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**THE POLITICS OF INSTITUTIONAL  
COLLECTIVE ACTION:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS  
OF INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL  
INVESTMENTS IN POLAND**

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Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sylvia Borkowke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a capital 'S' and 'B'.

Date: 29 June 2021

## Abstract

The thesis investigates metropolitan governance in local development through a comparative study of integrated economic development policies in Polish functional urban areas. It focuses on the case of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), a new policy instrument introduced under European Union's cohesion policy for the period 2014-2020 in order to promote sustainable urban development. This thesis aims to identify the political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration during ITI implementation, and their impact on collaboration.

The theoretical framework for this thesis is the Institutional Collective Action (ICA) Framework (Feiock, 2013) as adapted to the European context (Tavares, Feiock, 2018). The research focuses on ITI implementation in two Polish metropolitan areas: Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS), and the Lublin Functional Area (LFA). Data collection involved methods building on organisational ethnography: three months of participatory observation, and 45 in-depth expert semi-structured interviews. The data has been analysed using systematic qualitative content analysis, within a coding scheme based on the ICA Framework.

The research identified 48 political factors involved in joint ITI implementation. These factors had a strong impact on collaboration in both metropolitan areas: mostly positive impact in CS, and mostly negative in LFA. The factors were divided into nine thematic categories, out of which the highest impact had leaders and mayors. Among ICA Framework elements, political factors mostly affected division risks, and negotiations and bargaining costs.

The thesis contributes to the ICA literature by extending the scope of political factors involved in inter-municipal cooperation. It shows a dynamic dimension of the processes captured by the Framework, and proposes new types of collaboration risks (related to non-strategic joint projects) and of transaction costs (related to assessing these projects). Aside from applying the ICA framework to a new geographical context, it uses a new kind of (ethnographic) data. Finally, the research formulates practical implications relevant for policy-makers working with functional areas crossing administrative borders.

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

<b>CEE</b>	Central and Eastern Europe
<b>CF</b>	Cohesion Fund
<b>CP</b>	Cohesion policy
<b>CS</b>	Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ESIF</b>	European Structural and Investments Funds
<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional and Development Fund
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IAD</b>	institutional analysis and development
<b>IB</b>	Intermediate body
<b>ICA</b>	institutional collective action
<b>ICC</b>	Integrated Communication Centre
<b>ISUD</b>	Integrated sustainable urban development
<b>ITI</b>	Integrated Territorial Investment
<b>LFA</b>	Lublin Functional Area
<b>MA</b>	Managing Authority
<b>OP</b>	Operational programme
<b>ROP</b>	Regional operational programme
<b>TO</b>	Thematic objective

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## Introduction

This thesis contributes to the debates on the role of politics in public policy, specifically in metropolitan governance and the institutional collective action involved in it. It aims to identify the political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration, and their impact on collaboration in a particular context: the implementation of an EU policy tool in two metropolitan areas in Poland. It brings in-depth insights into the processes that so far have been studied mostly in a relatively narrow way, answering the calls for more ethnographic studies in political science (Boswell et al., 2019; Rhodes, Corbett, 2020; Schatz, 2009).

### **The state of the art and research puzzle**

The various literature strands led to non-aligned conclusions, and some contradicted reality. Research indicates that politics have become increasingly influential in public policy design and implementation in recent decades (Peters, Pierre, 2004; Shepherd et al., 2014). However, debate on how the increasing influence of politics work, and what impact it has on policy is ongoing and there are contested issues. The process of exerting political influence is typically called ‘politicisation’, understood as political influence on civil service or public policies. The influence of politics on policy have been mostly assessed negatively (Peters, 2013; Shepherd et al., 2014), associated with corruption, clientelism, non-merit-based administrative staff appointments, and using public resources for partisan interests.

This is also the case in the research on European Union’s cohesion policy (CP), a redistributive policy allocating development funds to all regions of each EU Member States (Cartwright, Batory, 2012). In this context, political influence was assessed negatively by academics and practitioners<sup>1</sup> as leading to non-strategic allocation of funds and the weakening of overall impact on development. Researchers acknowledged that as a redistributive policy, CP is more prone to political contestation than other EU policies. There are decisions to be made at EU, Member State and sub-national levels on the allocation of funds to thematic objectives, geographical territories, programmes and projects and these are bound to attract political attention. This attention, conflict and political influence are inevitable given that nearly one third of current EU budget has been invested in CP. The scope for politicisation is increased by the complicated, multi-level structure of CP governance (Milio, 2011b). The management

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<sup>1</sup>Personal communication: the author had a chance to exchange views on this topic with European Commission officials and the Permanent Representation of Poland in Brussels during the European Week of Regions and Cities in 2016.

and implementation of CP involves EU, national and sub-national administrative tiers and this creates several arenas for interaction of politicians and civil servants. As a result, CP implementation is an inherently politicised issue.

However, this contradicts other studies and strands in the literature that emphasise the potentially crucial role that political support and leadership can have on the strategic use of CP funds, particularly at the local level (Swianiewicz, 2013). Local politicians potentially have an important role in stimulating local development. This can apply to participation in formal structures and procedures but also to informal arenas where discussions and advocacy can take place. One cause of this contradiction is that research on politicisation has tended to focus on statistical data, exploring links between partisan affiliation of public authorities involved in management, implementation and ultimately the distribution of EU funds. Although valuable, this approach reveals little about how the process of political influence, positive or negative, occurs especially in an informal way. Researchers in the field of cohesion policy observed informal political influence and called for more qualitative assessment of the policy (Demidov, 2015; Dotti, 2016; Ferry, McMaster, 2013; Ferry, McMaster, 2018). Thus, the review identified a gap in conceptual and practical knowledge on how to identify which elements of CP implementation, including recently introduced tools to strengthen local level participation, could be used in order to optimise positive political influence and limit the scope for more negative processes of politicisation.

In this context, reforms of the CP for the 2014-2020 period introduced the ‘**place-based**’ approach, in order to promote sustainable urban development by adjusting policy interventions to the local context. One of the means of achieving this was by involving local authorities in strategic EU funds management. In this way, the new approach opened the scope of political involvement in CP implementation, contradicting the existing technocratic tendencies.

This contradiction led to the formulation of the **research puzzle** that this thesis addresses:

**While many researchers studying politicisation and practitioners involved in EU cohesion policy highlight the negative impacts of political influence on public policy, other strands of literature highlight a positive influence of politicians on local development. Moreover, the ‘place-based’ approach introduced for the 2014-2020 cohesion policy strengthens local politicians in the process of resource allocation, contradicting these theoretical and practical trends.**

## **Thesis scope and contribution**

The thesis focuses on one of the tools of the ‘placed-based’ approach: **Integrated Territorial Investments** (ITI) (see Chapter 3), which in Poland are implemented in metropolitan areas through collaborative structures established among targeted municipalities. Despite the top-down character of the tool, local collaboration differs widely in its design and implementation across localities in terms of form, scope and governance structure. This inter-municipal collaborative framework, has added a new dimension to EU cohesion policy, and increased the scope to apply emerging strands in the literature that focus on various forms of collaboration in public policy governance, in particular the Institutional Collective Action (ICA) Framework (Feiock, 2013, Kim et al., 2020) and its European adaptation (Tavares, Feiock, 2018).

ICA literature focuses on the interactions of various institutional actors in the local environment, and the process of forming collaborative arrangements among them. It argues that collaboration occurs when the benefits from it exceed the costs involved, and takes up the form depending on the scope of formalisation and complexity of the joint endeavours (Feiock 2009). The ICA Framework provides key concepts and mechanisms typically involved in inter-municipal collaboration, as well as typical factors involved.

A number of the factors studied empirically within the Framework had a **political character**, but their selection is quite narrow. This gap was acknowledged by other researchers, who consider power relations as one of the most important gaps to fill in the ICA literature (Kim et al., 2020), and highlighted that elected officials were not taken enough into consideration in ICA studies (Feiock, Lee, Park, Lee, 2010). Empirical studies using the ICA Framework analysed the homogeneity of mayors’ party affiliation, similarity of elections systems and local government models, party registration among population, and frequency of interactions among mayors. ICA literature has not studied other political influences acknowledged in different literature strands, including the one on politicisation of public services and resources redistribution.

This thesis contributes to filling in this gap by taking an interpretive research design and exploring the **variety of political factors** occurring in the studied context. It identifies a broad selection of factors and actors to be further studied as independent variables within the ICA Framework. It offers an in-depth analysis of the impact of the identified factors on particular aspects of collaboration following the ICA Framework. Moreover, it shows which factors had

the highest positive or negative impact in each metropolitan area, and which types of actors exerted the highest impact on collaboration.

Besides the political dimension, the thesis contributes to filling **several other gaps in ICA literature** recently acknowledged by researchers (Kim et al., 2020). They highlight the need to examine motivation of decision-makers when choosing to engage in collaboration, to analyse the process of spreading the knowledge among collaborating actors, to expand the punctual and linear approach to studying collaboration, and to broaden the geographical scope of ICA studies. The thesis contributes to these gaps with an in-depth analysis of the collaborative processes involving key actors, capturing the rationale of their particular decisions and behaviours and including the mutual learning aspect. It shows how the main processes evolved over time, contributing to the dynamic dimension of the Framework. The thesis brings empirical evidence from a new country to ICA literature, as Poland has not been empirically studied before within the Framework. Ultimately, on the basis of the analysis it proposes an extension of the ICA Framework with new types of collaboration risks and of transaction costs, which could be further examined within the ICA literature.

Finally, the thesis contributes to the **gap in the overall debate on political influence** on public policy and EU cohesion policy by analysing in detail how the process of politicisation happens, and exploring its broad understanding. Moreover, it shows both positive and negative impact of political factors on CP implementation, and proposes a broad selection of factors that could feed further studies in this area.

The research focuses on collaboration within ITI implementation in **two Polish metropolitan areas**: Central Subregion of the Silesia Voivodeship (CS), and the Lublin Functional Area in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (LFA). These areas differed in terms of size and mode of ITI implementation (see Chapter 3), with the one in LFA being expected to be more politicised.

The thesis aims to answer two main **research questions**:

- 1. ‘What are the political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?’**
- 2. ‘What is the impact of these identified factors on the inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?’**



Following the interpretive research design, the thesis uses methods of data collection built on **organisational ethnography**. Field research included three months of participatory observation, and 45 in-depth expert semi-structured interviews. The data has been analysed using systematic qualitative content analysis, within a coding scheme based on the ICA Framework.

By using ethnographic methods in the given context, the thesis answers recent calls for more **ethnographic data in political science**, specifically regarding the behaviour of political elites (Boswell et al., 2019; Rhodes, Corbett, 2020; Schatz, 2009). This kind of methodology is also a novelty in the ICA literature, which has included *low-n* and case studies based on interviews, but not interviews of an in-depth character and without data collected through participatory observation.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured into ten chapters. It begins with a chapter on the theoretical background, introducing the ICA Framework and the main concepts that are used throughout the thesis. The chapter captures the specificity of the European context in the ICA literature, and sets out particular political factors studied before empirically. In addition, the chapter defines the key concepts from other strands of literature related to political influences on public administration and policy, and summarises the to-date studies of political influences in EU cohesion policy. In this way, Chapter 1 sets out the key learnings from literature, which are then used in the analysis of empirical material.

Chapter 2 presents the research design and methodology, including the ontological and epistemological position of the thesis, outlining characteristics of the interpretive approach, and describing in detail the processes of data collection and analysis. It shows how the author ensured trustworthiness of the research following the standards of interpretive design. The chapter includes a detailed, transparent account of the main steps and decisions involved in case selection, preparation and conduct of field research, the process of conducting it and the summary of collected data. Chapter 2 shows also how the research questions evolved at different stages of the research, and what the rationale behind the changes was. Ultimately, it presents how the ICA Framework was used for data analysis, and the key characteristics of the methods applied at this stage.

Chapter 3 details the context for the field research, describing the state of inter-municipal collaboration in Poland, and providing an overview of the Integrated Territorial Investments as a tool of EU cohesion policy at the European and Polish level. The chapter also sets out key characteristics of the two studied metropolitan areas. In this way, the chapter provides key information about the socio-economic, institutional, legal and regulatory context, which is then used in the analysis of the empirical material.

Chapters 4-8 are related to the empirical research. The fourth chapter is a guide through the analysis. It explains the division of the empirical material between four analytical chapters, and describing the method of assessing the impact of political factors on ITI implementation. Chapter 5 opens the empirical analysis by setting out research participants' understanding of political factors and their impact on ITI implementation. The sixth chapter identifies political factors within the various categories of ICA Framework. Chapters 7 and 8 explore the impact of the identified political factors on shaping collective benefit and collaboration risks (Chapter 7), and on transaction costs and integration mechanisms (Chapter 8).

The last two chapters conclude the thesis. Chapter 9 presents the findings from the empirical analysis, while Chapter 10 chapter summarises the thesis' contribution to theory, methodology and practice. The chapter formulates practical implications relevant for policy-makers working with functional areas crossing administrative borders, especially but not limited to ITI implementation at the European, national, regional and local levels. The thesis finishes with recommendations for future research, following the limitations and broadening the key areas of contribution of the thesis.

## 1. Theoretical background

The main theoretical foundation of the thesis is the institutional collective action literature, in particular the Institutional Collective Action (ICA) Framework (Feiock, 2004, 2013). The Framework includes a conceptual system to investigate collective action dilemmas arising during inter-municipal cooperation, and suggests a taxonomy of mechanisms mitigating the dilemmas. In this way, the Framework provides the structure and concepts for the analysis of the empirical data collected during field research. The Framework and associated concepts are described in the first section of this chapter. This section identifies the political factors typically studied in the ICA literature, and identifies the gaps which this thesis contributes to.

Moreover, the thesis brings together various strands of literature, enriching the taxonomy traditionally used in the ICA literature. Section 2.2. introduces the main concepts in this regard. The thesis uses concepts related to the impact of politics in public administration and public policy, including the acknowledged influence on EU cohesion policy. This literature helped to identify the puzzle that led to the formulation of the initial research questions. Some of the phenomena described in the literature were observed during the field research, and the associated concepts will be used during the analysis, and when formulating the findings. In this way,.

Following the interpretivist research design, the understanding of politics and processes involved in ITI implementation was not restricted by single definitions or a strand of literature. Instead, the research explored their meaning for research participants (see Chapter 5), and then referred to relevant theoretical concepts. Therefore, it was important to choose a theoretical background that would best help to prepare for the field research, and then analyse the phenomena of main interest of the thesis. The choice followed a careful review of multiple policy analysis theories and frameworks (Sabatier, 2007) considering the role of politics in public policy, as well as a review of typical conceptual models used to study politicisation (see Section 1.2.1). A short overview of considered theories is presented below.

Conceptual frameworks typically used to study various types of politicisation (see Section 1.2), have included Principle-Agent and the Multi-Level Governance models. However, they were not relevant to the planned research scope. The Principle-Agent framework has been used mostly to investigate structural politicisation, focusing on the influence of politicians on the appointments and promotions of civil service at the national level. However, this framework

does not allow investigation of the influence of politicians on the implementation process of particular policies. Multi-level governance has been used to explain interactions between different hierarchical levels of policy implementation, but does not focus on interactions of multiple actors at a single level.

Peters (2016, pp. 64–65) suggests that the most useful literature for understanding political influences in policy making is the rational choice and veto players approaches to **institutionalism**. This explores the different possible scopes of political influences in various political systems (parliamentary/presidential, unitary/federal, centralised/decentralised). The institutional approach to analysing policy making highlights that individuals involved in it are embedded in particular institutions, which influence their behaviour and set general ‘rules of the game’ (Peters, 2016, p. 58). Consequently, public policies and institutions affect each other in many different dimensions, and one of them is channelling political pressures within institutions during the process of policy making. In this way, institutionalism provided a general theoretical framework that matched the broad objectives of the thesis, but within this it was important to identify a conceptual framework to operationalise the research questions.

Within institutional theory, Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1994, pp. 175–203) developed the **Advocacy Coalition Framework** to describe and explain a complex policymaking environment which contains multiple actors and levels of government and multiple veto points where actors can frustrate or veto the implementation process. Thus, policy decisions can be made against the backdrop of high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity, although policy processes vary, with some issues involving intensely politicised disputes among many actors while others are treated as technical and processed routinely, largely implemented by policy specialists.

A strand of neo-institutionalist literature (e.g. Mahoney, Thelen, 2009) takes policy actors systematically into account, introducing explanatory variables in assessing policy change: the strength of veto players, the level of discretion in interpretation, the enforcement of policy decisions, and change agents and coalitions with institutional challengers or supporters. Both approaches, however, usually limited the political influence to a negative and blocking role in public policy, while this research aims at exploring both the disadvantages and contributions of political involvement in policy implementation.

Other researchers highlight the special role of institutions in **policy network theory**, which emphasises institutional arrangements’ influence on policy (Schlager, 2007). At the same time,

however, they point out that the policy network theory focuses mostly on formal national structures, and that its role in explaining the dynamics of policy implementation needs further development. None of the above approaches are completely relevant to the thesis as they are neither designed to explore the subnational dimension of policy implementation, nor to identify particular mechanisms influencing roles of particular actors in the process of resource distribution.

The framework identified before the start of field research as the most relevant for the thesis was the **Institutional Analysis and Development** (IAD) Framework, developed by Elinor Ostrom (2011). Based on common-pool resources dilemmas, it facilitates analysis of how decisions are made in a situation where multiple policy actors are involved. The framework also helps in investigating structures for interactions of actors, in identifying strategies of individuals and groups for achieving their aims, and in understanding incentives for policy actors in making choices. By focusing on the micro-level of policy, it allows analysis of configurations, interpretations and changes of particular rules of actor behaviour. The micro-level of analysis matched the objectives and scope of the thesis, aiming to look into the process of policy implementation at the regional and local level, elaborating on how politicians affect the decisions on resource allocation, and how they interact with different actors during the process. Moreover, IAD illustrates that any social problem or policy is embedded in some external context, requires some interactions between actors involved, and finishes with a set of outcomes that bring a different added value from every participant's point of view. In this way, IAD provided the background for formulating an exploratory research question, and choosing an interpretive research design.

The last step in choosing the analytical framework was considering the overview of collected empirical material. The field research revealed that the main processes involving politicians and exercising their impact were directly associated with the specific character of the studied policy, which was implemented jointly by collaborating municipalities in the metropolitan areas. The **inter-municipal aspect of policy required additional conceptualisation** in order to fully capture the phenomena observed in the field. Here, the IAD Framework as such and associated analytical tools, e.g. grammar of institutions (Basurto et al., 2010; Crawford, Ostrom, 1995), did not allow capturing this specificity. Therefore, there was a need to find an analytical framework complying with the specificity of policies implemented through inter-municipal collaboration. At the same time, this framework needed to be compliant with former

assumptions towards the policy process following the IAD Framework, as it has already influenced the scope and approach to field research and empirical data collection.

The ICA Framework (Feiock, 2004, 2013) proved to be best-suited to these requirements, as one of its conceptual roots lies within the IAD framework, while at the same time it focuses on the specific collective action between local governments in metropolitan regions. The characteristics of this framework are presented in the next section.

## **1.1. The Institutional Collective Action Framework**

The ICA Framework formulates a system of concepts and mechanisms involved in cooperation among institutions in metropolitan areas. The foundations of the ICA Framework were first described in Richard Feiock's book on metropolitan governance (2004), while its key concepts and mechanisms were introduced in the article dedicated solely to the Framework (Feiock, 2013). Recently the Framework was updated by a group of researchers, taking into consideration over a decade of its empirical applications (Kim et al., 2020).

This section contains a review of the most important aspects of the ICA literature. The first subsection elaborates on the theoretical roots of the Framework. The second subsection introduces its key elements, concepts and mechanisms. The last subsection summarises current empirical research on the application of ICA including in the European context, as well as an overview of the political factors empirically studied within the Framework. In this way, this section provides the background for the analysis of the empirical material collected during field research, and identifies the gaps which this research addresses.

### **1.1.1. Theoretical background of the ICA Framework**

The ICA Framework integrates multiple research traditions in order to understand the specific interactions between local government units when acting collectively. It is theoretically rooted in collective action theory, combining elements from other literature strands: transaction cost theory, local public economies framework, social embeddedness theory, and political markets theory (Feiock, 2013, p. 399).

The collective action literature informs the main assumption of the ICA framework. It argues that the common interest and goals do not guarantee successful collective action, as actors behave mainly towards the achievement of their short-term individual interests. Without integration mechanisms, the sum of individual decisions will have an outcome that does not

fulfil collective interest, and that often is not even in the interest of any of the individuals (Olson, 1965). It is important to point out that the collective action theory is based on assumptions on the actors' rational behaviour, however this was challenged by some researchers, including Elinor Ostrom (1998). She pointed out the limits of full rationality models, highlighted the role of learning heuristics, rules and norms in shaping individual behaviour, and provided experimental evidence of the possibility to achieve results that are *'better than rational'* by building conditions where reciprocity, reputation, and trust can help to overcome the strong temptations of short-run self-interest (E. Ostrom, 1998, p. 1). This second generation of rationalism, highlighting **bounded rationality** of individuals, role of formal and informal norms and rules, and the importance of reciprocity, reputation and trust in collective action, provide a general background for the ICA Framework.

Crucially for the Framework, a part of the **collective action literature** emphasises that individuals are embedded in institutions, which provide the rules influencing policy actors' behaviour (E. Ostrom, 1990, 2005). ICA authors do not mention Ostrom's IAD framework directly, but the conceptual system of the ICA Framework is strongly associated with it. Policy arena, action situation and institutional rules are often used in publications associated with ICA, and will be used in this thesis. The authors of the ICA framework highlight particularly the position, authority (sic.) and aggregation rules (Feiock, 2013, p. 399), which provide individuals with the power to represent particular organisations, shape power relations between them, and influence the preferences in terms of collaborative mechanisms. However, the remaining rules from Ostrom's typology (see the previous section) are also relevant for the situations analysed here. Overall, the ICA Framework narrows down the variety of different collective action situations and participating institutions to the interactions between local government units, capturing the specificity of the collaboration between them.

**Transaction cost theory** (Williamson, 1979) contributes to the ICA framework in terms of explaining the barriers towards solving collective action dilemmas arising among local governments. The theory is based on the assumption of boundedly rational actors and the tendency of opportunistic behaviour, which to some extent enables explaining individual motivations and decisions. The ICA framework uses particular kinds of costs associated with collaboration, and incorporates them directly to the conceptual system of the Framework (Feiock, 2013, p. 399): information costs, negotiation costs, external decision costs, enforcement costs (see later in this section). ICA also draws on contracting as a way to deal

with transactions costs (Brown et al., 2015; Brown, Potoski, 2005), in order to formulate a part of mechanisms mitigating collective action dilemmas.

Another strand of literature that the ICA Framework draws upon is the **local public economies theory** (Oakerson, Parks, 2011; V. Ostrom et al., 1961), which is related to the common-pool resources and IAD Framework, but includes the specificity of polycentric metropolitan areas. The theory suggests an alternative to the transaction costs explanation of joint service delivery problems, focusing on control, efficiency, political representation and self-determination. The ICA Framework uses particular concepts rooted in the theory: the nature of the ICA dilemma, the direct or indirect involvement of authorities in a policy arena, the potential risks associated with action and inaction, and the incentives explaining the actors' motivation (Feiock, 2013, p. 400).

**Social embeddedness theory** is also an important contributor to the ICA Framework, as it explains the successful occurrence of bottom-up, self-organising mechanisms mitigating collective action dilemmas. Its contribution is crucial as this phenomenon cannot be fully explained by transaction costs. Social embeddedness theory highlights that the interactions between local governments happen in a broader socio-economic and political context (Granovetter, 1985). Within that, the geographical proximity and density enable cluster network relationships, which facilitate increasing social capital, trust and reciprocity between neighbouring partners. Due to long-term coexistence in such conditions, partnering municipalities build reciprocal relations, which consequently limits the tendency to opportunism in collective action situations (Tavares, Feiock, 2018, p. 4). Thus, social embeddedness constitutes another kind of mechanisms solving collective action dilemmas within the ICA Framework.

The last strand of literature that directly influenced the ICA Framework is the **policy analysis literature**, including policy instruments and political markets. It highlights that the design and choice of policy instruments - here mechanisms mitigating collective action dilemmas - happens in a dynamic political bargaining and negotiation process between collaborating local authorities. Representatives of partnering municipalities consider the inputs and outcomes that they can achieve on their own and compare them with the potential costs and benefits from different scopes and forms of collaboration. This mechanism is directly used in the ICA framework to define various forms of collaboration and explain reasons for choosing them (Feiock, 2013, p. 400).



### 1.1.2. The key concepts of the ICA Framework

The ICA framework introduces specific concepts which are used in this thesis. This section will briefly define the most important ones. An **institutional collective action** (ICA) is a collective effort to establish a cooperative arrangement between government units (Feiock, 2004).

Fragmentation of authority and responsibility produces **ICA dilemmas**, which are the problems that occur between collaborating entities. *'If local actors pursue strategies based on their short-term interests, the collective action problem dictates that the outcomes of individual decisions will be collectively inefficient in the absence of mechanisms to integrate decisions and/or jurisdictions'* (Feiock 2013, p. 398). According to Feiock, ICA dilemmas can have three dimensions, depending on the reason for collaborative effort and involved actors. **Horizontal dilemmas** occur when single local government units on the same administrative level find it troublesome to deliver a kind of public service. **Vertical** dilemmas arise when different levels of administrative hierarchy have overlapping responsibilities and objectives in similar policy areas. **Functional** dilemmas are caused by the interdependence of various services, policies and resources in particular government units, as decisions regarding them affect other policies and other municipalities in a region. In all cases, the dilemmas are related to the difficulties in coordinating service delivery and local development among multiple actors.

The ICA Framework gives particular attention to the horizontal problems among neighbouring municipalities (Kim et al., 2020). Such dilemmas can be caused by: **externality problems** occurring when the positive or negative effects of service delivery spill beyond the boundaries of the municipality (not) delivering this service, e.g. policies fighting or causing air pollution. **Scale problems** occur when the size of the municipality is inadequate to effective service delivery, e.g. a small municipality not being able to afford its own public transport. **Common-pool resource problems** occur when multiple government units have access to the same resource, e.g. particular parts of a river or a lake (Feiock, 2013).

The ICA Framework then provides a set of mechanisms mitigating the ICA dilemmas (also called **integration mechanisms**), which effectively are the various forms of real-life inter-municipal collaboration that are undertaken in order solve collective problems. Feiock (2013, pp. 401-405) differentiates them in terms of the scope of collaboration and the enforcement mechanism. He argues that the more advanced forms in both dimensions are more effective in solving collective action problems, but they also produce more transaction costs for local

authorities. This relationship has been illustrated in the Figure 1 and described more in detail below.

The ICA Framework acknowledges two dimensions differentiating the **collaboration scope**: the number of partnering municipalities and the complexity of tasks involved. Consequently, inter-municipal collaboration can differ from narrow, bilateral arrangements regarding a single policy, through broader multilateral agreements on multiple policy areas, to complex formations, encompassing numerous policies and including collective decision-making systems. To highlight the highest complexity of inter-related policy arenas and complicated service functions covered by the advanced collaborative mechanisms Feiock proposes the concept of **policy multiplexity**. He argues that the higher scope of collaboration, the higher costs of making collective decisions due to complexity of the matters and growing number of actors participating in the decision-making process. For the purpose of the ICA Framework, Feiock proposes a three-degree scale of the collaboration scope (see the vertical dimension of the Figure 1).

Another dimension of available integration mechanisms is the **method of enforcement**, differing available mechanisms in the degree of autonomy that the participating actors invest in collaboration. The most informal integration mechanisms are based on social embeddedness, more advanced collaboration is grounded in mutually binding contracts, delegated authority and imposed authority. The first three forms are voluntary, while the last one is enforced by a higher level of administration, including amalgamation of particular municipalities.

Feiock argues that the more advanced enforcement mechanism, the more autonomy costs for the participating actors. For example, in the case of collaboration based on embeddedness, local authorities usually do not need to delegate their power to a separate organisation, as the collaboration is not formalised, does not create any legal obligations for any of the partners and does not delegate decision-making power to an external body. In the case of more formalised and advanced mechanisms, collaboration usually involves some scope of responsibilities, tasks and decisions delegated to an external unit, either one of the partners or a higher (e.g. metropolitan) body. Consequently, local authorities lose the autonomy to decide and act on particular issues. The four categories of enforcement have been illustrated in the horizontal dimension of Figure 1.

Figure 1 Mechanisms integrating Institutional Collective Action dilemmas

---Decision Costs +++ ↑	<b>Enforcement method</b> <b>Scope of collaboration</b>	<b>Embeddedness</b>	<b>Contracts</b>	<b>Delegated Authority</b>	<b>Imposed Authority</b>
	<b>Encompassing Complex Collective</b>				
	<b>Intermediate Multilateral</b>				
	<b>Narrow Single Purpose Bilateral</b>				
		---Autonomy Costs+++ →			

Source: adapted from (Feiock, 2013, pp. 401-404)

Feiock describes real-life forms of collaboration typical for each cell of the Figure 1, depending on the collaboration scope and the enforcement method. However, they are rooted in the context and legal system of the United States. For the purpose of the Thesis, particular forms of collaboration within the ICA Framework will be discussed following the categorisation adjusted to the European context, which has recently been elaborated by Tavares and Feiock (2018) (see Section 1.1.3).

A crucial advantage of the ICA Framework is a well-explained **process of choosing the integration mechanism** to solve particular collective action dilemmas. *‘In any given policy arena, externally imposed rules combine with the underlying collective problem to determine the specific incentives facing each actor. The preference of local actors for specific mechanisms to mitigate ICA dilemmas will depend on collaboration risk that reflects the nature of the problem, the preferences and alignments of the actors, and existing institutions that influence the transaction costs local actors face’* (Feiock, 2013 p. 406). This process includes the assessment of three issues:

1. collaboration risks,
2. transaction costs, and
3. sources of collaboration risks.

Accurately assessing each of these elements is necessary for effective empirical applications of the Framework, and therefore below each of the concepts will be briefly explained. The relationship between them is illustrated in Figure 3.

## **Collaboration risks**

Risks are related to the uncertainty of other participants' behaviour and of the collaboration outcomes. It has a direct influence on the individual decisions to collaborate, and the collective choice of integration mechanism. The ICA Framework distinguishes three categories of collaboration risks (Feiock, 2013 p. 406) on the basis of traditional game theory and prisoner's dilemma: related to incoordination, division and defection.

**Incoordination risks** occur when local government units agree on a common interest, but in order to achieve collective benefit they must exchange information, and adjust their actions depending on mutual plans. The risk is directly associated with the nature of the ICA dilemma: it is low when the scope of collaboration is simple, and it arises with growing complexity and interconnectedness of joint activities. Higher coordination risks usually require more authoritative or encompassing integration mechanisms to effectively solve ICA dilemmas.

**Division risks** are related to achieving agreement on distributing collective benefits and costs among participants. They arise when each local authority is better-off when collaborating, but there are difficulties regarding perceived fairness in the method of dividing joint contributions and profits. Ensuring the common feeling of equality or proportionality among partners requires extensive bargaining and negotiation process, which is easier to achieve in collective actions including multiple policy areas. Disagreement on fair division can pose substantial barriers in establishing a successful collaborative mechanism.

**Defections risks** occur when local governments have conflicting interests, and a positive outcome for one participant can result in others' disadvantage. This type of risk grows in the atmosphere of misinformation, future uncertainty and opportunistic tendencies. Overcoming such risks usually requires establishing mechanisms with more authoritative enforcement in order to guarantee credibility of joint commitments, crucial for efficient mitigating of ICA dilemmas.

## **Transaction costs**

There is a price that needs to be paid by individual actors in order to solve a collective action dilemmas effectively. This is associated with the 'external decision costs', which occur when the joint actions and decisions differ from individual preferences, and the collaborative process requires effort to achieve an agreement. Feiock suggest that *the costs will be minimal when the scope of collaboration is narrow and enforcement is based on embedded social relations. The*

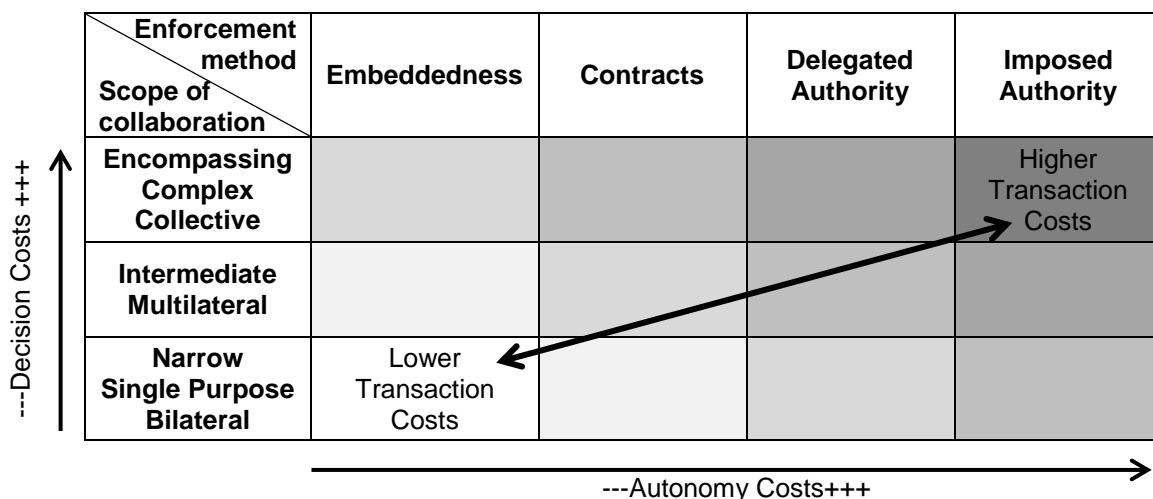
costs will be highest when mechanisms involve a collective decision process encompassing multiple policies and actors and delegated authority (Feiock, 2013, p. 407). This relationship has been illustrated in Figure 2. Importantly, Feiock suggests that the mechanisms with higher transaction costs are more effective in solving ICA dilemmas. Overall, establishing any integration mechanisms requires some scope of transaction costs, which arise as a consequence of collaboration risks. The types of costs discussed in the Framework are strongly related to the categorisation of collaboration risks set out above.

**Information costs** grow with increasing risks of incoordination, as participants need to invest time and resources to agree on the joint course of action and make the individual plans complement each other and create synergies.

**Bargaining and negotiation costs** arise as a consequence of division risks, because local authorities need to find a fair consensus on the collective benefit distribution and a proportional allocation of responsibilities.

**Enforcement costs** increase with growing defections risks, and are associated with losing some scope of autonomy by individual collaborators in order to prevent free-riding, as some partners may commit to opportunistic behaviour supporting their individual gain at the cost of collective benefit. Enforcement mechanisms are supposed to ensure obeying the collaboration rules in joint activities.

Figure 2 Integration mechanisms and transaction costs.



Source: adapted from (Feiock, 2013, pp. 404-408)

## Sources of collaboration risks

Lastly, the ICA Framework elaborates also the factors influencing the risks and costs, which are often analysed when applying the framework to empirical studies. Sources of collaboration risks are the characteristics of the dilemma, involved actors and external context, which influence partners' behaviour uncertainty and consequent individual decisions related to particular collective actions. Feiock discusses three categories of risk sources (2013, p. 410-412): the specific nature of the underlying ICA dilemma, the actors characteristics; and the existing institutions shaping the context and rules of collective action.

**The nature of the ICA dilemma** is the purpose of the collective action to be undertaken in a particular case, which influences the strength of incentives and risks of collaboration. Types indicated as the most common in practice are directly related to the earlier explained types of ICA problems, and assessed on the scale of their complexity.

1. **Coordination gains** from matching service delivery among local governments, which produces economic efficiencies by reducing redundancy and complementing mutual actions. They produce minimal risks and minimal costs, and therefore is usually possible to achieve through informal collaboration mechanisms.
2. **Economies of scale** in the production of infrastructure, which bring direct cost savings, which will not duplicate infrastructure in small local governments units, and share the costs of joint investment. Such collective actions can produce risks due to measurement difficulties and long-term mutual dependencies that increase the uncertainty of successful completing of the investment, which can increase coordination and enforcement costs. For example, if a big unit extends a service delivery to smaller municipalities, a legal contract may be required to guarantee the proportional share in costs paid by each partner.
3. **Minimising common pool resource problems** aims towards a more efficient preservation of the resource, e.g. by accepting joint rules of using it. However, there are high risks of defection due to potential individual gains from exploiting the common resource, and therefore more structured enforcement mechanisms are required to discourage partners from opportunism.
4. **Internalising externalities** imposed by other local authorities only provides gains for the disadvantaged units, while there are usually no incentives to collaborate for the municipality producing the negative externalities for the others. Therefore, in such

situation launching and maintaining an effective voluntary integration mechanism is the most problematic, and may require imposing one by a higher administration level.

**Actors characteristics** shows the diversity within and across collaborating local government units and among the preferences of actors representing them. The Framework distinguishes between the **individual actors' characteristics** (e.g. networks, interests), and **community characteristics** (social, economic, political composition of inhabitants of collaborating municipalities).

In general, the literature suggests that heterogeneity among the actors' characteristics increases coordination and bargaining costs, as aggregating preferences and agreeing on a joint scope of collective action can require more time and resources (Kim et al., 2020, p. 5). From another perspective, homophily among these characteristics reduces decision costs in aggregating preferences and facilitates accountability, as there is more understanding among partners, and the bargaining and negotiation process proceeds easier. In this way, similar municipalities are expected to choose less formal structures of collaboration, while metropolitan areas with more heterogeneity are likely to need a more formalised type of collaboration. For example, the proximity of neighbouring municipalities can play a role in minimising opportunistic behaviour as common interests are numerous and long-term (Minkoff, 2013).

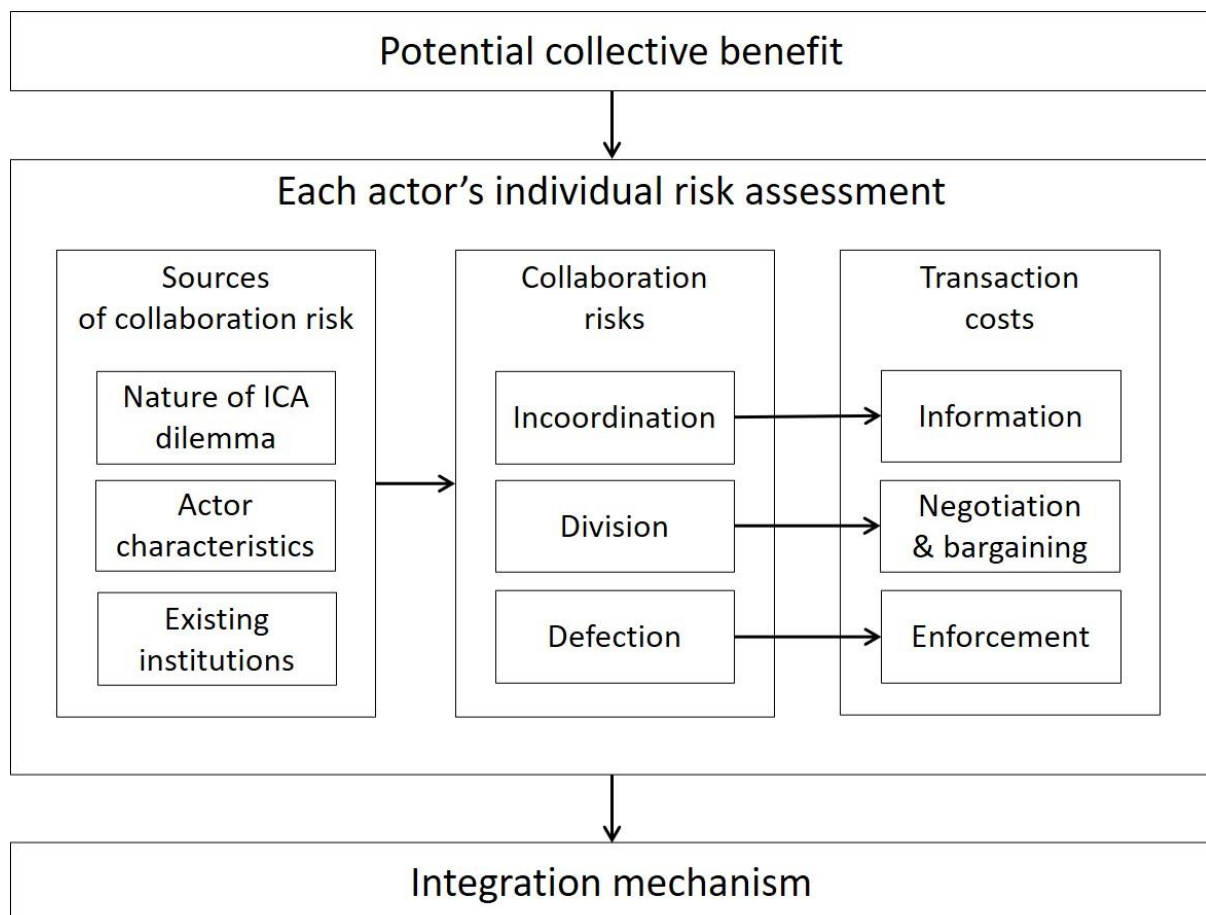
**Existing institutions** shape motivations and strategies of local actors who participate in decision-making, as they provide the rules of possible actions and create the characteristics of political and organisational context in which the collective action takes place. Within that, Feiock highlights three important aspects:

1. **higher-level rules**, which are the externally imposed laws that local governments need to obey, and the delegated responsibilities and prerogatives that shape the scope of authority and autonomy of collaboration participants;
2. **political structure**, including available forms of government and electoral systems that influence the incentives for individual representatives of municipalities to enter a collaborative action and, on the other hand, to opportunistic behaviour. Moreover, common structure can reduce uncertainty and risks in collaboration;
3. **existing ICA mechanisms** in place, which interact with the new integration mechanism that is about to be created, either by being complementary and reducing risks and transaction costs (by bringing information, administrative capacities, social capital, network brokering, or by being substituted, which might increase the transaction cost).

This usually happens with integration mechanisms that are created bottom-up by local governments, which are substituted by the mechanisms imposed top-down by the state.

Overall, the key mechanisms of the ICA Framework can be summarised in the following way. In the view of a potential collective benefit, actors with certain characteristics and previous experiences consider solving a particular ICA problem, and make a risk assessment. Within this assessment, they analyse various kinds of risks and associated costs in order to choose the most suitable integration mechanism. This process is visualised in Figure 3, which can be an alternative to the visualisation recently prepared by a group of researchers updating the ICA Framework (Kim et al., 2020, p. 4).

Figure 3 Visualisation of the Institutional Collective Action Framework



Source: own elaboration based on Feiock, 2013

### 1.1.3. Empirical applications of the ICA framework

ICA Framework has been applied in multiple studies in order to examine the role of particular elements of the framework in explaining the intensity of inter-municipal collaboration between



particular municipalities and lack of such initiatives in others<sup>2</sup>. Kim et al (2020, p. 12-13) summarised the main to-date empirical evidence related to the ICA Framework. They note that some studies proved that transaction costs impede collaboration (e.g. Feiock et al., 2009). Research conducting social network analysis (e.g. Lee et al., 2012) showed that actors with similar preferences tend to be more likely to collaborate, and that popular, well-connected actors tend to attract collaboration due to their access to information. Other strands focused on particular policy areas (e.g. Andrew et al., 2015; Hawkins, Feiock, 2011) and suggested that informal personal relations can encourage actors to engage in formal collaboration.

Among particular factors affecting formation of collaborative arrangements, the researchers identified a repeated analysis of the impact of social capital and administrative capacity. The former focused on the process of building trust and reciprocal relations over time (e.g. Percoco, 2016). Within this, the role of well-connected actors was acknowledged as important (e.g. Park, Feiock, 2006). Studies on the latter suggested that in general administrative capacity facilitates collaboration, but a high level of this factor can discourage organisations from engaging in collaborative arrangements (e.g. Krause et al., 2021), as they may feel self-sufficient and notice limited benefits from engaging with other entities.

Kim et al. (2020, p. 13-17) identify main gaps in the ICA literature, to which this thesis contributes. First, the researchers call for more studies on **power imbalances in collaboration**. They observe that *'the salience of power in the political processes in which collaboration decisions are made is often not fully accounted for in the ICA research program'* (Kim et al. 2020, p. 14). ICA theory observes the relation between politics and collaboration risks. For instance, actors with limited power may be reluctant to engage in collaboration as their interests may not be taken into consideration. Moreover, the extent of joint resources to be disposed by actors may influence the choice of integration mechanism. Nevertheless, researchers observe that these political aspects have not been studied empirically.

Second, they observe that more attention should be given to examining the motivation of decision-makers when choosing to engage in collaboration and in the choice of integration mechanisms, suggesting the use of behavioural science on top of cost-benefit analysis. Third, Kim et al. acknowledge that most ICA studies focus on a particular moment, usually the establishment of a particular integration mechanism. They suggest that collaboration varies

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<sup>2</sup> An updated collection of studies applying the ICA Framework was found on the official website of the Local Governance Research Lab of the Florida State University, which ran a research programme focused on ICA: [localgov.fsu.edu/research-programs/institutional-collective-action-ica-framework](http://localgov.fsu.edu/research-programs/institutional-collective-action-ica-framework) [accessed on 11/04/2018];

over time, and the usual linear basis should be expanded. Fourth, the researchers acknowledge the need to further explore the ‘collective learning’ – spreading the knowledge among collaborating actors. Lastly, apart from the thematic gaps, Kim et al. also call for a wider geographical coverage of ICA Framework applications, including small-n case studies, highlighting a low number of studies in this regard conducted in Europe.

### **ICA Framework in Europe**

From the geographical point of view, the great majority of these studies have been conducted in the USA, followed by studies conducted in Asia. However, there are a number of examples of studies using the ICA Framework to analyse the inter-municipal collaboration in the following European countries: Italy (Casula, 2020; Percoco, 2016), France (Boschet, Rambonilaza, 2018), Netherlands (Klok et al., 2018), Norway (Pierre, 2011), Portugal (Camões et al., 2020), and Sweden (Johansson et al., 2015; Pierre, 2019). Most of them use quantitative methods to test various hypotheses formulated on the basis of ICA Framework, or use case studies to describe the inter-municipal collaboration in a particular country.

In Eastern Europe, no published empirical studies directly using the ICA Framework have been identified, however some work is currently in progress, e.g. in relation to Bulgaria (Anguelov, Alibašić, 2019). In other cases, researchers refer to the ICA literature, but do not directly apply the Framework, e.g. in relation to Lithuania (Bučaitė-Vilke et al., 2018) and Poland (Swianiewicz, 2016; Szmigiel-Rawska, 2016).

The small number of studies applying the framework in the European context is important, because researchers acknowledged substantial differences between the character of inter-local collaboration between USA and Europe. Some highlight that in Europe collaboration often has the form of joint authority, while in the US it is more likely to happen through informal agreements. This influences the scope of authority delegated to the collaborative structure, and can discourage local actors from engaging in joint initiatives. They also point out that, in comparison to the US, municipalities in European countries have low level of fiscal authority and less autonomy in service delivery, which can limit the scope of potential collaboration (Hawkins, p. 756). However, this does not apply to Poland, which has a high level of decentralisation and relatively autonomous regional and local authorities (Swianiewicz, 2016).

Considering the differences of the local government systems and contexts, it is important to highlight that the ICA Framework has been recently extended to the European context. Tavares

and Feiock (2018) have proposed how it can be used to analyse mechanisms of solving collective action dilemmas during inter-municipal cooperation in various European countries. They have summarised the to-date literature on collaboration at supra-municipal level, and suggested a new collection of integration mechanisms that typically occur in the European context. They European mechanisms mitigating collective action dilemmas were allocated following the original matrix of the Framework (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Policy instruments for mitigating ICA dilemmas in European countries.

Enforcement method Scope of collaboration	Embeddedness	Contracts	Delegated Authority	Imposed Authority
	<b>Encompassing Complex Collective</b>	City-regions/ Network cities	Multi-Purpose Municipal Associations	Regional/ Metropolitan Governments
<b>Intermediate Multilateral</b>	Social Welfare Networks	Single-Purpose Municipal Associations	Inter-municipal Corporations	Metropolitan Transportation Authorities
<b>Narrow Single Purpose Bilateral</b>	Informal Working Groups	Interlocal Agreements	Municipal Corporations	Cynsorcios and Syndicats Mixtes

---Autonomy Costs+++

Source: adapted from Tavares, Feiock 2018, p. 15

#### 1.1.4. Political factors in empirical studies using the ICA Framework

The ICA Framework acknowledges political factors in the context of sources of collaboration risks. First, actors' and community diversity is partly associated with political aspects. The divergence of participants' interests and power is directly related to political affiliation of leaders of collaboration municipalities, while homophily among municipal population includes political ideologies popular among partnering municipalities' inhabitants. The framework assumes that similarity between both municipal leaders and communities facilitates collaboration by limiting risks and associated transactions costs. Moreover, political structures constitute one of the categories of existing institutions. The framework proposes that available forms of local government and electoral systems shape incentives for entering inter-municipal collaboration, and that common political structures can limit collaboration risks and transaction costs. The latter partially contributes also to the participant homophily argument.

Researchers have acknowledged that political aspects of inter-municipal collaboration have gained little academic attention: *The existing literature has focused almost exclusively on administrators, neglecting networks among elected officials* (Feiock et al., 2010, p. 24). Until

now, there has not been any research that would investigate the full complexity of political factors in the context of institutional collective action initiatives. Also Kim et al. acknowledge power relations as one of the most important gaps to fill in the ICA literature (2020, p. 14). Since 2010, however, a number of studies applying ICA framework operationalised and examined chosen political dimensions, which will be described below.

The first group of studies examining political factors focused on the political structure as a part of existing institutions acknowledged in the framework. In particular, these studies differentiated various electoral models of local government. In terms of mayor elections they considered the mayor-council model, in which the mayor is elected by popular vote and has extensive executive prerogatives, and council-manager model, in which the mayor is elected by council members and has mostly representative functions, while the municipal office is managed by a professional bureaucrat – a city manager.

As far as council elections are concerned, the studies distinguished a district system, in which municipalities are divided into smaller voting constituencies, and a general system, in which votes of all inhabitants are calculated together. The studies have shown that municipalities with a mayor-council model and general system are more likely to enter inter-municipal collaboration (Hawkins, Feiock, 2011). This has been explained following the political rationality model, according to which there are stronger political incentives for mayors elected by popular vote to engage in innovative initiatives improving services, ensuring savings, and allowing additional investments. In this context, the redistributive aspect of joint policy is the most desired by mayors, as it allows resource allocation to particular geographical areas, which can be important for mayor's re-election. On the other hand, the redistributive policy aspect in collaboration can encourage strong mayors to opportunistic behaviour due to short-term political interests.

The district model can create problems in negotiations of inter-municipal agreement, as within the same municipality there are various views on priorities and collaboration scope. Moreover, an extended strand of research has shown that the similarity between political structures of potential partners increase the likelihood of launching collaboration, which is the case in particular with two or more municipalities with a strong mayor model. This has been explained by limited incoordination risks due to the same legal basis, similar organisational culture and consequent limited behaviour uncertainty of municipalities with the same local government model: *Institutions encompass formal rules, including scope of power of elected officials, and*

*informal norms of behaviour, operating practices, which provide predictability by defining what is required, expected prohibited, permitted* (Hawkins, 2017, p. 769).

Another way of analysing political aspects of collective action involves comparing the policy networks that elected officials built with those forged by administrators. Studies assumed differences in incentives towards collaboration as well as in attitude towards risk, and expected that the rationale behind choosing partners for collaboration and associated networks would be shaped differently. This was measured by the frequency of interactions between elected officials and among appointed officials representing particular municipalities. Feiock et al (2010) showed that elected officials network mostly with popular actors who can provide them with access to information about other actors, and in this way limit the uncertainty of others' behaviour. In their later research, however, Feiock et al. (2012) acknowledge that the shape of networks forged by administrators and politicians does not differ substantially, and that both groups become risk-averse when the scope of collaboration is growing.

Moreover, individual studies developed three other approaches to studying political aspects of collaboration. Gerber et al (2013) focused on the **political homophily as a community attribute**, which they measured by similarity of representation in political parties among inhabitants of various municipalities. Their research proved that municipalities with communities that have similar ideological and partisan preferences are more likely to collaborate – which confirms the theoretical assumptions.

Shaowei et al. (2016) focused on the two types of **political incentives** in terms of hierarchical relations with central government when implementing policies: rank-ordered, *in which agents are paid or sanctioned based on their ordinal rank rather than on their absolute output* (pp. 214), and non-rank ordered in which they are assessed on the basis of their output. Researchers showed that non-rank ordered political incentives associated with particular policy stimulate inter-municipal collaboration, while rank-ordered incentives discourage such behaviour.

A recent study applying the ICA Framework examines political factors and is the first empirical attempt to measure *crucial form of political homophily (the extent to which participants with similar political ideologies are more likely to collaborate* (Song et al, 2018, p. 262). It builds on the concept of political solidarity (Hirsch, 1986) and operationalises it by assessing the **similarity between partisan affiliation** of mayors and the council majority in particular municipalities of a metropolitan area. Song et al have found that municipalities which have mayors affiliated with the same party are more likely to collaborate. This can be explained by

the possibility of favouring similar policies that can become a subject of collective action, which limits coordination risks. Homophily among municipal leaders can also provide bigger scope of reciprocity and loyalty, limiting division and defection risks (Feiock, 2013).

**In summary**, the reviewed articles provide evidence that political factors play an important role in inter-municipal collaboration in various policy areas, but used different variables in order to assess this. Some looked at political homophily regarding a community' or mayors' political preferences, some compared policy networks among politicians and bureaucrats in relation to differences in their attitude towards collaboration risk, some considered different types of policy incentives, and others analysed the differences between political structures. In doing this, the majority of the studies measured frequency of interactions between particular municipalities and how chosen political factors influence the fact of entering inter-municipal collaboration. The summary of reviewed articles is presented in the Table 1.

However, **none of the studies explained how political factors influence the shape and scope of the formed collaboration, how they operate in sustaining the collaboration, and what their role is in the implementation of joint policies or projects.** Moreover, each study operationalised political factors to one chosen variable, while the reality of inter-municipal collaboration includes all of the studied aspects together with other, potentially unexplored political factors affecting collective action.

Lastly, the studies explored empirically the relationships of independent variables associated with one of the ICA categories: sources of collaboration risk. Following the statistical test on how they directly influenced the choice of integration mechanism, they theorised in order to explain how the political variables shaped involved risks and transaction costs. The studies did not explore the actual mechanisms shaping when and how the political factors in question impacted on the risks and costs of collaboration to a particular extent.

Moreover, the relationships among actors seem to be more complex and context-related. For example, higher level institutions may define the role of politicians in the process of implementation and joint resource redistribution, which may affect the political incentives of entering inter-municipal collaboration. Moreover, politicians may play various roles in mitigating particular risks and costs during the process of collaboration, which would strengthen their role in that process. For these reasons, the thesis seeks to expand the selection of political factors and explore how they affect particular elements of the ICA Framework.

**Table 1. Political factors in chosen empirical studies applying ICA Framework**

Publication	Key research questions	Political factors	Methods	Key Results
<b>(Feiock et al., 2010)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do propensities of elected local government officials to be risk averse shape their willingness to engage in economic development exchanges and the structure of these networks from which they draw their partners?</li> </ul>	Frequency of interactions among elected officials vs. these among civil servants	Survey, social network analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected officials seek partners embedded in structure of relationships that can reduce the political risk of collaboration as well as provide information;</li> <li>Politically risk-averse elected officials are able to collaborate and share information even in the highly competitive economic development area;</li> </ul>
<b>(Hawkins, Feiock, 2011)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do political arrangements influence policy adoption and choice of governance mechanism?</li> </ul>	Local government model (mayor-council and council-manager)	Survey, statistical analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint ventures are more likely when there are localised benefits combined with mayor-council government, or when broader benefits are pursued under council-manager form of government</li> <li>Prior agreements influence future cooperative actions;</li> </ul>
<b>(Feiock et al., 2012)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent the structure of relationships reflects the efforts of actors to efficiently collect and process information or to enhance credible commitment?</li> <li>To what extent differences in incentives and risk aversion lead to differences in politicians' and administrators' networks?</li> </ul>	Frequency of interactions among elected officials vs. these among civil servants	Survey, social network analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local government actors forge tightly clustered networks to verify information and address commitment problems;</li> <li>Despite differences in incentives and risk aversion, politicians and administrators forge similar networks patterns;</li> </ul>
<b>(Gerber et al., 2013)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether and how broader political and ideological considerations shape local governments' decisions about participation in regional planning networks?</li> </ul>	Level of party registration distance between municipalities	Survey, statistical analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local governments whose constituents are similar politically, in terms of partisanship and voting behaviour, are more likely to collaborate;</li> <li>Political homophily reduces transaction costs associate with collective actions;</li> </ul>
<b>(Shaowei et al., 2016)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the role and significance of political incentives in addressing ICA dilemmas during inter-municipal collaboration?</li> </ul>	Type of political incentive (rank-ordered and non-rank ordered)	Case studies, interviews, document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The non-rank ordered political incentives attached to a specific policy area strongly stimulate collaborative behaviour of local governments facing ICA dilemmas;</li> <li>Political incentives play a significant role in influencing the collaborative behaviour of local governments;</li> </ul>
<b>(Hawkins, 2017)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do self-organising economic development agreements between cities with similar political institutions mitigate the transaction costs of collaboration?</li> <li>How characteristics of these agreements combine with political institutions to shape collective action?</li> </ul>	Similarity between elections systems: mayor (mayor-council, council-manager) and council (district, general)	Survey, statistical analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipalities with strong-mayor model are more likely to collaborate with each other, as similarity in political incentives facilitates coordination and limits division risks;</li> <li>District model of council elections creates problems in negotiations during inter-municipal collaboration;</li> </ul>
<b>(Song et al., 2018)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do political similarities facilitate inter-local collaboration?</li> </ul>	Similarity between partisan affiliations of mayors	Survey, statistical analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political homophily enhances the likelihood of inter-municipal collaboration;</li> <li>Political similarities enhance strong commitment and reduce division and defection risks.</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of quoted literature

## **1.2. Insights from the politicisation literature**

The aim of this section is to provide insights from the literature on politicisation, which can contribute to the conceptual development to the ICA Framework, filling the gap related to its political dimension (see Section 1.1.4). Hence, the thesis refers to a selection of concepts so far not used in the ICA literature when identifying and explaining the impact of political factors in the studied context. These concepts are related to the broader literature on political influence on public administration and public policy. This section summarises the key aspects of this literature that are relevant to the research.

The first subsection briefly describes the main kinds of politicisation acknowledged in the literature. Second subsection provides an overview of political influence specifically on EU cohesion policy (CP) as acknowledged in empirical studies conducted in various European countries.

### **1.2.1. Various dimensions of politicisation**

The concept of politicisation has been widely discussed in different literatures: comparative politics, political sociology, international relations, public administration and communication science (Wilde et al., 2016). Researchers have noted both positive and negative effects of politicisation. Among potential advantages, the literature identifies higher status and stronger responsiveness of policies, new forms of leadership allowing innovative and dynamic styles of governing, as well as stronger charisma, personality, and commitment to a policy effectiveness (Allum, Cilento, 2001). Much more often researchers refer to politicisation as one of the key impediments to successful administrative development, due to a risk of decision-making subordinated to fulfilling particular interests of politicians rather than long-term development strategies (Peters, 2013; Shepherd et al., 2014).

However, researchers acknowledge that the concept is loosely defined, resulting in ambiguity in its understanding and interpretation. For example Wilde (2011, p. 560) has suggested a distinction between politicisation of EU institutions, EU decision-making processes and European integration. Politicisation in this context is related to the consideration of how the EU affairs become an issue acknowledged in national politics and media, and therefore it is not relevant for this research. Some kinds of politicisation are relevant to this thesis and these are briefly introduced below. Debate on the implications of politicisation for policy performance is still open.



## Structural politicisation and staff turnover

According to Peters (2013, p. 16), politicisation is often understood as “the substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining of members of the public service”. This structural aspect of politicisation has been extended by other authors (Bellò, Spano, 2015; Mulgan, 1998; Weller, 1989; Williams, 1985). A concept associated with this type of politicisation is **party patronage** in civil service appointments. A typical indicator of politicisation in this context is **staff turnover** among senior civil service after elections, and the assessment of political relations of civil servants.

Some researchers argued that post-communist countries have had more politicised civil service than western countries (e.g. Fink-Hafner, 2014). In this context, an example of a study in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) is presented below (Meyer-Sahling, Veen, 2012). From this perspective, Poland and Slovakia are the most politicised countries in this part of Europe (see Table 2).

**Table 2 Overall politicisation of the senior civil service**

Country	Depth of appointments <sup>3</sup>	Size of ministerial cabinets <sup>4</sup>	Turnover after elections <sup>5</sup> (%)	Experience in politics <sup>4</sup> (%)	Political Contacts <sup>4</sup> (%)	Overall country score <sup>6</sup>
Poland	Grey area	>5	70–89	30–49	50–69	<b>66</b>
Slovakia	Political	<5	70–89	30–49	50–69	<b>66</b>
Hungary	Grey area	>5	30–49	30–49	30–49	<b>54</b>
Czech Republic	Grey area	>5	30–49	10–29	30–49	<b>50</b>
Slovenia	Grey area	<5	50–69	30–49	30–49	<b>48</b>
Latvia	Grey area	<5	10	10	30–49	<b>28</b>
Lithuania	Grey area	<5	10	10	10–29	<b>24</b>
Estonia	Non-political	<5	10	10	10–29	<b>14</b>

Source: elaborated by the author on the basis of (Meyer-Sahling, Veen, 2012, p. 9)

<sup>3</sup> Non-political ¼ 0; grey area ¼ 2.5; political ¼ 5

<sup>4</sup> No cabinets ¼ 0; less than five members ¼ 2.5; five or more members ¼ 5.

<sup>5</sup> Less than 10% ¼ 0; 10–29% ¼ 1; 30–49% ¼ 2; 50–69% ¼ 3; 70–89% ¼ 4; 90% or more ¼ 5

<sup>6</sup> The sum of the five variables was standardised to 100.

## **Administrative politicisation**

Alongside the traditional perspective based on structural politicisation through politicised civil service appointments, research has also highlighted a process-related dimension of politicisation, associating it with the “use of public service for political purposes”. Eichbaum and Shaw (2008, p. 343) have defined this phenomenon as ‘administrative politicisation’. They point out various means of exerting political influence or control over administrative processes, for example surrounding the circulation of information, influencing operating objectives, and the replacement of managers in decision-making. Some authors have explored politicisation of policy-making processes (Bellò, Spano, 2015; Mulgan, 2007; Weller, 1989). These studies have observed procedures increasing political control over different stages of public policies implementation, for example influencing regulations, procurement and tendering, access to public goods, as well as decisions on operation objectives and resource allocation. This political impact on policy process is strongly connected to the scope of this research.

Research has identified a range of variables that can potentially explain the occurrence of administrative politicisation. Some authors emphasise multi-level systems of policy implementation (Oosterwaal, Torenvlied, 2009) characterised by unclear responsibilities and lack of transparency in the sharing of risk and accountability. Other authors draw on the concept of asymmetries in information, capacity and funding at different levels and the principle-agent dynamic that assesses changes in human resources and strategic objectives (Grossman, Hart, 1983). These approaches assume that the decrease of strength of administrative resources and responsibilities increases the scope for political influence. Other literature focuses specifically on institutional relationships between politicians and civil servants, differentiating between a neutral competence model (Kaufman, 1956) and a politically responsive model.

Finally, research analyses levels of conflict and ambiguity in the implementation of specific policies (Exworthy, Powell, 2004) and identifies four categories of policy implementation that can influence the scope for politicisation (Matland, 1995). Two of these are especially relevant for this research: administrative implementation, in which outcomes are determined by resources, low political interference, low ambiguity, low conflict; and, politicised implementation, characterised by outcomes decided by political power, low ambiguity and high conflict which creates a danger of symbolic implementation. All four types are visualised in the Figure 5, presented below.

Figure 5 Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix: Policy Implementation Process

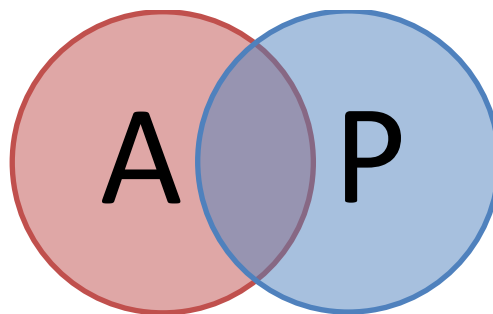
		Conflict	
		Low	High
Ambiguity	Low	Administrative	Political
	High	Experimental	Symbolic

Source: (Matland, 1995, p. 160)

### Purple zone

Some researchers build on the traditional Administrative-Political Dichotomy, and observe that the boundaries between these two domains are often blurry. They have visualised the interplay between administrative and political actors in the concept of the ‘purple zone’, the domain where the spheres of influence of two rationalities meet: political (blue) and administrative (red) (Bhatta, 2015; Matheson, 1998). Literature from a range of these theoretical fields, identify this ‘purple zone’ as the location of politicisation processes. The concept has been visualised in the Figure 6.

Figure 6 Visualisation of the ‘purple zone’ concept



A: Administrative influences, P: Political influences. Source: own elaboration based on (Bhatta, 2015; Matheson, 1998)

### 1.2.2. Politicisation of EU cohesion policy

This thesis focuses on a particular policy tool, Integrated Territorial Investments within the EU cohesion policy (CP). So far there have not been any studies on political influences in the implementation of the particular tool, but the politicisation of CP in general has been in the interest of researchers already for a while. CP is a redistributive policy, in which EU funds are allocated to each country, and then divided by national governments into regional or national thematic operational programmes. Eligible organisations can then apply for funds from

particular programmes, and projects to be funded are selected following specific criteria. Researchers in various countries observed that this process tends to be politicised. This phenomenon by some other researchers in the strand of redistributive politics was called ‘**pork-barrel politics**’ (Bloom, Petrova, 2013), suggesting that *politicians use political control over resources to reward target constituencies*, supporting their electoral interest, as well as their political allies.

For example Dotti (2016) examined the role of unwritten factors of CP implementation in the context of west European countries in the years 1999-2006. He found that regions whose political representatives had the same political affiliation as national government acquired more EU funds per capita than those who were not aligned. He also analysed political stability influence on the character of EU investments. Also Bloom and Petrova (2013) observe that EU funds in Latvia and Bulgaria were invested mostly in wealthier municipalities, and in those whose leaders supported national ruling coalition parties in the previous elections. Similar tendencies were identified in Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Poland (Medve-Balint, 2016). Dellmuth and Stoffel (2012) focus on the ambiguity of assessment criteria used when selecting projects to be funded by the EU, and provide evidence that electoral interests of subregional actors distort the allocation of the funds.

Some researchers directly focused on **corruption** and **clientelism** in EU funds allocation (Bouda et al., 2013; Fazekas, Toth, 2016; Grosse, 2006; Milio, 2008, 2011a, 2011b). Others observe different types of political gains and fraud of EU funds. For example Surubaru (2017a, 2017b) identified a strong influence of politics on CP implementation in Bulgaria and Romania. He measured politicisation with the scope of party patronage among key senior staff involved in EU funds allocation, and with the number of irregularities - formal appeals to project selection decisions showing the scope of political interferences in this process.

Other strand of literature focused on **cross-border and macro-regional cooperation** within CP, mostly through the INTERREG programme<sup>7</sup>. It is particularly relevant for this research, as in such programmes the authorities of neighbouring regions (across various countries) collaborate on particular projects. This territorial-based, inter-organisational cooperation across administrative boundaries constitutes a similar characteristic to the Integrated Territorial Investments. In this context, Sielker (2016a, 2016b) has found that political factors can create challenges to pursuing cooperation in macro-regions, e.g. due to **power struggles** and attempts

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<sup>7</sup> More information on INTERREG: [www.interregeurope.eu/about-us/facts-and-figures](http://www.interregeurope.eu/about-us/facts-and-figures)

to hinder the development of joint strategies. She highlighted that the commitment of political stakeholders was crucial for the success of collaboration, e.g. by setting up **ambitious priorities** of joint strategies. Other studies on cross-border collaboration focus on non-political factors creating additional challenges, e.g. geographical boundaries (sea, mountains), language barriers, financial and organisational differences, and the multitude of actors (e.g. Vidal, 2018).

It can be argued that some additional factors are especially visible in **Central East European countries** (CEE):<sup>8</sup> These include:

- lack of experience in managing EU funds in public administration,
- the substantive scale of policy, and
- ambiguity and conflict during the implementation process.

Research acknowledges that post-communist (Meyer-Sahling, Veen, 2012) and post-Napoleonic (Bellò, Spano, 2015) countries may be more politicised because of weaker administrative capacity. Under CP, many of the structures for the management and implementation of EU Funds have been established over a comparatively short period of time. Some organisations have had little time to adapt to their new roles. Some observers note that responses to pressure for organisational change in public institutions have tended to be ad hoc and politicised rather than rationally thought out, and this has had an impact on the administration of CP. More generally, high staff turn-over, in large part due to low public sector pay, is a particular problem, which reduces stability, experience and ‘institutional memory’ within key institutions, weakens capacity to manage CP and increases the scope for politicisation (McMaster, Novotny, 2005). The relationship between political influence and weaknesses in administrative capacity was also observed in other studies, e.g. (Verheijen, 2007).

The substantive scale of policy is relative to domestic investment in development. The allocation of CP funding is automatically skewed towards less developed Member States and regions and Cohesion policy as a share of total domestic spending on economic development is high in CEE in comparison to older member states in western Europe (Monfort, 2012). This guarantees strong EU and domestic political scrutiny of CP spending in CEE Member States.

The literature indicates that the scope for politicisation is extended where a given policy is associated with a high degree of political conflict or ambiguity (i.e. uncertainty surrounding

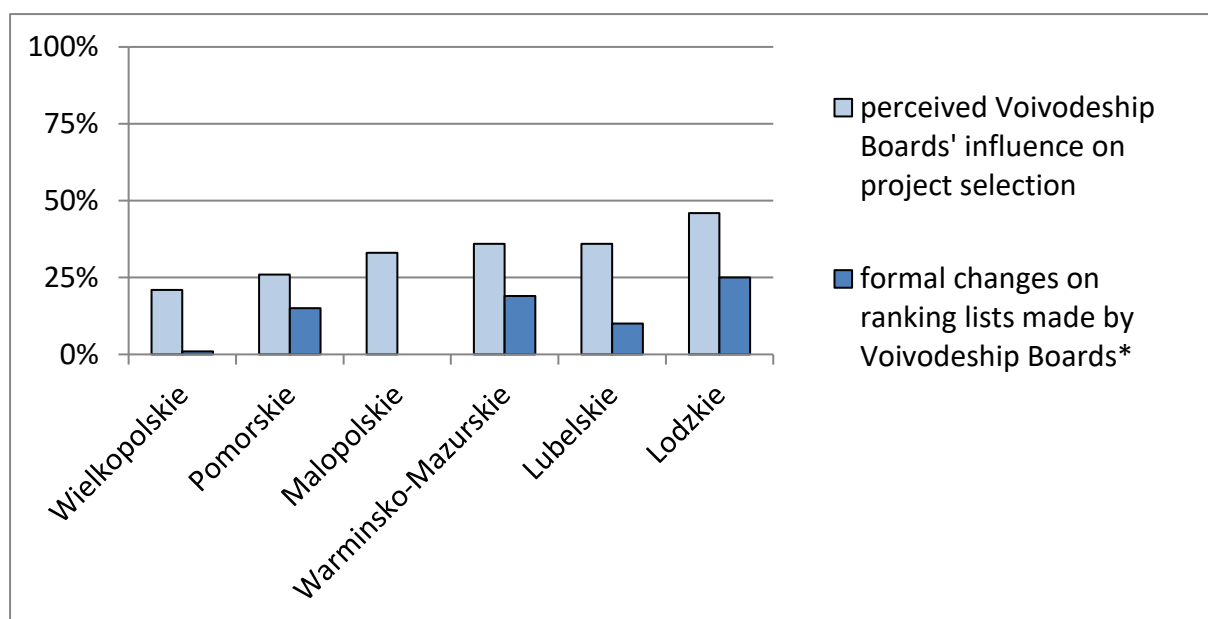
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<sup>8</sup> Several of these arguments have also been applied to the case of Southern European Member States.

policy goals and/or means of implementation) (Exworthy, Powell, 2004). These factors are present in the case of CP in CEE, concerning the implementation approach and strategic objectives.

In the **Polish context**, literature suggests that the political influence, at least in the formal dimension, was the strongest right after accession of Poland to EU in 2004. Swianiewicz et al., (2008) described the process of EU funds distribution in the 2004-2006 period, suggesting that the political decision-makers at the national or regional level were engaged in a politically-driven process of the allocation of the EU funds. This was supported by Grosse (2006) who assessed high corruption risks in the system of EU funds allocation. Swianiewicz’s team observed that political influence on policy-making can be direct, for example through changing decisions formally, or indirect, for instance by influencing decisions made by civil servants. They call these two forms of politicisation **open** and **closed authoritarianism** (2010, p. 247). The gap between those two forms of influence can be observed in Figure 7. Later research in relation to CP implementation in Poland suggests further formalisation and professionalisation of this process, e.g. by eliminating the formal possibility of regional marshals’ influence on project ranking lists (Swianiewicz et al., 2013). However, there is still an expectation that the political interests in influencing EU funds distribution remain, and is executed in an informal way. This aspect is in the area of interest of this Thesis and will be analysed on the basis of the collected empirical material in Chapters 5-8.

**Figure 7 Difference between perceived and factual politicisation of project selection within the Polish Integrated Regional Operational Programme 2004-2006**



\*No data for formal changes in Malopolskie. Source: own elaboration on the basis of (Swianiewicz et al., 2010, p. 80)

## 2. Research design and methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodology. It describes the research design and the rationale behind it. This is important due to the chosen interpretive research design, which led to changes during the research process in the role of literature in the process and in turn allowed scope for modifications of research questions. The chosen design also set specific standards to ensure trustworthiness.

I use the ‘first person’ voice in this chapter. Following the choice of ethnographic data collection methods, the academic exercise of field research became closely linked to my experience as a researcher. This is important to emphasise as the lived experience of the research process informed key decisions on data collection and analysis.

The first decision was to choose research design on the basis of the identified gaps in the literature, formulated research puzzle (see Introduction), consequent initial research questions and the methodology that would allow collecting relevant data. The puzzle led to the decision to take a neutral approach towards political influence, incorporating the scope to assess positive and negative aspects, and to explore the informal aspects of political influences on EU cohesion policy (CP) implementation. The narrow operationalisation of political factors in politicisation literature led to searching for a multi-faceted definition of political influence, and exploring different manifestations in a particular context rather than limiting the research to a particular theoretical definition.

Considering the considerations above, I formulated the initial research questions, which were subsequently reformulated following the chosen research design (see Sections 2.2.2 and 2.3.1). The initial research questions were:

- 1. What are the political factors involved in the EU cohesion policy implementation?**
- 2. In what way do they influence the implementation process formally and informally?**

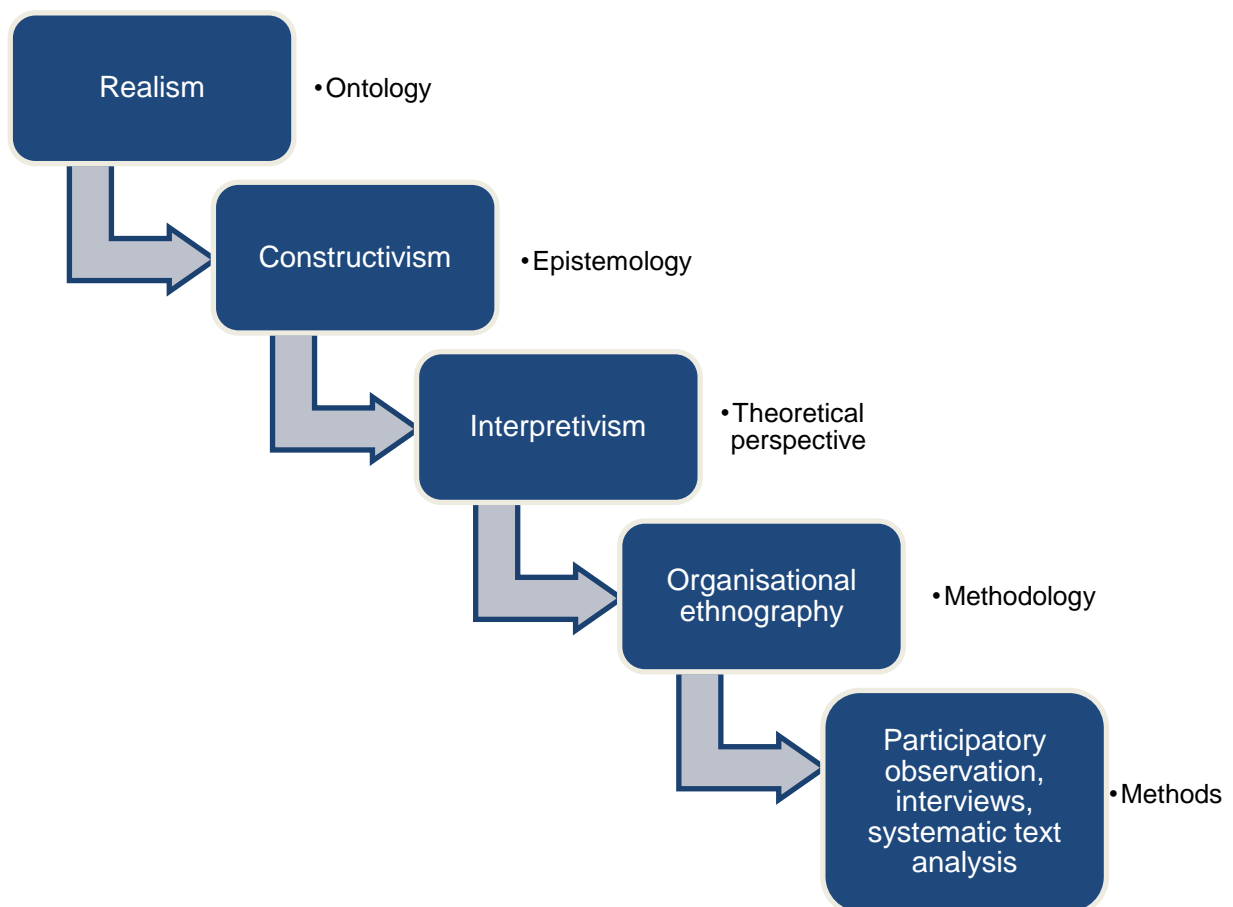
Such research questions led to the decision of using a methodology that allows in-depth exploration of the process of policy implementation at a micro-level, and collecting the data that will enable answering the questions. After considering various methodologies and research design models, the most valuable for the purposes of the research was the interpretive approach.

In the first Section, I delineate the characteristics of the chosen research design, including ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods used in this research. The section finishes with trustworthiness standards applied in this research. In the second Section I describe the data collection process, including the exploration of the research questions and the and a description of the methods used. In the last Section, I describe the data analysis process, explaining the role of literature following completion of the field research and consequent final research questions, and delineating the method of data analysis.

## 2.1. Characteristics of the interpretive research design

The thesis uses an interpretive research design, described below according to the typical scheme proposed by Crotty (1998). This has five main elements: ontology, epistemology, theoretical approach, methodology and methods of data collection and analysis. Each element chosen for this research has been illustrated in the Figure 8, and elaborated below.

Figure 8 Research design





### 2.1.1. Ontology, epistemology and theoretical perspective of the research

The thesis is based on **realism**, understood as ‘*an ontological notion asserting that realities exist outside the mind*’ (Crotty, 1998). The assumption is that the world exists independently of human consciousness, contrary to nominalism or idealism stating that the existence of the world without a mind is not conceivable.

Epistemologically, the research draws on **constructivism**. As a theory of knowledge, it rejects the existence of an objective truth. It assumes that the meaning of things is constructed by people, and can differ in various contexts, depending on the subjects who define it. This assumption has important implications for the research, as the results offer an interpretation of a studied reality. This is crucial in filling the identified literature gaps, as it allows the research to go beyond limited (and sometimes contradictory) explorations of politicisation and its impacts, treating the concept as open to varied interpretations in different contexts rather than imposing a rigid theoretical framework. The aim is to identify the meaning of the concept in a specific context, accepting that it might be different from their definitions in literature and other settings (Crotty, 1998). In this way, the constructivist epistemology facilitates the research in identifying what politicisation means ‘on the ground’, how it is understood by local policy actors and how it influences their actions and policy implementation.

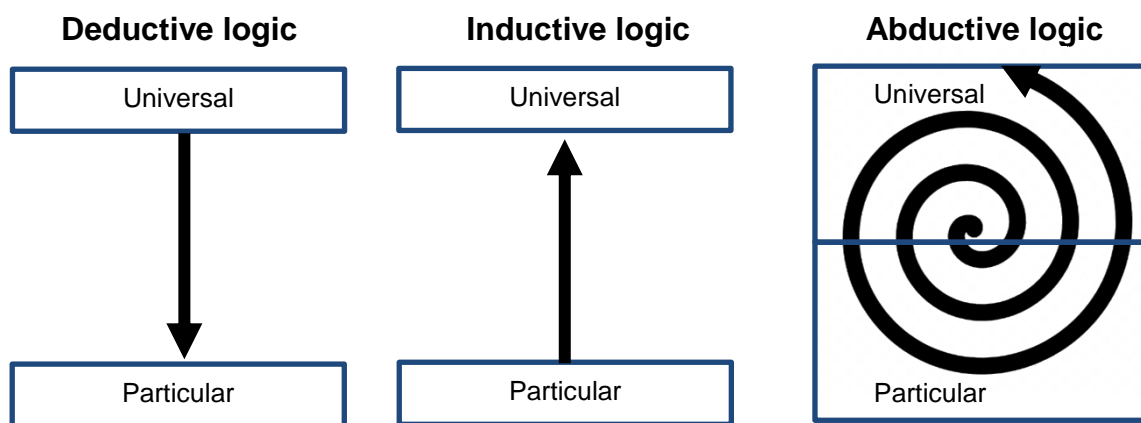
In terms of theoretical perspective, the methodological approach is based on **interpretivism**, in particular ‘symbolic interactionism’. This emphasises the importance of social relations within the studied reality, e.g. language, inter-relations, communication, existing values and perceptions. The central issue of symbolic interactionism is the possibility of putting a researcher amidst members of a studied community, exploring and interpreting the interactions that they are experiencing. This has clear benefits for research on processes and interactions influencing EU funds implementation at the local level.

An ‘**abductive**’ logic of enquiry is increasingly employed within this interpretivist methodological approach (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012, p. 26). This is based on the assumption that the researcher’s reasoning follows various factors in an iterative way through often changing paths, rather than being set in a single, pre-determined direction. One of the first detailed descriptions of this logic of enquiry was set out by Charles Peirce (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012, p. 27). According to him, ‘abductive’ reasoning begins with a **puzzle**, a surprise, or a tension, which is then studied with a view to explicate it by identifying the conditions that would make the puzzle less perplexing and more of a “normal” or “natural”

event'. Also **this research has begun with a puzzle**, resulting from contradictions between various strands of literature and reality (see the Introduction).

This means that the **research design does not start with a hypothesis, but rather with a question with no precisely expected answer**. Rather, researchers try to find possible explanations of the puzzle using both practice and theory, often changing the source of information, going back and forth to the field and to the literature. For this reason, abductive reasoning is sometimes visualised in a circular or spiral pattern, contrary to linear process characterising both inductive and deductive logics. The differences between the three types of inquiry logic have been visualised in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Three types of the logic of inquiry



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012, p. 26-34)

The application of an abductive logic of inquiry, has significant implications for this research design. Importantly, it changes the **role of theory**. In the initial stage of preparing the research, a review of the literature on politicisation informed initial expectations and helped articulate the research puzzle or dilemma. It also indicated some tentative research questions prior to fieldwork. During the fieldwork, it was important to identify and explore the misfits between these expectations and lived experiences, often simply called 'surprises'. In order to explain these surprises, it was necessary to revisit the theoretical framework in order to solve the research dilemmas in the best possible way.

Thus, a research design following the abductive logic inevitably changes between the stages of preparations, fieldwork and analysis. Researchers specialised in interpretive research design stress that 'changing a design in light of field realities would be part of the process', and 'the researcher might then turn to theoretical literature to search for an explanation' (Schwartz-

Shea, Yanow, 2012, p. 34). This would not be possible in the typical positivist research design, in which changing the research question demands starting research from the beginning.

In the case of this research, the initial research questions were informed by literature on politicisation, which is a relatively limited field, particularly in terms of qualitative research. The abductive logic allowed the research orientation to evolve. Specifically, the importance of collaboration frameworks in explaining the role of political factors in the design and delivery of EU cohesion policy (CP) became evident during the fieldwork and this led to the use of the Institutional Collective Action framework for analysis and the adaptation of the research questions.

### **2.1.2. Organisational ethnography as a methodology**

The research used ethnography as a methodology to study the role of political factors in administrative organisations and the behaviour of their employees. Ethnography is embedded in interpretivist–constructivist approaches to research design (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012). It is based on the assumption that actors construct their own reality on the basis of their beliefs and interpretations, which strongly influence their behaviour, often more than objective facts. Ethnography aims to explore the meaning of concepts and phenomena in reality through the researchers' personal presence in the particular place and their interactions with researched groups and individuals. As argued by Malinowski (1922), in order to understand a different culture, researchers should spend substantial time with the studied groups, so that they capture the 'native' point of view on life. This proposition built the foundation of participatory observation as a research method.

More specifically, **organisational ethnography** can be defined as 'an ethnographic study of organisations and their organising processes' (Ybema et al., 2009). The argument is that organisational studies have tended largely to ignore the ordinary 'everyday' experiences of people working in organisations and that ethnographic approaches can provide in-depth and up-close understandings of how the 'everyday-ness' of work is organised and how, in turn, work itself organises people and the societies they inhabit.

The characteristics of organisational ethnography are as following (Ybema et al., 2009):

1. Combined fieldwork methods: observing, conversing, reading
2. At the scene – first-hand observations and experiences
3. Hidden and harsh dimensions: power and emotions

4. Context-sensitive and actor-centred analysis
5. Meaning-making – language, concepts values, feelings from the field
6. Multivocality – capturing tensions between research participants

Research on the role and impact of organisational interactions in EU CP has been based mostly on quantitative, statistical data that often lacks contextual meaning and may not capture the role of political factors in deeper processes or relationships in particular territories (Demidov, 2016). Recent studies focusing on the implementation of territorial instruments in CP have called for more qualitative indicators, highlighting the need to explore less tangible factors in their design and delivery (Demidov, 2015; Dotti, 2016; Ferry, McMaster, 2013; Ferry, McMaster, 2018). Consequently, policy interventions designed solely on quantitative data may potentially lack the tools to explore key mechanisms that most accurately explain the processes at work.

Ethnographic methods can fill this gap by gathering qualitative data at the micro-level of policy implementation. Such in-depth approaches capture territorial and organisational interrelations, revealing the less tangible challenges and benefits of particular policy instruments, explaining the reasons for their success or failure in particular localities, exploring the role of political factors, including the informal as well as formal aspects of governance, and assessing the rationality and quality of EU-funded projects. On this basis it was assumed that ethnography can contribute to a stronger analytical framework and more relevant policy recommendations, allowing the design of more tailored, human-centred policy interventions.

### **2.1.3. Ethnographic methods of data collection**

The most typical methods of data collection used in ethnography are participatory observation and interviews (Emerson et al., 2011; Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012). Both methods were used in this research.

#### **Participatory observation**

In the first method, researchers enter the community or organisation under study for a significant period of time and interact with local actors (e.g. policy-makers). During observation, researchers gather a wide variety of data: field notes, photos, recordings, videos, documents, etc. (Galman, 2007). They immerse themselves in the context, accompanying

research participants during everyday activities, and trying to understand their reality. In order to do this, researchers can take three possible roles (Gans, 1976):

1. **anonymous observer**: when the researcher does not reveal his or her purpose when interacting with the environment being studied;
2. **researcher participant**: when local actors are informed that the researcher is conducting a particular study;
3. **participant in a role**: when a researcher enters the environment being studied in a particular role, e.g. through employment in the organisation being studied, and fulfils the obligations of this role while conducting observations for the research.

Depending on the chosen role, researchers have various levels of access to different types of information, which can influence the reality being studied in various ways. In the first scenario, “anonymous observer”, the data collected will be least influenced by the researcher, as local actors will not realise that they are being observed and will behave in the usual way. For this reason, in some countries (e.g. the United States) academics prefer this approach, while researchers in other countries (e.g. the United Kingdom) argue that it does not comply with ethical standards. The second scenario, “researcher participant”, complies with these standards, as it usually requires the local actors’ consent before participating in the study. However, this might influence local actors’ behaviour, and they may not give the researcher access to all events and information. This issue of access is usually solved in the case of conducting observations in a chosen role (“participant in a role”), as the researcher acts as a typical employee. Nonetheless, what kind of data can be used for research purposes still needs to be agreed with the management.

For the purpose of studying public administration, participatory observation can be conducted in the second or third role. The first one is difficult due to not being able to stay anonymous in the public offices while having access to essential information. The third scenario allows civil servants to conduct observation while fulfilling their own jobs. Such studies provide a way of gathering data without delegating a study to external institutions. However, in the case of this research it did not seem suitable to employ myself as a civil servant, mostly for limited time purposes. Considering these arguments, the chosen option for this research was the **researcher participant**, which had the challenge of negotiating access and trust building. This required a good preparation, reflexivity, and rapport building, which I approached thoroughly (see the Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3).

## Interviews

Another method used in ethnography is the conducting of interviews. A typical ethnographic interview differs from standard interview methods in the fact that a non-structured scenario is adopted, in which local actors determine the order and scope of the topics discussed. In public administration, however, interviews are often conducted with high-level officials who have limited time, and therefore have to be more organised and targeted.

Thus, organisational ethnography typically includes a **mix of the following kinds of interviews** (Ybema et al., 2009):

1. semi-structured,
2. in-depth,
3. expert.

This requires comprehensive preparation and flexibility on the part of the researcher, but also allows more extensive, detailed data to be collected than from structured interviews. The interviews conducted for this research drew on elements from all three kinds mentioned above, adapting to the interviewees involved in order to maximise the quality of data collection.

### 2.1.4. Ensuring the trustworthiness of the research

The ethnographic methodology designed for the research was based on extensive preparation, including qualitative methods courses at the University of Strathclyde, and intensive ethnographic courses at the Central European University<sup>9</sup>. The courses included both theory and practical exercises of conducting ethnographic fieldwork, highlighting some solutions to common challenges but also the importance of being able to improvise and use social skills to interpret a situation and decide how to act. This preparation was crucial in terms of ensuring the trustworthiness of the research.

Traditional concepts used to gauge trustworthiness are: objectivity, validity, reliability, generalisability and replicability. These characteristics are rooted in positivist approaches and deductive research logics, but are of a limited applicability in assessing interpretive, abductive research and ethnographic methods (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012). Thus, interpretative

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<sup>9</sup> The author completed two week-long courses: 1. Field Research I: Practical Introduction to Ethnographic Fieldwork; 2. Field Research II: Issues in Political, Policy, and Organizational Ethnography and Participant Observation. They were taught during the ECPR Summer School in Methods and Techniques organised by the European Consortium for Political Research in 2017 at the Central European University.

research designs must address each of these issues in a specific way. A summary of the comparison between the evaluative criteria for trustworthiness typically used in positivist and interpretivist research designs has been presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 Evaluative criteria typically used in assessing the trustworthiness of positivist and interpretive research designs**

Positivist research design	Interpretive research design	Application to research
Objectivity	<b>Reflexivity, positionality, rapport building</b>	Reflection on how 'native' I am to the field, and how my characteristics influence the data I can collect. Conclusions resulted in a positionality strategy to negotiate maximum access to data. Reflexivity continued during data collection and interpretation.
Validity	<b>Inter-textuality, member-checking</b>	Diverse interviewees and municipalities visited, comparison with documents, checking the understanding of concepts with research participants during fieldwork
Reliability	<b>Transparency</b>	Reporting on the steps taken during data collection, preparation of the data for analysis, coming back to the literature after data collection, and data analysis
Generalisability	<b>Contextuality</b>	Thorough choice of case studies, maximising data collection with direct contact to local actors, who have the best context-specific knowledge
Replicability	<b>Systematicity</b>	Ensuring academic rigour and explanation of decisions taken at key moments of the research, especially choice of research design, case studies, data collection (daily diary, weekly reflections), and data analysis.

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012

### **Reflexivity and positionality**

**Objectivity** is important in positivist research to prevent researcher's bias. This is often guaranteed by physical and emotional distance, as well as additional controls for organising and carrying out survey interviews. Nevertheless, since the 1960s research has indicated the potential for 'confirmation bias' in positivist research as both the researchers and research subjects may look for evidence confirming their prior beliefs (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012 after Wason, 1960, Hergovic et al. 2010). A strength of interpretive research is that it acknowledges the potential for bias, highlighting that the presence of a researcher is a primary 'instrument' of data generation, and their presence is 'inevitable and in some cases invaluable' (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012, pp. 109-111), and that it looks for ways to ensure trustworthiness regardless. Interpretive research is based on a physical presence in the field, as

its primary goal is to understand the research participants. Personal interactions are a key means of data collection, which is analysed using researcher's interpretations.

As there is a risk that researcher's prior knowledge and personal characteristics will influence the research too much, interpretive research calls for **reflexivity**, demanding an explicit self-analysis of how researcher's identity and activity may have affected data collection and analysis. Various aspects are important in this context: positionality, 'rapport building', and physical positioning (Emerson et al., 2011).

**Positionality**, acknowledges that researcher's characteristics matter in terms of building trust and access to data. It matters how people react to researchers presence, how much they trust them, and how open they are. This influences access to information and determines data collection. Moreover, the researcher's background also influences observations and interpretations – how one will understand different situations in the field, and how they will be assessed. Therefore, it matters who the researcher is and how participants will treat him or her. Reflexivity regarding positionality was an important part of preparations for the research, during data collection, as well as during data analysis.

'**Rapport building**' concerns the strategy to build trust and relationship with the members of organisations or communities in which one conducts fieldwork. It is important because it can strongly influence access to information, and even more broadly the access to the field: to get the agreement for conducting research. The more participants trust the researcher, the more trustworthy data the researcher will gain. Therefore, it was important to elaborate a strategy for approaching building rapport – first with gatekeepers, and during fieldwork also with other research participants.

**Physical positioning** of the researcher during data collection is important in order to have access to information relevant for the research, and varying their source. It matters where the researcher is placed in order to gather observations valuable for the research. Therefore, during fieldwork it was important to negotiate access to various spots of observations, and attend different meetings of research participants.

More detailed reflexivity applied in this research is described in Sections 2.2.2. and 2.2.3.



## **Intertextuality and member-checking**

**Validity** is a further test of the trustworthiness of research findings. This is related to the indicators used to measure the concepts and relationships covered by the research. If indicators are not valid for measuring the variables, the results will provide an inaccurate assessment of the tested causality. However, this is not relevant for interpretive approaches, as it is not based on predefined variables, and understandings of causal relationships and concepts are refined during field research. Interpretive research measures and assesses the validity of concepts by following the research participants' understanding through techniques of intertextuality and member-checking (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012).

**Intertextuality** demands that the meaning of concepts is compared across various sources of data, to identify patterns in understanding and inter-subjective perception rather than individual opinions. In this research, this was achieved by collecting data through interviews, participatory observation and relevant documents, in order to compare what people tell with what they actually do. Moreover, a high number of interviews covered a diverse range of respondents, allowing assessment of how the understanding of certain concepts by politicians differed from that of civil servants and other research participants. Concepts that were particularly important to understand were 'politicisation' and other associated cases of political influence, as well as 'collaboration' and the 'benefits' resulting from it.

**Member checking** ensures that the researcher managed to comprehend the language and concepts and reflected research participants' points of view. This is usually done by sending pieces of text written by a researcher to research participants so that they 'validate' the researcher's understanding. However, in this research the main concepts, e.g. politicisation, were of a sensitive character. Sending pieces of text about this topics to local politicians may have risked contrary effects – denial rather than validation, as they may have felt endangered. For this reason, member-checking was done through an iterative process during fieldwork, in informal conversations that would not be possible afterwards due to physical distance.

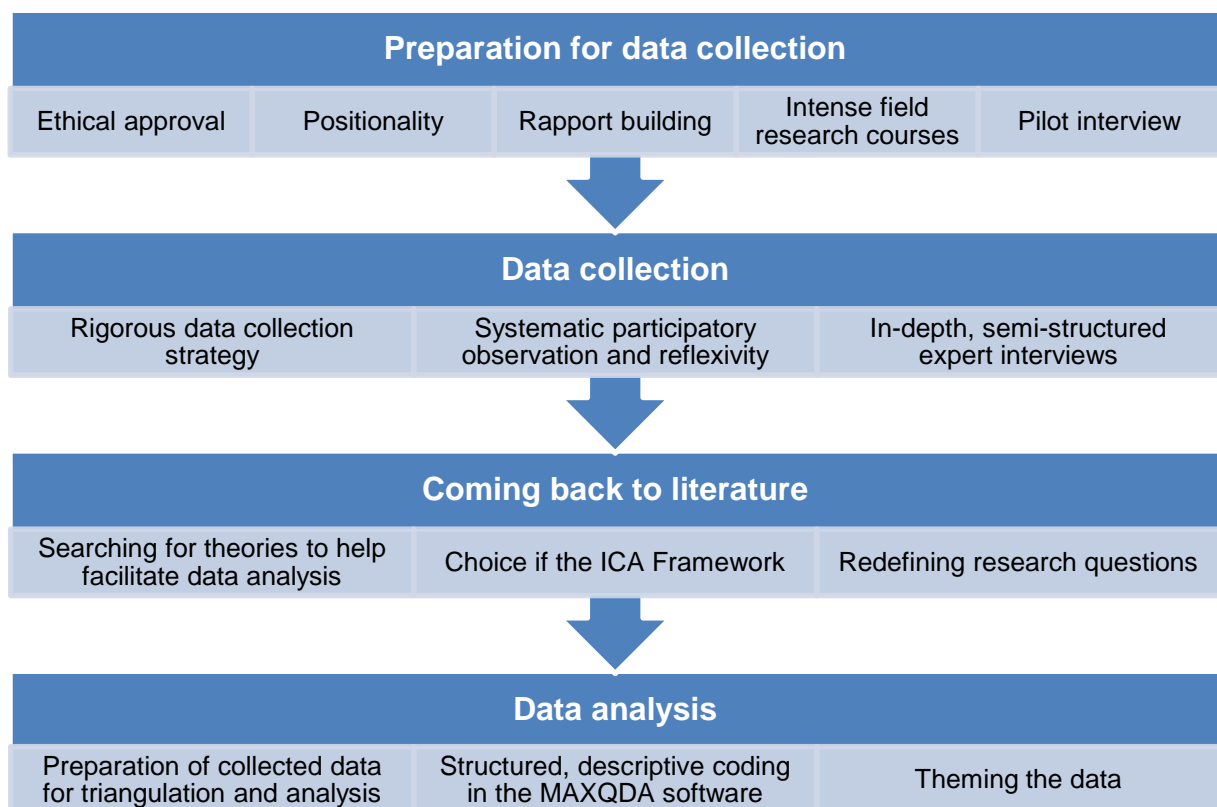
## **Transparency**

**Reliability** is concerned with ensuring that the same measurement procedure conducted by multiple researchers will determine the same result. For example 'inter-coder reliability' is often assessed when conducting coding exercises, in order to check whether the researchers assess the textual data in the same way, following the given categories. In interpretive research

design this criterion is not relevant, as the aim of the research is to provide one of multiple possible interpretations of the reality, which is based on the researcher’s interaction with the data, using their unique knowledge and characteristics. Instead, interpretive research provides an alternative standard of **transparency**, according to which researchers need to provide a detailed explanation of how they conducted data collection and analysis (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012).

For this research, this process included a series of elements under main four steps, as illustrated in Figure 10. Each of them is described in detail in the relevant subchapters, in order to ensure maximum transparency and rigour.

Figure 10 Main steps involved in the empirical research



### Contextuality

**Generalisability** allows research to draw conclusions for a broader context from a more narrow, representative study. This criterion for research trustworthiness is also less relevant for interpretive approaches, as it contradicts the constructivist epistemological assumption that meaning is created by local actors and can differ in multiple places. Instead, the value of interpretive research is **contextuality**, which aims at exploring in-depth a narrow part of reality

rather than determining laws present in many different contexts. The added value of the data produced under this approach is their depth rather than breadth. The ethnographic methodology employed depends on the placement of the researcher for a significant amount of time in a specific setting. Time is needed for the researcher to fully immerse in the new context, build connections with local actors, gain access to data and truly understand the local reality (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012).

Contextuality is important for a study of local political influence on EU cohesion policy because the data are very place-dependent, and factors proven to matter in one locality may differ from those elsewhere. That is why I **carefully selected the cases** (two different regions with varying models of ITI implementation), so that the analysed processes could be observed in different contexts, although operating within the same legal and organisational framework (see Section 2.2.1). Additional efforts were made to conduct the field research at the city level, in order to gain good access to actors directly involved in ITI implementation. In order to fully understand the local context and build relevant connections, the decision was made to spend a **significant amount of time** in each of the regions (5 and 6 weeks). In order to get the **desired depth of data**, the data was collected at the very source of the examined processes – through interactions with numerous local civil servants and politicians.

### **Systematicity**

In positivist research, **replicability** is concerned with whether the results of a study would be the same when conducted at another time, as the laws that they are supposed to discover should be universal, and not dependent on context or researcher. By nature, interpretive studies are not entirely replicable, as the data collected depend on the time and place of field research, and are influenced by the researcher conducting the study. In interpretive research design researchers are by definition part of the field when collecting the data, and their characteristics have an acknowledged influence. The aim is to provide **insight into this particular moment of reality**, rather than discover replicable laws (Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, 2012). Nevertheless, interpretive research designs can be repeated in various contexts and compared, although they will always differ in terms of at least one of the characteristics, as a single researcher cannot be present in multiple places at the same time.

An alternative standard of interpretive research design is **systematicity**, in order to ensure that the study has been conducted following a clear research strategy, with explanations provided

for every step of the research process. In this research, the crucial moments to ensure systematicity were:

1. The choice of research design following the gaps in the initial literature and the puzzle (as explained in the beginning of this Chapter)
2. The cases selection (see Section 2.2.1)
3. The preparation for field research (reflexivity, rapport building, see Section 2.2.2)
4. Systematic data collection (rigour of taking notes, division from reflexions and interpretations, see Section 2.2.3)
5. Choice of theoretical framework (see Chapter 1) and updating research questions
6. Systematic data analysis (rigour of coding, see Section 2.2.4)

## 2.2. Data collection

Data collection involved field research conducted between 1<sup>st</sup> of October and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2017 in two Polish metropolitan areas: Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS), and the Lublin Functional Area in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (LFA). Fieldwork consisted of:

- **11 weeks of participatory observation:** six weeks in CS (1.10-10.11.2017), and five weeks in LFA (12.11-21.12.2017), and
- **46 interviews:** 22 in CS and 24 in LFA.

In this section I provide a detailed account of the field research. First, I explain the rationale of the case study selection. Second, I describe how I prepared for data collection, reformulating the research question, reflecting on positionality and negotiating access to the field. In the last two subsections I present the data collection process, separately for each method: participatory observation and interviews.

### 2.2.1. Selection of cases

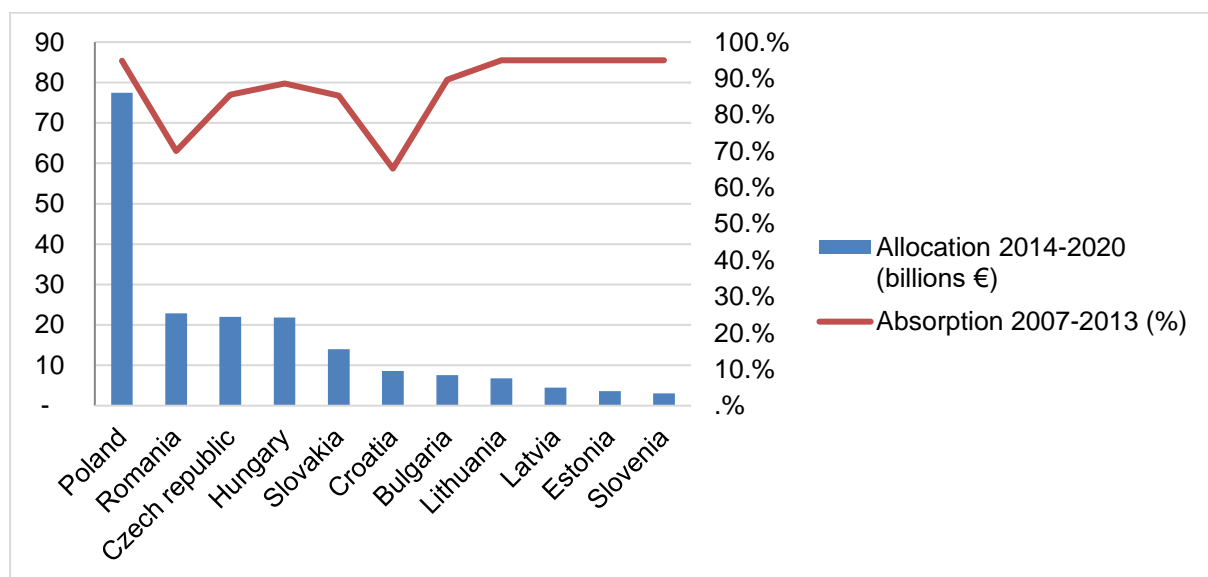
Following the research puzzle, the research was focusing on the implementation of EU cohesion policy, in particular its tool Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) (see Section 3.2). The initial literature review showed that politicisation of civil service and CP is stronger in **Central and Eastern Europe** (CEE) (see Section 1.2.2), due to lack of experience in managing EU funds in public administration, the substantive scale of policy, and ambiguity and conflict

during the implementation process. This created an assumption that the processes in question would be stronger and more visible during field research.

Among this group of countries, I chose to **focus on Poland**. First, next to Slovakia it was assessed in research as a country with the most politicised civil service (see Table 2). Second, researchers acknowledged political interventions in CP implementation in the past (see Figure 7), and although formally this process has been limited, academics highlighted that politicians' appetite to influence CP resources distribution was still high (e.g. Medve-Balint, 2016).

This was strengthened by the fact that Poland is by far **the biggest beneficiary of CP** in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 financial perspectives (see Figure 11), representing a unique scale of investment for the analysis of interactions between civil servants and politicians. EU and domestic political scrutiny is guaranteed in this case as successful CP implementation in Poland will ensure effectiveness of more than half of the funding invested in CP at the EU scale and the substantial majority of development funding in Poland. The scale of EU funds in Poland excludes the political significance of other regional development resources.

**Figure 11 Absorption and allocation of EU cohesion policy funds in CEE**



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the European Commission's data (collected from [www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu) 9.03.2016)

Moreover, Poland's **regionalised public administration** system and CP implementation arrangements also provide a robust institutional framework for this analysis. On the one hand, Poland's self-governing regions have received increasing powers over the past 15 years and they are now managing authorities for CP regional programmes. On the other hand, the regional level is relatively new and its powers and capacities are still developing, in comparison to

national and local levels. This context opens up the scope for comparative analysis of CP politicisation in different Polish regions with the same general institutional frameworks and administrative processes.

The final argument for choosing Poland was related to the will of ensuring the maximum quality of data collection. The **topic of political influence on CP was assessed as sensitive**, which led to an assumption that the language of communication during field research will matter for data collection, and communicating in a native language of the author can improve the quality of research.

### **Choice of the functional urban areas**

As explained in Section 3.2., Poland implements the ITI in functional urban areas (FUA). The research involves two FUA with varying characteristics. Although ITI as a tool had top-down character, FUA differed widely (see Table 16) in terms of four key aspects:

1. mode of project selection of ERDF projects<sup>10</sup> (competitive or non-competitive),
2. legal form (an association or an agreement),
3. socio-economic and cultural characteristics,
4. scale of the area and allocated resources.

The main rationale behind the choice was related to the first criterion. I expected that local politicians would want to influence the project selection within ITI implementation, and that **preselected projects** would be more politicised than those chosen in a usual competitive procedure. At the same time, I knew that there can be differences between the **formal and informal** political prerogatives in ITI implementation and project selection, and that I should be looking for the unofficial layer of the process beyond the official procedure. This provided ground for observing how politics matter in the context of politicisation expected to a higher and lower extent, which can be similar to the ‘least likely’ (Rohlfing, 2012) case study choice rationale. However, in interpretive research cases are not supposed to lead to generalisable conclusions (Rhodes, Corbett, 2020), but rather an in-depth analysis of the particular context (see Section 2.1.4).

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<sup>10</sup> ERDF constituted usually around 90% of the ITI allocation in each FUA, and allowed funding of ‘hard’ investments expected to attract political attention to a more extent than ESF-funded ‘soft’ projects (see Section 2.2.2 and 6.3.1).

Consequently, following the first criterion I chose **the only** FUA with the competitive mode in Poland for the selection of ERDF projects (CS), and one FUA with a non-competitive mode of project selection (LFA) in this regard.

The chosen metropolitan areas differ also in terms of the remaining three criteria mentioned above. Following the second one, I chose one inter-municipal association (CS) and one inter-municipal agreement (LFA). I expected that the legal form will affect the governance structure, and may shape the power relations differently, with the association being a more complex form.

The third criterion was important due to the differences between Polish regions in their socio-economic and cultural characteristics, in particular between the Western (better developed) and Eastern (less developed) parts of the country. I assumed that this may affect ITI implementation, varying the motivations, ambitions and behaviour of involved politicians and other actors. Consequently, I chose an area located in a Śląskie, a well-developed region (CS), and one in Lubelskie, one of the poorest regions in Poland (LFA).

Following the scale criterion, I expected higher political tensions in FUA with larger number of collaborating municipalities and a higher amount of allocated EU funds. I chose LFA, characterised with both aspects **close to average** among Polish FUA, and CS - the **largest** FUA in Europe considering both dimensions (Van der Zwet et al., 2017).

The analysis of FUA with a combination of suitable characteristics led to the choice of LFA and CS (see summary in Table 17, and a detailed description in Section 3.3). Both selected areas belong to core cities considered as metropolis in the Polish strategic documents. For this reason, in the thesis they will be called **metropolitan areas**. With the selected cases, I could have started preparations for field research, described in the next subsection.

### 2.2.2. Preparation for the field research

The research question at the stage of data collection was formulated in an exploratory way, adjusted to the chosen research design, and including the selected cases:

**What are the political factors involved in the ITI implementation  
in the two Polish metropolitan areas?**

The idea was to enter field research with an open mind regarding the political influence, and develop understanding what it means, how it happens and how it is perceived by local actors in the two regions. These observations would be made with my knowledge from literature on politicisation (see Chapter 1), initial interviews in the European Commission, ITI-related documents, and personal experience.

On this basis, on top of the assumptions feeding selection of cases, I formulated a number of other expectations before entering the field. First, I knew that official **political affiliation** of mayors would not be enough to map the political alliances in the metropolitan areas, as 85% of Polish mayors are officially independent (see Section 3.2). I knew that I should ask about their past affiliations, and observe their relations looking for other potential factors bringing politicians together. Second, I was aware of differences between the regions in terms of what **kind of projects** can be funded and are the most attractive for politicians. I wanted to focus on **ERDF projects**, as I expected them to be potentially more attractive for politicians. In practice, I covered both ERDF and ESF projects, trying to capture the differences. Lastly, I knew that the **future of ITI** in Poland, and consequent collaboration among the municipalities is unsure as the Policy Ministry was waiting for the results of ITI evaluation in 2018. Therefore, I knew that intermediate bodies implementing ITI are under political pressure. Nevertheless, it was important to take a neutral approach and explore what political factors meant in the local contexts.

Apart from formulating research question and content-related assumptions, I committed a lot of attention to preparations before the data collection has started. They involved the following:

1. **Ethical approval** from the University of Strathclyde, including data protection rules, **information page** about the PhD research, a **consent form** for research participants, and a **draft interview** scenario (see Annexes II-VI);
2. **Positionality** – reflexivity regarding my personal characteristics and their influence on the access to the field and data collection process. This included the level of ‘nativity and strangeness’, gender, status, and others;
3. **Rapport building** – elaborating a strategy of how to best enter the field considering the conclusions from the positionality exercise. This stage included establishing contacts with **gatekeepers** in both regions, and **negotiating access** and in order to achieve an agreement regarding the scope and timing of my fieldwork;



4. **Intense field research courses** specialised in organisational ethnography (as mentioned before), in order to increase the quality of data collection;
5. **Pilot interview** - testing my draft interview scenario with an representative of another ITI, in order to observe reactions to various questions and get to know what other important aspects of ITI implementation I might have been missing. It was conducted in Warsaw in September 2017, with a representative of the Warsaw ITI Office, who I knew from my professional network.

Positionality and rapport building have been described in more detail below, as they involved the most preparations and this process directly determined the shape of field research.

### **Positionality**

Following the trustworthiness standards, before entering the field, I tried to foresee how personal characteristics can influence access to data. The expectation was that positionality will mostly work to my advantage during the fieldwork.

A basic concern was the extent to which I as a researcher was '**native**' to the field, and how this would influence data collection. In this case, I can perceive myself as native to some extent, as my race, nationality, language, religion with which I was raised, and experience in work for local public administration gave me some similarities to the research participants. I expected these elements to mitigate my communication with gate keepers, and make my access to the field easier. Moreover, familiarity with the language, previous experience in public sector and studies in related disciplines potentially allowed me to understand the processes going on in the field relatively easily.

However, there were some elements that highlighted my '**strangeness**' to the field: age (I was significantly younger than most public administration employees); the specific culture and customs of the regions which I was unfamiliar with; and, the type of EU funds management institution, of which I had no experience. These aspects ensured that I could gain a sufficient distance while conducting data collection, and spot atypical behaviours relevant in the context of research questions.

Another aspect to be considered was how my characteristics would influence the data I could collect. **Gender** influenced my access to data and trust of research participants in different ways. On the one hand, being a young female made it at times difficult to mingle during male-dominated meetings of mayors. However, this characteristic worked sometimes as an

advantage, as participants did not see me as a competitor or a ‘threat’ and tended to be quite open. In some cases, they even commented that my questions were naïve, and were eager to explain me ‘how real world works’, talking about sensitive issues that they would normally not discuss.

Another characteristic that played a role was my **status**. Representing a foreign university, and to a certain extent, coming from Warsaw, helped in ensuring that my research was taken seriously. The status of student helped to highlight that I was there to learn about how they implemented the EU funds and what kind of challenges they were facing. Since I wanted to discuss sensitive issues, it mattered that I was not perceived as a ‘threat’, and the questions I was asking were neither of a journalistic nor controlling manner.

Conclusions from reflexivity directly fed the rapport building strategy, described below. Reflexivity regarding the positionality continued throughout the empirical research, data collection and interpretation. This is described in more detail in the data collection subchapter.

### **Rapport building**

Following the researcher participant role for my fieldwork, I was aware that I had to negotiate to even get access to the field. It is not every day that public administration in Poland allows a stranger to hang out in their offices, especially for a longer period of time. In order to get this access, I needed to first gain trust and support of a ‘**gatekeeper**’ in each region – an employee of an institution in which I wanted to conduct my research, and who could facilitate my permission internally. In both regions the chosen gatekeepers came from a professionally built network. In CS it was the deputy director in the Managing Authority, who used to be a contact person for the IQ Net<sup>11</sup>. We briefly discussed my PhD at an IQ-Net conference in 2016, and when I said I was planning to do field research in Poland, she ensured her support if I chose CS for my case study. In LFA it was the director of the ITI IB, with whom I conducted an interview as a part of the study on territorial instruments conducted by the EPRC for the European Commission in 2016<sup>12</sup>. She expressed interest in the further collaboration on ITI research, so I counted on a positive approach towards my PhD fieldwork.

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<sup>11</sup> IQ-net is a network for regional and national partners working with EU Structural Funds. The network is managed by the European Policies Research Centre Delft. More information: [www.eprc-strath.eu/ignet](http://www.eprc-strath.eu/ignet)

<sup>12</sup> Territorial strategies supported by EU territorial tools (sustainable urban development under Art. 7 ERDF, ITI and CLLD when related to SUD). Final report: [ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/integrated\\_strategies/integrated\\_strategies\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/integrated_strategies/integrated_strategies_en.pdf)

Before contacting gatekeepers, I needed to think of a strategic approach in order to build trust, and gain their interest and willingness to support. It was surprising how much preparation had to be done even before the initial meeting. The key considerations involved:

- **Form of contact** – a decision to send a short initial e-mail with a request for support of my PhD field research and a phone call. The participatory observation was mentioned during the phone call to have an opportunity to explain and answer any questions.
- **Esteem** - a ‘Request for support letter’, issued by EPRC, was attached to the e-mail in English (see Annex I) and Polish versions. The letter explained the character of my research and proved that it was backed by a Scottish University. The letters turned out to be useful in building my position and supporting my research.
- **Title of the PhD** - the selection of words needed to be careful as some academic terms, e.g. ‘politicisation’, could have been associated in a negative way. The final ‘role of political and administrative factors in ITI implementation’ highlighted the dichotomy and showed interest in the political dimension. I updated my online footprint, since any incoherence could have hampered gatekeepers’ trust.

**First contact with the gatekeepers** was in the beginning of June 2017. I sent introductory e-mails with a request for support of organising my fieldwork in each region, and asking for a short phone call about it. In both cases, the call took place on the same week after a positive response. During the calls I mentioned the aim of not only conducting interviews, but also observation for at least a month. In both cases they were enthusiastic about the research and including their region in it, but did not have any experience with participant observation and asked many questions about the rationale behind such a study. I highlighted the importance for the research of ‘insiders’ knowledge’ and the practical application of official rules on everyday basis, as well as the ethical standards that such a research has to comply with. Both gatekeepers promised to see what they can do and asked for sending additional e-mails to their hierarchy and other suitable units in the Managing Authorities. After sending these follow-up e-mails, contact in the regions took two different directions.

In LFA, crucially there was an informal approval by the ITI Office and the Managing Authority of my access to the field and willingness to show me the ‘flesh’ of their everyday work over implementation process. However, there was also a clear need to **formalise** the contact and my field research. They were actively looking for plausible legal solutions to give me formal access to the field and documents. I had to send digital and paper version of the request for acceptance

of my voluntary work, confirmation letter from Strathclyde, and an ‘application for data reuse’ form, after which they sent me an ‘offer’ with terms and conditions of the data use, which I had to accept via e-mail. When I didn’t reply within five days due to being abroad for the Summer School, they called me 3 times: to confirm acceptance of the offer via e-mail, and to ask me to come in person to sign the **contract for voluntary work**. The first I did immediately, the latter I promised to do in September after arrival in Poland.

In CS there was an initial agreement to give me access. They highlighted that there should not be a problem with my research as there is a strong support from the managerial level – highlighting the power of the gatekeeper. My main contact became Department of Evaluation and Analysis in the Marshal’s Office. They were suggesting some forms of access that I even did not know were possible (e.g. the preparatory group of the Monitoring Committee, Working group of Project Assessment). But then point after point they limited the possible access: after checking some legal acts and internal procedures, and discussing details with directors they did not see a need of keeping me in the organisation for a longer period of time, as in fact I only can have access to some additional documents and conduct some interviews.

I started to feel that probably one of the reasons is lack of trust and insufficient information about my intentions with the research. I called the contact persons in the Marshal’s Office, and said that I understand the legal and managerial context, but that the observation part is very important for the research so maybe there would be a way to find a solution, giving examples used in LFA. I asked if there is anything unclear about the research that they would like to know before the fieldwork, and that actually I will be coming to Poland in late July so I could even come to Katowice to discuss the details in person. This was welcomed with enthusiasm, and the next day I received an e-mail confirming the location and timing of the meeting, as well as planned participants – among which to my positive surprise apart from MA was also the director of the ITI Office.

This meeting turned out to be crucial in getting access to the field in CS, and therefore below I am citing my notes drafted right after the meeting. They reflect well the atmosphere and the challenge of this stage of the research.

27 July 2017

*We introduced each other and exchanged formal handshakes. We sat in a small circle in the office of AD. The atmosphere was a bit stiff as nobody knew what to expect and how to start the meeting, although thanks to the improvised setting of the room and no table in between there was a potential for a more informal conversation. I suggested I would start by saying a bit about myself, the PhD and my fieldwork plans, and then I will be happy to answer any questions. Among others, I highlighted my experience of work in the Warsaw City Office and understanding how important are the processes happening at the actual implementation level.*

*It is hard to say if my efforts directly affected the attitude of other participants of the meeting, but at least further conversation went rather smoothly. They asked about my plans in terms of publishing, so I told about the dissertation and potential academic articles, but no plans of commercial publication. I guess it was one of the invisible barriers from, as they replied that different access can be given to commercial and non-commercial usage.*

*I asked about possible forms of my role, as before in the correspondence we discussed about Project Assessment Committee, LSI Reports, Monitoring Committee and its working group, interviews with experts, and my role of a volunteer, intern or researcher. This part of discussion was not the most pleasant, as evaluation unit was pointing out why they cannot give me access to any of forums among this list, and why none of the roles is appropriate. (...) AD was trying to find solutions, and said that with time, more and more responsibilities were transferred to the ITI Office to Gliwice, and probably it would make sense to spend more time there.*

*The ITI Director was listening to our discussion, and now finally felt called to take the voice. It was a big moment as I was secretly hoping for his support and openness. And I was not disappointed. He said that (as I remember):*

*'Indeed in the ITI a lot is going on, and actually the most interesting part is BEFORE a project call is launched – as earlier take place all the informal meetings and negotiations between local mayors, and the ITI role is to prepare the call in a way that suits the reality and the agreement with the mayors. This is the key moment in the implementation, later there are formal stages where the majority of decisions have been already made. In the ITI we don't have so many restrictions, and he sees no obstacle in me participating in these informal meetings, just taking advantage of a free place in a car with an employee who is going there anyway'.*

***Deep within I was jumping in happiness**, because indeed this was the part that I was most interested in! But I just said that it sounds indeed very interesting and that would be great. He continued that the only thing that he needs to point out is that he would not like to formalise our cooperation and my fieldwork in any way, because to give me the position of a volunteer or an intern, they would need to organise a health and safety training and other procedures, what would cause additional costs for them. So from their point of view it will be inviting me to participate in meetings, and the meetings will continue for a month. I said it is absolutely fine for me and that I am looking forward to come to the ITI.*

After this meeting I exchanged phone calls and e-mails with the ITI Office in order to agree on the timing of my arrival, which I coordinated with similar talks in LFA. Following the success of a face-to-face meeting in CS, I also suggested I would come for an introductory meeting to Lublin in September, which would be an occasion to complete formalities and get to know each other two months before my actual arrival for the research. In September, I also visited Gliwice, since there was the only meeting of local ITI coordinators that I could attend during my stay in

Poland. In this way I had a chance to meet the employees of the ITI teams in both regions even before officially starting the fieldwork. The ultimate aim – to build initial trust – was achieved, and provided a promising foundation for starting the fieldwork.

### 2.2.3. Field research – participatory observation

Field research included 11 weeks of participatory observation in the intermediate bodies responsible for implementing ITIs in two Polish metropolitan areas: the Lublin Functional Area in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (LFA) and the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS).

In order to ensure high quality and access to data collected through this method, the **data collection strategy** involved the following aspects, described in more detail below: diversification of physical positionality, systematic and comprehensive field notes and ongoing reflexivity and gradual data access negotiation.

#### Physical positionality and mapping of the sites

It was important to diversify the observation sites in order to extend access to various types of data sources and interactions with multiple research participants. In both regions, participatory observation was mostly conducted during the everyday office work of research participants, complemented with study visits and meetings in various municipalities. The comparison between the participatory observation in both regions are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4** Element involved in participatory observation in both regions

	LFA	CS	Total
<b>Weeks of observation</b>	5	6	<b>11</b>
<b>Attended meetings and events</b>	9	18	<b>27</b>
<b>Study visits</b>	8	2	<b>10</b>
<b>Visited municipalities</b>	10	10	<b>20</b>
<b>Kilometres travelled</b>	428	636	<b>1064</b>

In both cases, the main observation places were ‘ITI Offices’ – bodies officially given the function of an Intermediate Body implementing Integrated Territorial Investments in the particular metropolitan area. In CS it was the Association of Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship, while in LFA this function was held by an ITI-dedicated Office within the structures of the City of Lublin.

In CS, the ITI Office was located in a post-mining area of Gliwice, revitalised using EU funds. The Association occupied five rooms: the director's office, the Secretariat for two secretaries and one other employee, a room for four employees, a meeting room with desks for two employees and a small one-desk room that was empty. Therefore, it was impossible to observe the work of the whole team at once. I was told that the last, empty room was freed the previous week by a controlling authority, and that I should stay there as there is a free desk. This would of course lead to isolation and exclude the possibility of any observation. I explained that I would like to get to know the team and participate in everyday work, and that I can be flexible in terms of working conditions. We agreed that I could start by sitting in the Secretariat at the table that was normally used for meetings, and then adjust to the situation. After a while, I got a chance to spend a few days in each of the rooms except the director's office, using the desks freed during various team member's leave or meetings. The best place for observations turned out to be the room with four employees, among which there were funds coordinators, managing the majority of the operational processes of the ITI.

In Lublin, the ITI Office was located in a small building near the city centre. They occupied one floor, divided into four rooms: a secretariat connected with the Director's office, two interconnected rooms for 2 employees each, 1 separate room for 2 employees, 2 individual rooms for a deputy director and a legal adviser, and a meetings room. A kitchenette was located in the corridor. Following the ITI director's suggestion, I spent the majority of time at the desk of an employee on maternity leave, in one of the connected rooms. This gave me an opportunity to hear what was going on in both, and interact with all three team members. When this employee came back, I stayed in another shared room, which also allowed for some interaction. All doors were usually open and interactions between the team happened constantly. The kitchenette was a natural meeting point, which I often used for informal interactions.

I attended operational and – with time – political meetings attended by ITI employees. The meetings and places for study visits were selected on the basis of the calendar of research participants, variety of municipalities (location, size), and the character of the meeting (operational or political, formal or informal). In CS, already in the first week I received a calendar with upcoming meetings, with information that I could choose which were interesting for me. In LFA, I was told informally a few days before about the upcoming events – it was easier as there were significantly less events happening. For this reason, with crucial help of the ITI Office, I organised more study visits just for the purpose of the research.

In both regions, I attended the following types of meetings:

- Meeting of local ITI coordinators (operational level)
- ITI Assembly/Board (mayors – political level)
- Internal meetings of ITI Office employees
- Project Assessment Committee (ITI office + external experts)
- Training for experts assessing ITI projects
- Consultation by a private company planning to apply for ITI funds
- Meetings between the ITI Office and Managing Authority
- Subregion meeting (political)
- Informative meeting for project applicants (by MA and ITI)
- Training for ITI coordinators

Meetings, study visits and interviews required travelling around the metropolitan area. Whenever possible, I used public transport or joined an employee of the ITI office who was driving. In other cases, I had to rent a car and go to less accessible places. In total, I visited 10 municipalities in each region and travelled for over 1000 km. This allowed me to gain hands-on experience with commuting around the metropolitan functional area (while transport was one of the key investment areas funded from ITI), and understand better reality of research participants and the context in which collaboration happens.

### **Field notes**

I applied a **comprehensive, systematic approach** to taking field notes. I kept the note of the exact time and place of every observation taken, and regularly updated a list of all persons met and meetings and events attended. This allowed me to keep track of diverse data sources and adjust the next study visits and the choice of interviewees. As I was not sure what kind of information would turn out to be important for the research, I tried to note everything I heard and saw. Whenever possible, I noted direct quotes. At the end of every week, I wrote a summary of what I had experienced and observed. I also noted the type I had collected and where I saved it.



Depending on the situation, I collected data in the following **forms**: handwritten field notes in a dedicated diary, notes in a dedicated word document, notes written on a smart phone, audio recordings, photos, and relevant official documents selected for further analysis.

Following the trustworthiness standards, I divided my field journal into **three sections**:

1. **notes** (e.g. describing what happened, and what research participants said or did);
2. **interpretations** (my own understanding of what a particular sentence or behaviour may mean or show, what is surprising for me, what it means for the research, or what else I should ask about in order to get a clearer picture);
3. **reflexivity** (how my presence and characteristics affect the data collection process, how research participants treat me, the scope of my access, how I feel in particular situations)

### **Reflexivity during data collection**

Field research included in-depth daily interactions with ITI Office employees, and gradual negotiation of access to political actors and their meetings. Hence, during the whole process I exercised self-reflection regarding my positionality and influence on data, as well as changes in the trust of research participants towards me and my consequent access to data.

On arrival, I assessed **my relationship to the research question**, in order to detect potential bias during data collection. I noted a positive approach to ITI and collaboration, which could have encouraged me to present ITI in a good light. I acknowledged the need to be neutral, and not to idealise. To answer this challenge, I decided to gather a variety of points of view, talking not only to the supporters of ITI collaboration, but also to those sceptical and critical (e.g. authors of complaints, representatives of NGOs and private entities applying for ITI funds, independent experts assessing ITI projects, and various political leaders).

An important aspect of building trust during fieldwork was ensuring the **transparency** of my research. Following ethical approval, all interviewees and other key research participants received an **information fiche** (see Annexes II-III) including the study's objectives, who the research is conducted by and for, how the data would be used etc. Moreover, participants were asked to sign a **consent** form (see Annexes II-III), including information about planned anonymisation. The initial expectation was that the consent forms might create problems – signing such forms is not standard practice in Polish academia, and there can be reluctance to sign agreements due to the negative experiences in the Communist times. However, in this case

research participants reacted positively, indicating that the consent forms were perceived as a sign of professionalism, and the information page answered many of their queries.

In both regions, I was warmly welcomed and found ITI Office employees who were interested in my research, actively wanted to talk to me and provide help if needed. Already in the first week the leaders of ITI Offices suggested an informal way of addressing each other - per 'you' – which in Polish public administration is not common. In both cases, I felt that **staff wanted to make a good impression**, present the ITI from the best possible perspective, and persuade me in this way to report to the national and European authorities that they are doing a good job. In LFA this impulse was strengthened by pressure from the responsible Ministry in Warsaw, which was critical of the slow rate of ITI funds absorption – an issue which was irrelevant for this research. I decided to clarify that the aim of the research was not to evaluate their job but to learn about the process of implementation on the ground. I was aware of potential political pressures as my work could be read by authorities evaluating the ITI. However, the publication of my research results would come much later than official evaluations.

The process of trust building and negotiating access to data evolved differently in each region. In CS, the process of entering the field was informal. They introduced me in each meeting I joined as a representative of the 'Western science world', and expressed the hope that thanks to my long stay I would describe the ITI holistically. They also often asked the participants to share with me all information, and actively **wanted me to see that they were transparent**. In fact, I felt surprised that they were inviting me to internal meetings almost immediately, and was impressed with the amount of relevant information – inaccessible in any official documents – I gathered in the first few days. They also shared their team calendar and said that in principle all meetings are open for me to join, and that they would let me know if any would be problematic for logistical or confidentiality reasons. In the second week, I also obtained access to typical political meetings, in which normally only official members or their representatives could participate. I noted that at the political meetings people did not pay attention to me, sometimes I was not even introduced and could observe the behaviour of participants in a natural way. I felt welcome, enthusiastic and the access to data seemed not to be an issue.

In LFA, my initial experience was very different. During the first few days, I was concerned about how I was being treated in regards to the work of the Office I had to go through some formal steps due to my 'volunteer' role, e.g. health and safety training, getting a personal login to City Office network etc. I was asked to sign a contract stating that I would not use the

materials that I worked on during the ‘voluntary service’ when not related to my research. I consulted on this both with the ITI Office director and my PhD supervisor, and we agreed that since my only formal task as a volunteer was to conduct my research connected to ITI implementation, I would be able to use any materials in the thesis and associated publications. Still, these experiences made me feel like an intruder, not knowing how things work and **being controlled**. Any control would of course significantly influence the trustworthiness of the research and directly shape access to data, so I had to ensure that this did not happen. I had to face three main challenges in this regard:

1. In the beginning, I had to work on a corporate laptop, to which I could not connect any pen drive, and could not use private nor university e-mail – only the one in the city office domain. This limited my notes on the computer only to facts, without the opinion and self-reflection part. I added these afterwards or typed on smartphone, but it complicated the process of data collection. I started bringing my own laptop and typing there, but then I could not connect to local wifi, and ended up working on two laptops.
2. At first, ITI office employees came with me to the interviews to introduce me and discuss their own issues with interviewees (these mostly took place in other municipalities). On one occasion, an ITI office employee even participated in the interview, following the invitation by the interviewee who wanted to demonstrate transparency. This influenced the answers although the interviewee still expressed some critical views. However, before the next interview I obtained agreement from the ITI Director that it would be better if I conducted these meetings alone.
3. Once during the usual observation in the ITI Office, I was taking notes during an informal conversation in the connected room, when the ITI Director suddenly moved to our room and looked directly at what I was typing on my laptop. Luckily the topic of discussion was not sensitive and I managed to turn this into a humorous situation, but it was clearly a sign of control. Luckily it didn’t seem to have any consequences for my access to the field and it did not happen again.

Over time, in both regions varying levels of enthusiasm and interest among the research participants became apparent. I tried to nurture informal contacts with individual persons, find common topics and participate in informal conversations with more team members. ITI Office employees often complained about other institutions involved in ITI implementation, which of course was subject to bias but often gave me hints on what to ask about during interviews. In CS they often used words from the local dialect, and after the second week they called me

‘dziółcha’ which is the dialect word for a girl. This showed that I was becoming part of the group and that they liked me. In the third week, research participants became disappointed that I was not sitting with them in the room. The same happened in LFA, when I changed location a number of research participants complained that I am ‘leaving them’. This showed that people did not want to avoid my presence and confirmed that I was gaining more broad access to data.

However, the atmosphere in both regions differed. In CS it was mainly positive. Beyond everyday problems, there was a general sense that I felt that they were one of the best-organised ITI intermediate bodies in Poland. This influenced my research as such conditions allowed them to be open, so the access to data grew. I reciprocated their positive mood. In LFA, on the contrary, the atmosphere was quite negative. They felt various, sometimes contradictory, pressures from many sides. This atmosphere in the office affected my research and my mood. I was frustrated by the formalities connected with my field research, but also in the ITI system, and other obstacles blocking research progress. However, this difficult situation had some positive influences on the data collection. Since the atmosphere was negative, employees and other research participants were very critical (even self-critical) about ITI implementation. This enriched the variety of points of view and suggested some crucial issues to explore during the interviews.

At the end of the research, in both regions I only did not have access to confidential parts of the meetings, which would reveal information that could not have been known before the official publication, e.g. results of calls for projects in CS. Moreover, in both cases in the third week I felt that some types of meetings were repetitive and I was noting little new information. The last days of fieldwork were more reflective and bringing few new observations. In this way, I was sure that I had gathered sufficient empirical data.

### **The fieldwork experience - dilemmas during the research**

Conducting participatory observation was a very enriching, fascinating and challenging experience for both my academic and personal development but during fieldwork I also faced dilemmas. I have listed below those that had the most important influence on data collection.

**Staying silent.** Perhaps the biggest challenge was to step back and passively observe other people’s interactions, as I am an extrovert and being socially active comes naturally to me. It was particularly difficult not to participate in discussions about how to approach various aspects of ITI implementation. I had to resist expressing an opinion if I felt strongly about it,

or suggesting a solution to a problem when I had a relevant idea. Instead, I had to focus on making myself as invisible as possible, for instance by substituting laptop with a paper notebook during meetings in order not to disturb participants with the sound of typing.

**Asking about political issues.** I was not sure how direct I could be when asking about politics, including the political affiliation of mayors and their alliances. I was aware that although they were often officially independent, they formed strong political connections. I was concerned that they could treat me as an investigative journalist looking for scandals, which could have undermined their trust. I observed which research participants were more open and eager to talk about these issues, and checked their reactions to make sure that I was not taking this line of questioning too far.

**Setting the limits of personal integration.** I was unsure about how much personal information I should share, and to what extent I could befriend research participants. On one hand, this was a natural process as the research involved personal interaction. On the other hand, I had to keep some distance in order not to become biased during observation and interpretation. I had a dilemma whether I should meet with staff after work, which topics of discussion to pursue, whether to accept a lift home, go together on a hiking trip, etc. I noted that I had naturally bonded with and talked more to some people, who consequently shared more information and opinions than others. This was unavoidable and it was beneficial for the research that I had managed to build trust and closer contact with some research participants.

**Attending informal events.** One of the biggest challenges concerned annual events for the ITI Board/Council Members, which in both regions were held at a hotel located in different municipality, including a formal and informal programme. After a careful consideration, I decided to attend both events, as it was an ideal opportunity to observe informal interactions between research participants. During these events, I kept the balance between participating in the event and joining the ongoing activities e.g. informal conversations at dinner or dancing, but staying in the researcher's role and behaving in a professional way.

**Personal security vs. access to data.** I had received special attention from a number of male research participants, and was unsure how to react. I was careful as I read about both positive and negative influences of young women's positionality: on one hand higher chances of gathering relevant data due to interest and willingness to commit time and engage in conversations, but on the other, cases of sexual harassment on female ethnographers. In fact, I heard compliments and even suggestions to conduct an interview in a hotel room, or that I

should *'call before 18.30 so that the wife does not hear'*. These suggestions were expressed in a joking way, but outside the research setting I would directly express my disapproval of such behaviour and would not want to contact such persons. However, here they might have relevant information for the research and I did not want to lose this opportunity. I did not agree to any of these suggestions, but also was more tolerant: I smiled and suggested to conduct interviews during working hours. The suggestions did not repeat and I conducted the interviews in neutral circumstances.

**Sharing feedback.** Research participants in both regions asked a number of times about my observations, opinions or even recommendations related to their work. I responded that it is too early for conclusions. In fact, I was feeling overwhelmed with the amount of information, impressed with the complexity of the system but also genuinely unsure how to access it. Participants accepted the answer, but I was concerned that they doubted my honesty, which might have affected their future openness when expressing their opinions. Thus, I included more details in subsequent answers (e.g. some dilemmas that I had in interpreting how the ITI system works). Still, I did not disclose the actual research-relevant observations.

**My contribution to the ITI Office.** I felt increasingly grateful for key research participants' support, so when they asked me for help, I felt that I should find a way to be useful for them, without affecting the research-related aspects. For example, I helped them in translations, provided ideas regarding methods of organising interactive, co-creating workshops. Some of the methods were used during a training exercise for local ITI Coordinators held during the annual event in CS, and observations conducted during this proved useful for the research.

**Accepting financial reimbursement.** Due to my official volunteer status in LFA, before attending the external annual event for ITI Council I was informed that I would be officially 'sent on a delegation' and that the cost of hotel will be covered by the Lublin City Office. I opposed this as receiving any remuneration could have created potential bias. However, they insisted because of insurance reasons and my formal status. After consideration, I accepted this after clarifying that no money would enter my bank account, as the City Office would pay the for the room directly to the hotel. In CS I covered the hotel from my own pocket.

## 2.2.4. Field research – interviews

The field research included 46 semi-structured, in-depth expert interviews. Below I have explained: the content of interviews, selection of interviewees, and the process of conducting the interviews.

### **The content of the interviews**

Before entering the field, I had draft interview questions using the pilot exercise conducted in Warsaw. However, following the interpretive approach, the final content of interviews was adjusted to the **local context**. In CS, interviews started after three weeks of observation. Only then did I feel that I had understood what kind of data should be gathered through interviews, and which had not available from other sources. In LFA, I could start interviews much earlier thanks to the knowledge on ITI gathered in CS.

My knowledge about the context, the ITI implementation system and the associated collaborative process grew over time, so I gradually adjusted the questions to ask about more details of the specific issues and aspects that were most relevant for the research. For example, during fieldwork I realised that the majority of everyday work by research participants was driven by collaboration, in a general implementation framework. In principle all ITI implementation mechanisms had to go through a collaborative process and be accepted by mayors. Thus, achieving consensus among local mayors turned out to be the crucial ITI process connected to politics, which was the main focus of the research. Consequently, I included questions directly connected to collaboration.

Following the **semi-structured character** of the interviews, I prepared a general ‘interview scenario’, trying to gather as much information relevant for the research question as possible. The main idea was to explore the political aspects of the ITI implementation and related collaboration in the past, present and future perspectives. The **interview scenario** (see Annexes IV-V) had the following structure:

1. **The past** (introductory questions, identifying the role of the interviewee in ITI and how long the person has been involved, learning about the initial process of ITI programming and collaboration and the role of particular actors in it, doubts and hopes of the interviewee);

2. **The present: projects** (opinion about project selection and other procedural aspects, the influences of particular actors on this process, details about particular projects if relevant for the research);
3. **The present: collaboration** (opinion about collaboration between the ITI Office and municipalities and among municipalities themselves, as well as with other stakeholders, details of the collaborative process);
4. **The future** (opinion about the potential continuation of collaboration after the end of ITI funds, what this would depend on, potential improvements and joint investments).

The general structure was always the same, while particular questions were each time adjusted to the type of interviewee and their role in ITI. This was an effect of the **expert character** of the interviews. Some questions were crucial to ask to the holders of particular roles in the ITI, while for others they were irrelevant. The main aim of the interview was to acquire the specific knowledge that each interviewee had, which required individually-crafted questions.

It is important to highlight that, following the **in-depth character** of the interviews, the prepared questions had a guiding character and were subject to improvised modifications during the actual interview. This facilitated the exploration of issues that arose during the interview as crucial for the research, and adjusting questions to the context and available timing.

### **Selection of interviewees**

As explained above, capturing a variety of points of view was an important element of the data collection strategy. Consequently, the key **criteria** of interviewee selection was the **diversity** of the roles played in the ITI implementation, and of the municipalities they represented.

Concerning the roles, I tried to keep a balance between political and administrative actors, and also include independent/external stakeholders of ITI implementation. During fieldwork, I discovered the key actors that I should interview: mayors and their deputies, ITI Office employees, municipal ITI coordinators, regional Managing Authority representatives, experts assessing ITI projects and external beneficiaries. In a number of cases in LFA, one person held a double role (e.g. deputy mayor and ITI coordinator, which gave them the double political and administrative point of view, which was very interesting for this research). For this reason, the number of interviewees is higher than the number of interviews (see Table 5).



**Table 5 Types of interviewees - comparison between the regions**

Interviewees	LFA	CS	TOTAL
ITI Coordinators	9	6	<b>15</b>
Mayors (or deputy)	6	4	<b>10</b>
ITI Office	6	3	<b>9</b>
Managing Authority	3	3	<b>6</b>
Experts	1	5	<b>6</b>
Other	2	2	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>50</b>

In terms of diversity of municipalities, a fundamental aim was geographical balance: to include the views of centrally and peripherally located parts of metropolises. Moreover, during fieldwork I observed that the alliances between municipalities were formed on two axes: the size of municipalities (in terms of population) and the speed of EU funds absorption. Both variables determine motivations to collaborate among municipalities and to engage in joint resource distribution. Trying to incorporate the most diverse points of view, I created a simple matrix (see Table 6), and made sure to conduct interviews with representatives of all the four groups.

**Table 6 Types of municipalities taken into consideration when selecting interviewees**

MUNICIPALITIES	Small	Big
Slow in EU funds absorption	I	II
Fast in EU funds absorption	III	IV

Interviewees were selected following a **snowball method**, starting from the key figures in ITI implementation, and then asking them for recommendations of other potential respondents fitting the specified criteria. The participatory observation process and attending various meetings with internal and external stakeholders allowed for additional diversity. For example, on the basis of what people were saying during the meetings, I could distinguish between enthusiastic and critical or dissatisfied actors involved in ITI implementation and associated collaborative mechanisms.

## **The process of conducting the interviews**

In the majority of cases, the persons invited for an interview agreed to meet with me and talk for the expected amount of time (around 1-1.5h). Here, the process of field research helped as in most cases the interviewees already had got to know me during meetings, and I could approach them directly following an initial informal contact. Moreover, the ITI Office employees helped me to set up the first interviews, and book appointments with mayors of big cities, whose agendas were particularly busy.

Most of the interviews were conducted in person and audio-recorded. Two were conducted via a phone call, and the data were collected in a form of thorough notes. The shortest interview was 28-minutes long, while the longest was over 2.5 hours.

I observed that interviewees gradually opened during the interviews, and in most cases spoke freely about details of collaboration and ITI implementation. Some administrative workers did not feel entitled to answer questions on strategic matters, e.g. priority projects or future of collaboration, indicating that these were political matters. This however did not cause problems for a research as also can be interpreted in regards to the research question. Otherwise interviewees did not have other caveats and responded to all questions. Some of them provided additional, more sensitive details to their answers after the recording stopped. Such comments were included in the field notes. In a number of cases, male interviewees assessed my questions as naïve (e.g. in relation to independent assessment of projects, or other sensitive issues), and decided to ‘explain to me how real world functions here’. In this context, my positionality as a young woman potentially helped the data collection process, as such interviewees answered questions crucial for the research in an honest, blunt way, which in other circumstances they might have hidden.

The majority of interviews had an **individual** character, while two were conducted as dyads (mayor and ITI coordinator). Because of this, there were 45 interviews with 47 persons. The full list of persons interviewed on particular days has been summarised below.

Each interviewee was assigned a **code that is used in empirical chapters for referencing** particular people. In this way, it is possible to ensure anonymity, while at the same time identifying the role and region of a particular person. In the case of double roles (as explained above), the code followed the more political function of each interviewee. The codes were created on the following basis:

1. a letter symbolising the metropolitan area ('S' for CS or 'L' for LFA),
2. an abbreviation of the interviewee's role,
3. a number to distinguish municipalities (e.g. M1) and/or persons with the same roles.

Tables 7 and 8 set out the full list of interviewees in each region, together with respective codes.

**Table 7 List of interviewees in the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship , with relevant codes used for references**

Number	Interviewee	Date	Code
1	ITI coordinator Municipality 1	2017.10.23	S_Coor_M1
2	Mayor Municipality 1	2017.10.23	S_Mayor_M1
3	ITI coordinator Municipality 2	2017.10.23	S_Coor_M2
4	Managing Authority, employee 1	2017.10.24	S_MA_1
5	Managing Authority Unit director 2	2017.10.24	S_MA_2
6	ITI coordinator Municipality 3	2017.10.24	S_Coor_M3
7	Deputy Mayor Municipality 4	2017.10.24	S_DMayor_M4
8	ITI coordinator Municipality 5	2017.10.25	S_Coor_M5
9	Expert assessing ERDF projects 1	2017.10.25	S_Expert_1
10	Expert assessing ERDF projects 2	2017.10.26	S_Expert_2
11	Expert assessing ERDF projects 3	2017.10.26	S_Expert_3
12	ITI Advisory Council Director, Municipality 6	2017.10.27	S_AC1_M6
13	ITI Advisory Council Deputy Director, Municipality 6	2017.10.27	S_AC2_M6
14	ITI coordinator Municipality 7	2017.10.27	S_Coor_M7
15	Deputy Mayor Municipality 7	2017.10.27	S_DMayor_M7
16	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 1	2017.10.30	S_IB_1
17	Mayor Municipality 5	2017.10.30	S_Mayor_M5
18	Expert assessing ERDF projects 4	2017.10.31	S_Expert_4
19	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 2	2017.11.06	S_IB_2
20	Managing Authority, Unit director 3	2017.11.07	S_MA_3
21	ITI coordinator Municipality 8	2017.11.07	S_Coor_M8
22	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 3	2017.11.10	S_IB_3

**Table 8 List of interviewees in the Lublin Functional Area, with relevant codes used for references**

Number	Interviewee	Date	Code
1	ITI coordinator (Deputy Mayor) Municipality 1	2017.11.15	L_DMayor_M1
2	Mayor Municipality 2	2017.11.17	L_Mayor_M2
3	ITI coordinator (Deputy Mayor) Municipality 2	2017.11.17	L_DMayor_M2
4	Managing Authority, Unit director 1	2017.11.20	L_MA_1
5	Managing Authority, Unit director 2	2017.11.20	L_MA_2
6	Managing Authority, Unit director 3	2017.11.20	L_MA_3
7	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 1	2017.11.21	L_IB_1
8	ITI coordinator Municipality 3	2017.11.28	L_Coor_M3
9	ITI coordinator Municipality 4	2017.11.29	L_Coor_M4

10	ITI coordinator Municipality 5	2017.11.29	L_Coor_M5
11	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 2	2017.11.30	L_IB_2
12	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 3	2017.11.30	L_IB_3
13	Investments Office Director Municipality 5	2017.12.01	L_IO_M5
14	ITI coordinator Municipality 6	2017.12.01	L_Coor_M6
15	Mayor Municipality 6	2017.12.01	L_Mayor_M6
16	Transport Authority Director Municipality 5	2017.12.04	L_TA_M5
17	ITI coordinator Municipality 7	2017.12.06	L_Coor_M7
18	Mayor Municipality 7	2017.12.06	L_Mayor_M7
19	ITI coordinator Municipality 8	2017.12.06	L_Coor_M8
20	Expert assessing ESF projects 1	2017.12.07	L_Expert_1
21	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 4	2017.12.08	L_IB_4
22	Mayor Municipality 5	2017.12.08	L_Mayor_M5
23	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 5	2017.12.11	L_IB_5
24	ITI coordinator Municipality 9	2017.12.11	L_Coor_M9
25	ITI Intermediate Body, employee 6	2017.12.13	L_IB_6

### 2.3. Data analysis

During fieldwork it became clear that considering the specific character of ITI implementation, I will need to use a relevant theory to understand the role of political factors present in the field. The **collaborative aspect** of ITI was fundamental in the activities of local actors and it framed the role of politicians during implementation. For this reason, after coming back from fieldwork I started reading literature on inter-municipal collaboration and searching for theories that could help explain what happened in the field.

Finally, the **Institutional Collective Action (ICA) Framework** was chosen to facilitate data analysis (see more details in the Theoretical Chapter). At the same time, I wanted to maintain flexibility in case something relevant for the research but not captured by the Framework occurred during the analysis. The literature that provided basis for the research before fieldwork was still valid in a sense of the concepts related to politicisation processes. Following abductive reasoning, they remained important in characterising various kinds of political influence identified in the field during the second stage of data analysis.

Consequently, I decided to redesign research questions following the chosen theoretical framework. Their final shape is described below.

### 2.3.1. Final research questions

There are two final main research questions, which are answered in the two empirical chapters:

- 1. What are the political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?**
- 2. What is the impact of the identified political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?**

In order to answer these, I defined secondary research questions, followed by more detailed supportive questions (see Table 9).

Questions 1.1. and 2.1. aim to capture the meaning of politics and the role of political factors directly expressed by research participants. Following the research design, it is crucial to use their narrative in answering the main research question. However, fieldwork also revealed situations in which political factors were present, although local actors did not realise or acknowledge their political character, or at least they did not wish to talk about it.

Questions 1.2.-1.4. are related to the are related to: three kinds of sources of collaboration risks, on the of the key elements of the ICA Framework. This part of the theory usually concerns the identification of independent variables, which are then tested in terms of influencing the likelihood of starting inter-municipal collaboration. Some of the variables had a political character, and I wanted to see if they can be identified in the empirical material, and if there are other political factors that so far were missing in the ICA literature.

Questions 2.2.-2.5. are related to other main elements of the ICA Framework: potential collective benefits, collaboration risks and transaction costs, as well as the integration mechanisms. In the theoretical chapter I described how the framework explains the various processes involved in inter-municipal collaboration. This helped me understand the processes within ITI implementation that research participants were describing, and I gained academic vocabulary to describe them. Hence, formulating these questions on the basis of the Framework facilitated analysis of the collaborative process observed during the fieldwork in a more structured way. It also helped assess the role of political factors in particular processes involved in collaboration. Still, I kept the opportunity to include processes that did not fit in the existing categories of the Framework, but played a role in the analysed case studies.

Table 9 Final research questions

Main research questions	Secondary research questions	Supportive research questions	
1. What were the political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?	1.1. How did research participants <b>understand politics</b> ? What kind of political factors can be formulated on this basis?	In which context did research participants mention the word 'politics' and other related? What did they mean by that? Who did they perceive as a political actor?	
	1.2. What was the <b>nature of the ICA dilemmas</b> involved in joint ITI implementation? What kind of political factors can be identified in this context?	Were there any actions aiming at achieving coordination gains?	
		Were there any actions aiming at achieving economies of scale?	
		Were there any actions aiming at managing common-pool resources?	
		Were there any actions aiming at internalising externalities?	
	1.3. What kind of <b>actors and communities</b> were involved in joint ITI implementation? What kind of political factors can be identified in this context?	Who were the actors involved in joint ITI implementation? How diverse were they? What were their characteristics and role?	
		What were the characteristics of communities involved in joint ITI implementation? How diverse were they?	
	1.4. What were the <b>existing institutions</b> in both regions? What kind of political factors can be identified in this context?	What were the higher-level rules shaping the joint ITI implementation?	
		What was the political structure in which ITI was implemented?	
		What kind of ICA mechanisms had existed before joint ITI implementation?	
	2. What was the impact of the identified political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas??	2.1. How did research participants <b>perceive the role of political factors</b> in joint ITI implementation?	In what situations did research participants acknowledge political influence on joint ITI implementation? How did they assess it?
		2.2. What were the <b>potential collective benefits</b> of joint ITI implementation? What was the role of political factors in this context?	What kind of benefits did research participants acknowledge in the beginning of collaboration? How did they change during ITI implementation?
What were the risks of incoordination?			
2.3. What were the <b>collaboration risks</b> ? What was the role of political factors in this context?		What were the risks of division?	
		What were the risks of defection?	
		What kind of other risks were involved?	
		What were the information costs?	
2.4. What were the <b>transaction costs</b> present in joint ITI implementation? What was the role of political factors in this context?		What were the negotiation and bargaining costs?	
		What were the enforcement costs?	
		What kind of other costs were involved?	
		How did research participants explain the reasons for choosing the integration mechanism? How did research participants perceive the future of collaboration?	
2.5. How were the two different <b>integration mechanisms</b> perceived by research participants? What was the role of political factors in this context?			

### 2.3.2. Systematic thematic qualitative text analysis

The data gathered during the fieldwork included field notes, documents, photos, videos and recordings and relevant documents. The data was prepared for triangulation and analysis in the following way:

- All interviews were transcribed in Polish to produce accurate, textual data. Each interview transcript was saved in a separate file, and renamed following the code included above.
- Data from participatory observation were digitalised in a coherent word document. Notes in all forms from each day were summarised in a form of a **fieldwork journal**. This included separate notes, reflexivity, and initial observations parts, as described above. Photos, videos and documents were referenced throughout the journal and analysed together with other relevant data. The observations were noted in the analytical memos (see explanation below).
- All data were uploaded to the MAXQDA software, in a way that differentiated data from the two regions.

The process of data analysis included two steps, described in more detail below: 1. coding using MAXQDA software, and 2. Theming the data.

#### **Coding using MAXQDA software**

Following the richness and complexity of empirical material gathered, I needed a method and a tool for analysis that would allow me to systematically organise and analyse the data. In this context, coding in a professional software for qualitative analysis was the most suitable solution. This ensured that none of the data was missed, and organised the material automatically following the chosen categories.

In terms of **software choice**, I conducted pilot exercises in MAXQDA and NVivo in order to compare and choose the most suitable software for the planned analysis. NVivo offered more functions for automatic and quantitative queries, e.g. word frequency test with the possibility to include synonyms and word families (e.g. multiple kinds of fish). However, this function was only available in English, while my data was in Polish – so this advantage would not be useful. The MAXQDA had a possibility to export coded data to an Excel separately for each category, in a format more suitable for further qualitative analysis than the one offered by NVivo. It also allowed creating memos in addition to each coded piece of data, which was

useful for the first stage of analysis. This functionality aspect became the main reason for choosing MAXQDA to conduct the coding exercise.

In terms of coding approach, Saldaña's Handbook was very useful in informing the choice as it specified which types of coding fit which conceptual frameworks and research designs. Thus, the most suitable coding for my analysis were structured and descriptive coding, described below.

**Structured coding**, 'applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data to both code and categorise the data corpus' (Saldaña, 2013, p. 66), which particularly relevant for studies employing multiple participants. In this case, I labelled the data following the main ICA Framework categories. This allowed me to organise the large data set that I had collected during fieldwork, and continue the analysis following key topics associated with particular research questions. For an overview of key categories created, see Table 10.

In **descriptive coding**, the researcher assigns labels to data describing their content, particularly suitable for studies with a wide variety of data forms (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, etc.) (Saldaña, 2013, p. 70). This was very suitable for my analysis, as the assumption was that not all content would be fitting into the ICA Framework categories. In such a case, I created new categories in a descriptive manner. The main descriptive categories turned out to be 'understanding of politics' focusing on the meaning of politics to research participants. Moreover, I created descriptive subcodes (often called 'children') under the ICA Framework-based structured codes (called 'parents') (Gibbs, 2007, p. 72). This technique additionally helped in further analysis of complex empirical data. Here, the main categories turned out to be 'non-strategic joint project risks' and 'joint project assessment costs' (see Table 10), but also many other, more detailed under each code.

The next step was to decide how and what to code. I followed a wide definition, specifying that **a code** is 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.' (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3) In my case, the codes varied from a single sentence to a paragraph.

Each 'parent' code was characterised in a **codebook** (Saldaña, 2013, p. 21), including its definition, guidelines for when to use the code, and an example. This helped to minimise the risk of blurry boundaries between the codes and ensured transparency. This was particularly



important as the decision was taken to conduct an individual coding. While in positivist research designs the usual practice is coder-checking, in order to ensure objectivity, ‘coding in most qualitative studies is a solitary act – the “lone ethnographer” intimately at work with her data’ (Galman, 2007, p. 26). The solitary coding was relevant for this research, and the codebook contributed to its trustworthiness.

In addition to assigning pieces of text to particular codes, I created **analytic memos**, which are comments to the coded phrases. This was the first step of the analysis: noting initial observations related to the possible patterns and relations between the codes. Some researchers call this technique ‘a conversation with ourselves about our data’ (Clarke, 2005, p. 202) This exercise was invaluable for the next stage of analysis: – theming the data. Saldana highlights that crucially coding should lead to ‘making new discoveries, insights, and connections about your participants, their processes, or the phenomenon under investigation’ (Saldaña, 2013, p. 51). I kept track of such observations in the memos, and in this was able to verify that the chosen type of coding was appropriate.

In total, I coded **4055 segments** and wrote **2695 analytical memos**. A detailed overview of the number of segments in the main categories in each region is summarised in the Table 10. The **quantitative analysis** for this research is limited as the research questions are not related to the frequency of causality. Still, a general summary of coded phrases provided indications of patterns, which could be then used during next stage of analysis. Therefore, in each empirical chapter there are provided short quantitative summaries of the coded data and the initial expectations drawn on this basis. Importantly, such expectations had to be verified during further qualitative analysis, as even with lower frequencies, some concepts could have been assessed as crucial by research participants, while other participants often mentioned ones marked as unimportant in the quantitative analysis.

Table 10 Quantitative summary of the coded segments

Category		Subcategory	Codes	Segments CS	Segments LFA	Segments TOTAL
ICA Framework elements	Potential collective benefit	None	Potential collective benefit	95	172	<b>267</b>
	Sources of collaboration risks	Nature of the ICA dilemma	Coordination gains	70	122	<b>192</b>
			Economies of scale	22	32	<b>54</b>
			Common-pool resources	0	3	<b>3</b>
			Internalising externalities	7	9	<b>16</b>
		Actor characteristics	Individual	525	724	<b>1249</b>
			Community	58	73	<b>131</b>
		Existing institutions	Higher-level rules	122	146	<b>268</b>
			Political structure	21	39	<b>60</b>
			Existing ICA mechanisms	49	39	<b>88</b>
	Collaboration risks	Incoordination	Incoordination	19	49	<b>68</b>
		Division	Division	122	96	<b>218</b>
		Defection	Defection	46	23	<b>69</b>
		Non-strategic joint project risks	Non-strategic joint project risks	50	96	<b>146</b>
	Transaction costs	Information	Information	89	119	<b>208</b>
		Negotiation and bargaining	Negotiation and bargaining	189	96	<b>285</b>
		Enforcement	Enforcement	94	67	<b>161</b>
		Joint project assessment costs	Joint project assessment costs	161	103	<b>264</b>
	Integration mechanism	None	Integration mechanism	33	114	<b>147</b>
Other	Understanding of politics	None	Understanding of politics	78	83	<b>161</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>1850</b>	<b>2205</b>	<b>4055</b>

Legend: Descriptive codes, Structural codes

## **Theming the data**

The coded data were exported to an Excel table, organised following the codes ‘parent’ and ‘children’ categories. Rows with particular pieces of text were accompanied by relevant analytic memos. The next step was to search for themes: ‘abstract entities that bring meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations’ (Saldaña, 2013, p. 362). Themes are created in a process of analytic reflection regarding the coded data, searching for patterns in the meaning of concepts related to each code. Importantly, ‘unlike content analysis, which begins with predefined categories, thematic analysis allows categories to emerge from the data’ (Ezzy, 2002, p. 83). Following (Ryan, Bernard, 2003), I searched for the themes by looking for:

- repeating ideas,
- participant or indigenous terms,
- metaphors and analogies,
- transitions or shifts in topic,
- similarities and differences of participant expression,
- linguistic connectors (“because,” “since,” “then,” etc.),
- theoretical issues suggested by the data (e.g., interpersonal relationships, social conflict and control),
- elements missing from the data.

Considering the scope of research questions, I gave particular attention to identifying **political elements** in the characteristics of research participants and their role in the collaborative process, the power relations between them, as well as the differences in perception of various concepts by actors characterised as political and non-political. I also oriented the analysis to identify differences between the two analysed regions.

The process of theming the data was crucial for the analysis related to both research questions. When identifying the political factors, these themes allowed me to identify which factors typically used in the ICA Framework had a political meaning in the studied context, and which research participants acknowledged it. Theming also allowed me to capture otherwise intangible role these political factors played in processes of inter-municipal collaboration. The identified themes formed the basis for structuring the analysis presented in the empirical chapters.

### 3. Institutional and policy context: Integrated Territorial Investments and the two Polish metropolitan areas

This chapter sets out the context for the empirical research. First, it presents the legal foundations for inter-municipal collaboration in Poland, and its characteristics before the introduction of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) by the European Commission. Second, it describes the European and Polish legal and institutional frameworks created for the implementation of this particular policy instrument. Third, it describes the characteristics of the two metropolitan areas selected for comparative analysis: Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS) and the Lublin Functional Area (LFA). This focuses on the key elements of the territories covered by ITI, and the most important elements of the implementation system – information regarding the local context that could be identified prior to field research. It is crucial to take into consideration these key characteristics in interpreting empirical material in the next four chapters.

#### 3.1. Inter-municipal collaboration in Poland

This section provides an overview of inter-municipal collaboration in Poland. First, it delineates the main forms of collaboration used by representatives of Polish municipalities, and places them within the Institutional Collective Action (ICA) Framework (See Section 1.1). Second, it describes the characteristics of collaboration in Polish metropolitan areas before the introduction of Integrated Territorial Investments.

##### Legal forms of collaboration

Recent literature systematised the available forms of collaboration in Poland. Researchers agree that there are three main and most common forms of collaboration (Porawski, 2013; Potkanski, 2016; Swianiewicz, 2016; Swianiewicz et al., 2016; Szlachetko, Gajewski, 2016; Szmigiel-Rawska, 2017), all functioning on the basis of the main national regulation on local government in Poland.<sup>13</sup> These forms are: 1. **inter-municipal unions**, usually aiming at joint tasks delivery; 2. **inter-municipal agreements**, usually contracting tasks of one municipality to be delivered by another; 3. **inter-municipal associations**, usually aiming at the

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<sup>13</sup> Regulation Dz. U. 1990 Nr 16 poz. 95., Art. 64-84. Full text: [isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19900160095/U/D19900095Lj.pdf](https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19900160095/U/D19900095Lj.pdf)

representation and protection of collective interests. The last form can have a local, metropolitan, regional, national, or even international scope. A particular example noted in the literature are Local Tourism Organisations<sup>14</sup>, specialising in a single thematic area.

The literature indicates that municipalities can also collaborate by creating joint entities based on other regulations: e.g. **commercial law companies** (created to deliver particular services, e.g. public transport), **foundations** (aiming at contributing to a particular common good, e.g. promoting sustainable development), or **consortia** (created mostly for purchasing joint services or goods, e.g. electricity). A separate form of collaboration was identified among the EU-funded **Local Action Groups**<sup>15</sup>, including private and non-profit organisations on top of municipalities (Porawski, 2013; Swianiewicz et al., 2016). Authors acknowledge also informal forms of collaboration, e.g. **meetings** of mayors, civil servants or councillors (Swianiewicz et al., 2016, p. 58), and **informal metropolitan networks** (Krukowska, Lackowska, 2017; Porawski, 2013). Other researchers acknowledged **national informal networks** of collaboration among various cities: their formal representatives, local non-profit organisations, independent activists and academics (Domaradzka, 2021; Kubicki, 2019, 2020). The most prominent example here is the Congress of Urban Movements<sup>16</sup>, which initially operated solely informally, and later on became an association.

The newest form of inter-municipal collaboration is a **metropolitan union**, introduced in Polish law in 2015 (Potkanski, 2016, p. 31; Szlachetko, Gajewski, 2016, pp. 91–130). So far, only one entity of this kind has been created (Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia, proclaimed in 2017<sup>17</sup>). The difference between the metropolitan union from other forms of collaboration is that it is not fully voluntary. It is formally established at the national level, by an executive act issued by the Council of Ministers. The establishment of such a union needs to be approved by 70% of municipalities and 50% of counties belonging to the area in question, however after passing this criterion, the union can be imposed on a top-down basis.

Polish forms of collaboration can be placed in a broader context within the **classifications of inter-municipal forms in Europe**. Authors of three main classifications created them by identifying different pairs of axes, varying the collaboration forms. Teles (2016) indicates the extent of institutionalisation (high or low), and the nature of collaboration ('soft', e.g. joint

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<sup>14</sup> More information: [www.pot.gov.pl/pl/o-pot/wspolpraca-z-regionami/lokalne-organizacje-turystyczne](http://www.pot.gov.pl/pl/o-pot/wspolpraca-z-regionami/lokalne-organizacje-turystyczne)

<sup>15</sup> Local Action Groups are created on rural areas within the LEADER Programme funded by the EU. More information: [enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld\\_en](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_en)

<sup>16</sup> More information: [kongresruchowmiejskich.pl/](http://kongresruchowmiejskich.pl/)

<sup>17</sup> More information: [metropoliagzm.pl/](http://metropoliagzm.pl/)

promotion, or ‘hard’, e.g. joint investment in infrastructure). The axes identified by Hulst, van Montfort (2007) include the scope of joint endeavours (single- or multi-task), and the extent of formalisation (loose, formal contracts, permanent organisations). The third categorisation by Tavares and Feiock (2018), in relation to the ICA Framework (see Section 1.1), differentiates forms of collaboration in terms of decision costs (depending mostly on the scope of collaboration), and autonomy costs (depending on the enforcement method).

While other researchers (Swianiewicz et al., 2016, pp. 24–26) already placed Polish forms of collaboration within the first two classifications, this has not been done for the third one. Hence, **Figure 12 proposes the placement of Polish forms of inter-municipal collaboration within the ICA Framework** adapted to the European context. For example, inter-municipal agreements and associations are classified as contract-based collaboration, while agreements as a simpler form usually involve a more narrow scope of joint endeavours and a smaller number of involved municipalities.

**Figure 12 Polish forms of inter-municipal collaboration within the ICA Framework**

Enforcement method Scope of collaboration	Embeddedness	Contracts	Delegated Authority	Imposed Authority
	Encompassing Complex Collective	Informal national networks	Inter-municipal associations (regional and national)	n/a
Intermediate Multilateral	Informal local and metropolitan networks	Inter-municipal associations (local and metropolitan) Local Action Groups	Inter-municipal unions, Commercial law companies	Metropolitan unions
Narrow Single Purpose Bilateral	Informal meetings	Inter-municipal agreements	Consortia, Foundations	n/a

---Autonomy Costs+++

Source: Own elaboration within the framework by Tavares, Feiock, 2018, p. 15

Moreover, the Polish forms of inter-municipal collaboration are worth considering within the criteria proposed by Miller and Nelles (2020) in order to identify regional inter-governmental organisations (RIGOs). The researchers proposed five attributes characterising organisations: membership, agenda, legitimacy, ambition and scale (see Table 11 for details). If an entity fulfils all criteria, it can be classified as a RIGO and then analysed in a comparative perspective with other similar organisations (Miller, Nelles, pp. 339-348). Following this assessment, in

the Polish context only three forms of collaboration can be classified as RIGOs: inter-municipal associations, inter-municipal agreements and metropolitan unions (see Table 11).

**Table 11 Polish forms of inter-municipal collaboration within the attributes of regional inter-governmental organisations (RIGOs)**

RIGO attribute	Description	Inter-municipal associations	Inter-municipal agreements	Metropolitan unions	Informal metropolitan networks	Inter-municipal unions,	Commercial law companies	Other
<b>Membership</b>	The organization is primarily constituted by general-purpose local governments (counties and municipalities)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Agenda</b>	The organization has a public agenda that covers a broad number of policy areas.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Legitimacy</b>	The organization has a high degree of intergovernmental legitimacy as viewed by the government	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Ambition</b>	The organization has articulated an agenda to be a voice of the region in the broader context	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Scale</b>	The organization covers a geography that is the largest to which a set of local governments have representational rights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Overall classification as a RIGO</b>		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Source: Own elaboration based on Miller, Nelles, 2020, pp. 340

### **Inter-municipal collaboration in Poland before Integrated Territorial Investments<sup>18</sup>**

Apart from the legal forms and their inventory, researchers have also studied other aspects of inter-municipal collaboration in Poland. The most recent comprehensive research in this regard focused on inter-municipal unions (Swianiewicz et al., 2016). The study included an analysis of the scope of collaboration in various forms, the dynamics of finances and thematic areas of the unions' activity, and governance structures. Moreover, it covered the motives for engaging

<sup>18</sup> Parts of the text were used by the author for the Polish case study in the World Bank's report on organisational models for inter-jurisdictional agreements within the project 'Romania Catching-Up Regions' (Kriss et al., 2019).

in collaboration, factors impacting its durability, and effects of collaboration. Szmigiel-Rawska (2017) prepared an assessment of inter-local arrangements in Poland from a micro- and macro-geographical perspective including the transaction costs aspect. Other researchers focused on particular sectors, e.g. waste management (Kołsut, 2016; Picej, 2018a, 2018b) and education (Kaczyńska, 2020). Łukomska and Szmigiel-Rawska (2015, 2018) focused on the financial aspects of collaboration, while (Gendźwiłł et al., 2019) on the motives of collaboration. Poland was also included in comparative studies and monographies on inter-municipal collaboration in Europe (e.g. Hertzog et al., 2010, Podgórnjak-Krzykacz, 2017; Swianiewicz, Teles, 2019; Teles, Swianiewicz, 2018).

A separate strand of literature focuses specifically on collaboration within Polish metropolitan areas, allowing to assess its characteristics before introduction of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI). In the majority of the Functional Urban Areas (FUA) of capital regions, inter-municipal cooperation existed before the ITI period. However, the majority of these were either unofficial or inactive (Krukowska, Lackowska, 2017, p. 279). Only the associations in Katowice and Poznań were performing joint initiatives, including EU-funded projects. This lack of intensive cooperation is often explained by researchers due to the low social capital in Poland. Which in turn leads to a consequent lack of trust, low skills and willingness to cooperate of the Polish population (Kozak, 2016a). It might also be connected to the lack of a clear legal basis and insufficient incentives for intensifying cooperation. This is relevant for both national and EU policies. Before ITI, the only EU funds dedicated directly to cities in Poland were URBAN (2004–06), URBACT (2007–onwards) and JESSICA (Kaczmarek, Kociuba, 2017; Krukowska, Lackowska, 2017).

However, these instruments did not stimulate inter-municipal cooperation, resulting in a fragmentation of EU investments (Mendez et al., 2021). There were cases of very similar, competing investments in neighbouring communities, neither of which is currently sustainable, bringing debts to both municipalities (e.g. the case of two aquaparks built in neighbouring municipalities; Różalski, 2012). Before 2014, Poland did not have any instruments directly supporting the creation of metropolitan institutions with independent tasks, resources and funding, and inter-local collaboration focused on bilateral service contracts (Swianiewicz, 2016). From this perspective, the launch of ITI introduced new inter-municipal collaboration structures, or formalised and activated some existing collaborative initiatives (Krukowska, Lackowska, 2017, p. 279). The next section provides more information in this regard.



### 3.1. Integrated Territorial Investments – a new opening for metropolitan collaboration in Poland

This section provides an overview of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI). First, it explains the European background and aims of this policy instrument. Second, it characterises the Polish model of ITI, describing its territorial, financial, thematic and governance scope.

It is also worth providing a broader context of the policy that ITI is built in. ITI is part of the European Union's Cohesion Policy (CP), which 'aims to correct imbalances between countries and regions', and 'contributes to strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union'<sup>19</sup>. CP is the EU's main investment policy operating in seven-year periods. At the time of field research, EU contribution to CP for 2014-2020 equalled nearly **€ 387 billion**, almost one third of the total EU budget. The EU allocation was complemented with national co-financing, which in total provided a CP budget of over **€ 515 billion** (see Table 12).

The CP budget is built within the European Structural Investment (ESI) Funds<sup>20</sup>, out of which four contribute to CP<sup>21</sup>:

1. The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**, investing in the social and economic development of all EU regions and cities. It has a strong focus on four key priority areas: Research and Innovation, Digital Economy, SME Competitiveness and Low Carbon Economy;
2. The **European Social Fund Plus (ESF)**, supporting jobs and creating a fair and socially inclusive society in EU countries. It helps people find employment or create businesses, supports disadvantaged groups, improves education and makes public services more efficient;
3. The **Cohesion Fund (CF)**, investing in trans-European transport networks and in projects falling under EU environmental priorities. It targets the 15 less prosperous EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia;

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<sup>19</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/2021\\_2027/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/)

<sup>20</sup> More information about ESI funds: [ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes/overview-funding-programmes/european-structural-and-investment-funds\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes/overview-funding-programmes/european-structural-and-investment-funds_en)

<sup>21</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index.cfm/en/policy/what/investment-policy/#1](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/policy/what/investment-policy/#1)

4. The **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**, helping the EU Member States respond to high level of youth unemployment. It focuses on young people not in employment, education or training, supporting their integration into the labour market.

**Table 12 EU cohesion policy budget by fund, 2014-2020**

Fund	EU Amount [€]	Percent of total EU Amount	National Amount [€]	TOTAL Amount [€]
<b>ERDF</b>	220,347,297,253	57%	79,062,067,157	299,409,364,411
<b>ESF</b>	95,966,735,409	25%	36,557,354,244	132,524,089,653
<b>CF</b>	61,455,291,487	16%	11,216,282,623	72,671,574,110
<b>YEI</b>	8,950,645,385	2%	1,503,013,787	10,453,659,172
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>386,719,969,534</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>128,338,717,811</b>	<b>515,058,687,346</b>

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of data from [https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2014-2020\\_cohesion\\_overview](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2014-2020_cohesion_overview)

Cohesion policy is implemented following particular **principles**, which are modified before each programming cycle. It is, however, possible to identify the key principles, important for CP since 1988, and those that were formulated recently (see Table 13). The principles introduced for the 2014-2020 period correspond with the recommendations from some academic evaluations suggesting how to improve CP. For example, Bachtler et al. (2016) suggest that CP would benefit from greater concentration of resources, strategic coherence, strengthened administrative and institutional capacity, and from an integrated approach to investments. The latter recommendation and the principle ‘strengthened urban dimension’ are directly related to ITI, described in detail in the next section.

Table 13 Key EU cohesion policy principles

	Principle	Description
General, since 1988	Focusing on the poorest and most backward regions	Most funding goes to the regions below 75% of the average EU GDP
	Multi-annual programming	The seven-year-long cycles, for which the regulations, funds and available instruments are reintroduced after negotiations between the European Commission, European Council and European Parliament
	Strategic orientation of investments	Setting up priorities for each period
	Multi-level governance	Sharing responsibility of CP programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation between European, national, and subnational authorities
	Partnership	Each programme is developed, through a collective process involving authorities at European, national, regional and local level, social partners and organisations from civil society
New in the 2014-2020 period	Stronger focus on results	Clearer and measurable targets for better accountability
	Simplification	One set of rules for all CP funds
	Conditions	Introduction of specific preconditions before funds can be channelled
	Strengthened urban dimension and fight for social inclusion	A minimum amount of ERDF earmarked for integrated projects in cities and of ESF to support marginalised communities
	Link to economic reform	The Commission may suspend funding for a Member State which does not comply with EU economic rules

Source: Own elaboration based on: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/what/history/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/what/history/), [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/how/priorities/2014-2020/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/priorities/2014-2020/)

### 3.1.1. European context of the Integrated Territorial Investments

ITI is a tool introduced for the first time in CP for the 2014-2020 period, as one of the ways of fostering **integrated sustainable urban development (ISUD)**. Its aims is ‘*to make it easier to run territorial strategies that need funding from different sources*’ and ‘*to promote a more local or ‘place-based’ form of policy making*’ (European Commission, 2015). The ‘**place-based**’ **approach** was brought to CP after practitioners’ calls, for policy-interventions to be created on a more bottom-up basis, taking into consideration the specifics of the local context (Mendez, 2013). The focal point in this context was a report by Fabrizio Barca on cohesion policy (Barca,

2009), which pointed out that this new approach should include **integration of: 1. territories** (highlighting the specificity of challenges and needs of particular places, and the need to address them looking beyond administrative borders); 2. **interventions** (showing the need to achieve synergy of various investments in the same place); 3. **knowledge** (highlighting the importance of local actors' understanding of a particular place in diagnosing its needs and challenges, and designing solutions to them); and 4. **governance** (showing the need to empower local actors within EU funds management by increasing their responsibilities within this process).

More broadly, ITI fits within the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU<sup>22</sup>, and its objective to promote social, economic and territorial cohesion (Article 174). It corresponds with the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (European Council, 2011). Among more recent developments, ITI is strongly related to the EU Urban Agenda introduced through the Pact of Amsterdam in 2016 (European Council, 2016).

The role of ISUD (as noted above a possible form of ITI) was strengthened in the regulations<sup>23</sup> of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds for 2014-2020 in comparison to previous periods. The regulations highlight the importance of cities, functional territories and sub-regional areas facing specific challenges, and the need for integrated strategies addressing them (Van der Zwet et al., 2014). In concrete terms, the ERDF Regulation<sup>24</sup> requires that **at least 5% of the ESI funds in all Member State are invested through ISUD**, and one of the mechanisms through which the Member States can do this is via ITI (see Figure 13). European Commission issued guidelines on the ISUD implementation, describing its main purpose and possible variants (European Commission, 2014).

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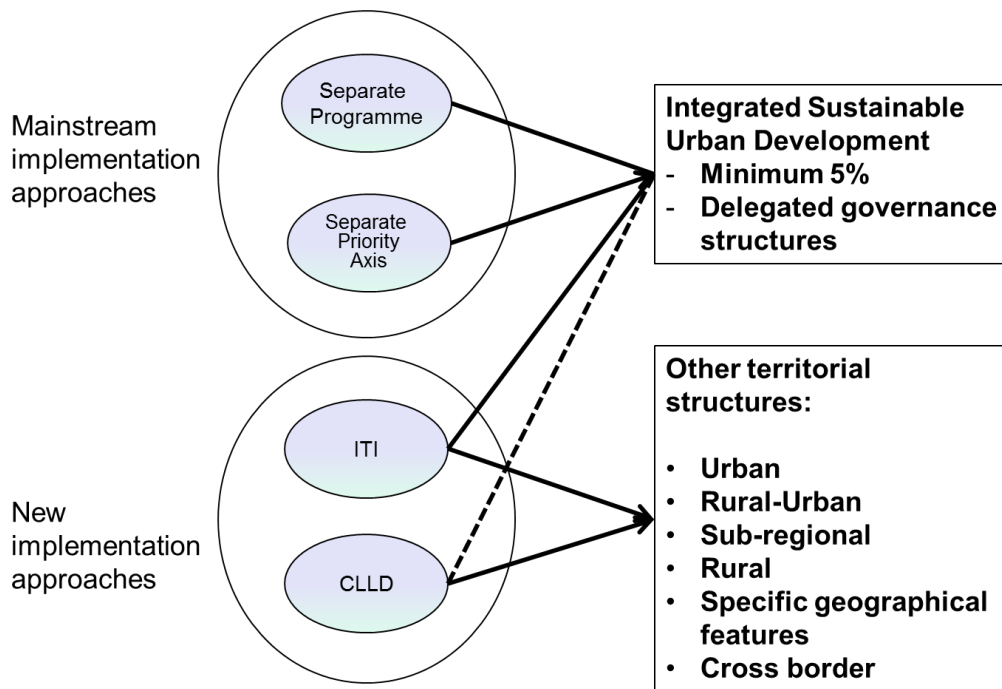
<sup>22</sup> The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008/C 115/01)

[eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:FULL&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:FULL&from=EN)

<sup>23</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council (2013) laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 available at: [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN)

<sup>24</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council (2013) on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, available at [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1301&from=en](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1301&from=en)

Figure 13 Mechanisms for implementing territorial approaches in EU cohesion policy



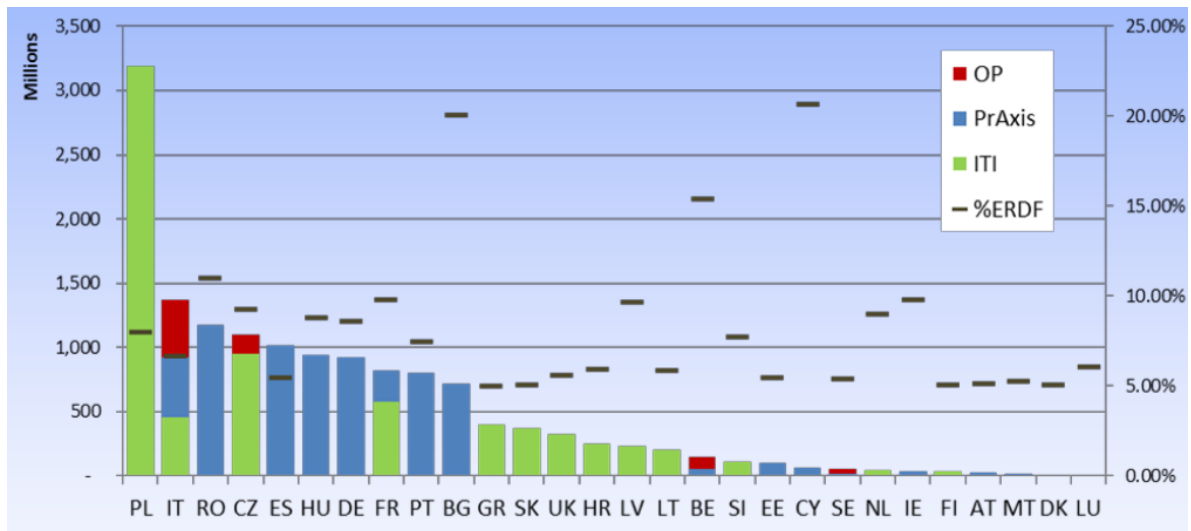
Source: (Van der Zwet et al., 2014). CLLD refers to the Community-led local development<sup>25</sup>

Following the possibilities outlined above, each Member State defined its scope and model of implementing ISUD within the Partnership Agreement signed with the European Commission. Poland decided to invest all ISUD funds through ITI, similarly to 9 other Member States. Three countries mixed ITI with other mechanisms, while 14 opted for a Priority Axis or an operational programme (OP) dedicated to ISUD (see Figure 14). In total, nearly €14.5 billion was invested through ITI, which constitutes 7.8% of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), over 50% more than the required 5% by regulation. Half of Member States invested in ISUD more than the required percentage, including Poland. In total, over €7 billion is invested through ITI in the whole EU. Within this amount, in absolute terms Poland invests by far the most resources in ISUD out of all Member States (over 3 €billion). This amount is justified by Poland being the biggest recipient of ESI funds within EU cohesion policy, and the calculated percentage reserved for ISUD results in proportionally high resources.

<sup>25</sup> More information on CLLD:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2014/community-led-local-development](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2014/community-led-local-development)

Figure 14 Mechanisms used by EU Member States to foster Integrated Sustainable Urban Development



Source: (Matkó, 2016). The axis on the right refers to the % of allocated ERDF funds to a particular country.

The European Commission issued a document guiding Member States through the possible variants of ITI implementation (European Commission, 2015). However, it has to be noted that at the moment of publishing these guidelines, the territories targeted by ITI in Poland were already selected, and the majority of Polish ITI Strategies were being already in the drafting process. In fact, the Polish model of ITI implementation was considered as a basis to formulate the various options rather than the other way around.<sup>26</sup>

There are three elements that distinguish ITI from other CP tools, following the ‘place-based’ approach to EU cohesion policy described earlier in this section. First, it allows **linking investments** from two or three different ESI funds: European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesion Fund (CF) in the same area. Second, it allows investing EU funds in territories **crossing the administrative boundaries** (normally they are limited to the scope of the whole country, a region or a number of them, or a single municipality). Third, it supports the option of creating **Intermediate Bodies at the local level** (in addition to the usual Managing Authority at the national or regional level), corresponding with the chosen territory. In relation to various types, of eligible territories, European Commission indicated **four scenarios** of ITI implementation (European Commission, 2015):

<sup>26</sup> Author’s interviews conducted in 2016 with representatives of the European Commission as part of preparations for the research (see Introduction).

1. **Metropolis**, including a functional urban area of a city (or a number of them in case of polycentric territories),
2. **Sub-region**, including a part of a region that is not a functional urban area, e.g. a rural territory,
3. **District**, including a part of a single municipality, e.g. facing distinct challenges,
4. **Twin Cities**, including a number of towns not belonging to the same functional area, but linked in another way, e.g. a similar economic specialisation.

The implementation of ISUD strategies is regularly monitored by the European Commission. Key data about them are visualised within an online interactive mapping tool ‘STRAT-Board’.<sup>27</sup> The recent ‘Handbook of ISUD strategies’ (Joint Research Centre, 2020) assesses various dimensions of their implementation: strategic, territorial, financial, governance, and thematic. Already in 2017, the European Commission issued a comprehensive study assessing the preparations of the various ISUD strategies in all Member States. The final report<sup>28</sup> (Van der Zwet et al., 2017) shows the diversity of the approaches to ITI and other mechanisms chosen by particular countries. All these sources illustrate that ISUD strategies differ in terms of the type and number of targeted territories, invested budget and thematic scope of eligible investments, governance structures, and approaches to strategy preparation, project selection, monitoring and evaluation.

### 3.1.2. The Polish model of the Integrated Territorial Investments<sup>29</sup>

This section provides an overview of the Polish approach to implement integrated sustainable urban development (ISUD) for the 2014-2020 programming period. Poland chose to use solely ITI for this purpose, and created an individual model for its implementation. In particular, the section describes the delimitation of territories targeted by ITI, available forms of collaboration, funding sources, thematic scope and institutional embeddedness of the Polish ITI implementation.

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<sup>27</sup> [urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/strat-board/](http://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/strat-board/)

<sup>28</sup> The author contributed to preparing the Polish case studies for this report. They are available here: [ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/integrated\\_strategies/annex\\_4\\_strategy\\_fiches.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/integrated_strategies/annex_4_strategy_fiches.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Disclaimer: This section is based mostly on the content of Polish ITI strategies, and policy documents related to ITI programming and implementation (Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2015, websites of particular FUAs). Parts of the text were used by the author for the Polish case study in the World Bank’s report on organisational models for inter-jurisdictional agreements within the project ‘Romania Catching-Up Regions’ (Kriss et al., 2019). Part of the text were also used in the article (Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak, 2018): only the pieces drafted by the thesis’ author.

At the national level, ITIs are regulated by the legal act dedicated to EU cohesion policy<sup>30</sup>, the Partnership Agreement signed with the European Commission<sup>31</sup>, and guideline documents issued by the Ministry of Economic Development (Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2015). The Partnership Agreement defines how ESI funds are distributed. In Poland, they are distributed through a number of thematic national operational programmes (OP), and 16 regional operational programmes (ROP), each in every Voivodeship (region). Every ROP includes resources from two funds: ESF and ERDF, sometimes also CF. For each operational programme, a managing authority (MA) is created to distribute the funds. At the national level they are relevant ministries, and for ROP this function is given to the respective Marshal Office – the regional administration accountable to the indirectly elected politician. MA can delegate some of their prerogatives to intermediate bodies, organisations selected to help in the implementation of a respective programme.

Poland, similarly to a third of the EU member states (Van der Zwet et al., 2017), decided to focus the ISUD approach on FUA. This model requires cooperation between the core city (or cities) and surrounding localities. Encouraging such partnerships was one of the main aims of the ITI policy in Poland (Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2015), because, as noted above, there have not been many instruments to incentivise Polish local authorities to coordinate their investments and solve joint problems.

In comparison to other countries implementing ITIs, Poland kept a relative balance in the number and size of targeted territories. There are **24 ISUD strategies** targeting FUAs in all of the Polish regions (see Figure 15). Within those, 17 address regional capitals and 7 sub-regionally important cities. ITI strategies of FUAs are built into the ROP and their objectives. Each of the 24 targeted functional urban areas prepared a strategy for ITI implementation. Six FUAs are located around the biggest cities in Poland and consist of metropolitan areas with over 1 million inhabitants. The other ITIs are for sub-regionally important major or medium-sized urban areas (200,000-650,000 inhabitants in the FUA). Non-ISUD ITIs are located around medium-sized or small towns (70,000-200,000 inhabitants). The total population covered by the strategies is around 18 million, which is nearly 50% of Polish inhabitants. More details on the population covered by particular FUAs can be found in Table 16.

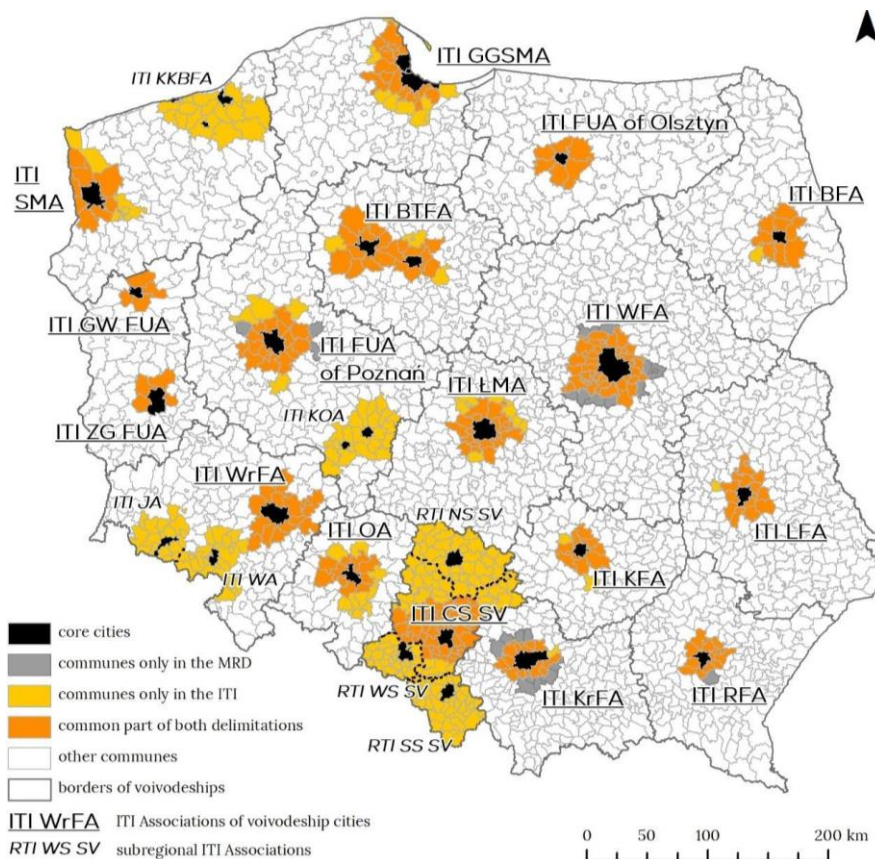
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<sup>30</sup> In particular article 30 of the Act of 11 July 2014 on the principles of implementing programs in the field of cohesion policy financed under the 2014-2020 financial perspective [isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20140001146](http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20140001146)

<sup>31</sup> A version binding in May 2021 is available here: [www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/media/86484/UP\\_2014\\_2020.pdf](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/media/86484/UP_2014_2020.pdf)



Figure 15 Location of ISUD Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland



Source: (Wolański, 2018)

### Delimitation of functional urban areas

The delimitation of FUAs was a complex process for Polish authorities. The Ministry of Development commissioned an expert study to indicate which municipalities are functionally connected with major cities in Poland. The analysis conducted by academics from the Polish Academy of Sciences (Śleszyński, 2013), remained the main basis for the ITI FUA delimitation. However, in many cases the list was extended by a number of municipalities (in Figure 15, marked in yellow, next to the municipalities included originally in the analysis, marked in orange) on the basis of the historical links and the will to collaborate (Kaczmarek, Kociuba, 2017, p. 55; Krukowska, Lackowska, 2017, p. 281). In other cases, the number of municipalities was limited (in Figure 15, excluded jurisdictions are marked in grey). Consequently, there is a broad range in the number of partners included in different FUAs (from to 5 to 81, see Table 16).

The decision to focus on the biggest cities and their functional areas was taken at the ministerial level. Initially, the idea was to limit ITI funding only to FUAs of the regional capitals (marked in orange in Figure 15). This was disputed by the local and regional authorities (Kozak, 2016b),

and some of them successfully lobbied to extend the ITI funding for a number of chosen sub-regional FUAs (marked in yellow in Figure 15). In a number of regions, additional ITIs were not created, but the regions decided to allocate part of the ROP funds to a few more FUAs (Frankowski, Szmytkowska, 2015). These FUAs are not targeted by the earmarked funding based on Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation, and are usually called non-SUD ITI, to distinguish from SUD ITI funded from Article 7.

Consequently, seven models of regional ITIs in Poland there can be distinguished (Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak, 2018). The models differ in terms of the number of targeted areas, and their mono- and poly-centric character (see Table 14).

Table 14 Polish ITI models in particular regions

ITI Model	One SUD ITI in a region	Several SUD ITIs in a region	One SUD ITI and a number of non-SUD ITIs	One SUD ITI and a 'para-ITI' mechanism
One main city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Podlaskie,</li> <li>• Podkarpackie,</li> <li>• Opolskie,</li> <li>• Łódzkie</li> <li>• Świętokrzyskie</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lubuskie,</li> <li>• Dolnośląskie,</li> </ul> Partially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Śląskie</li> <li>• Zachodniopomorskie,</li> <li>• Wielkopolskie</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warmińsko-Mazurskie,</li> <li>• Lubelskie</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mazowieckie,</li> <li>• Małopolskie</li> </ul>
Multiple main cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kujawsko-Pomorskie</li> </ul>	Partially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Śląskie,</li> <li>• Zachodniopomorskie</li> <li>• Wielkopolskie</li> </ul>	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pomorskie</li> </ul>

Source: Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak 2018

### Institutional embeddedness

In Poland the ITIs were established through ROP, for which the Managing Authorities (MA) are regional local government authorities, also referred to as Marshal's Offices. For the purpose of the ITI implementation, Poland created implementing bodies at the urban level, which is a novelty in the Polish CP implementation system. IBs were created for all 24 SUD ITIs. The IB's tasks were delegated to pre-existing or newly launched associations, or to leaders of ITI-dedicated inter-municipal agreements.

All the ITI IBs were delegated responsibilities regarding ITI implementation by the regional MA on the basis of a formal agreement. The MA-IB agreements specified the scope of tasks and rules of collaboration between both parties, and these delegations vary between regions. In

general, the scope of delegated responsibility of urban IBs is quite limited (with the exception of the Walbrzych FUA, where the ITI IB has been delegated full responsibility), while the MA still plays the main role in the process. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of created IBs did not have any experience in managing EU funds. The detailed tasks performed by ITI Offices in the two analysed FUAs are included within the empirical analysis (see Chapter 6). Table 15 illustrates a general distribution of various responsibilities within various aspects of ITI implementation in the Polish FUAs.

**Table 15. Scope of task delegation to local authorities within ITI implementation**

Policy implementation stage	Responsible institution
<b>Design</b>	Led by urban IB, approved by MA and national government
<b>Project selection</b>	Shared among MA and urban IB
<b>Financial management</b>	Led by MA, urban IB's informal influence
<b>Monitoring</b>	Urban IB, reporting to MA
<b>Evaluation</b>	Conducted by MA and national authorities

Source: (Mendez et al., 2021)

The division of responsibilities among various levels of authorities resulted in complex governance arrangements, which have been further analysed using the data collected during field research. The illustration of these complexities can be found in Figure 27.

### Forms of cooperation

Another aspect of the Polish system of ITI implementation is the legal form of collaboration available to implement ITI. Initially, the Ministry of Development wanted all municipalities in agreed-upon FUAs to create an association. On the other hand, local authorities had various ideas of possible forms of cooperation. In the end, the ministry decided to allow two forms of cooperation: an **agreement** or an **association**. The first form is the simplest form of collaboration, in which partnering municipalities do not form a separate entity, but voluntarily collaborate on a particular issue (in this case ITI implementation). They sign an agreement specifying key collaboration rules (e.g. voting during assembly meetings etc.), and delegate the main joint tasks to the association leader (usually the core city of an agglomeration). Associations, on the contrary, are separate organisations, with municipalities as official

members. They usually have a more complex structure (executive board and its president, secretariat, advisory board), more detailed collaboration rules, and a broader scope of tasks. In the context of ITI implementation, the main difference was in who was given the function of an Intermediate Body. In the case of agreements, these tasks were delegated to a single city, while in the case of associations, their secretariats were given the IB function.

The majority of FUAs decided to cooperate in a less-advanced form of agreement (14 out of 24). The remaining 10 are associations, chosen usually in FUAs with pre-existing and relatively active cooperation structures before the ITI implementation. Table 16 shows which FUAs opted for which form of collaboration.

Although the ITI instrument had many top-down rules, the membership in the association or agreement was voluntary. The council of each municipality or county had to officially express the will to join, and each mayor had to sign the collaboration agreement. This document included the aims and rules of collaboration, defined membership fees (if any), and specified the main bodies responsible for the joint actions. These rules of collaboration were also created on a bottom-up basis.

### **Funding sources**

Poland decided to link various funds in order to allow closer coordination of hard and soft interventions in a particular area. All Polish ITI strategies include interventions funded from both the ERDF and ESF, which are built in multi-fund regional operational programmes. In addition, many FUAs planned complementary CF investments funded from national operational programmes: OP Eastern Poland and OP Infrastructure and Environment. However, these investments are not officially part of the ITI budgets and Article 7 interventions.

Poland decided to allocate the required 5% of ERDF allocation within each Regional Operational Programme (ROP). Each region could increase this amount with additional resources from its ROP, both to support the main functional urban area (FUA), or create a separate budget for the additional FUAs. In total, Poland allocated relatively high sums for functional urban areas within ITIs, increasing the minimum 5% of ERDF to over nearly 10%, and adding an amount of ESF funds to be invested through the instrument. Considering that Poland is by far the biggest beneficiary of the CP 2014-2020, the funds allocated through ITIs have a potentially substantial impact on local and regional development. In total around €6

billion has been invested, where €3.11 billion comes from ERDF, and €0.57 billion from ESF. This was complimented with around €2.5 billion from domestic resources, including both own contribution of the local authorities, and complimentary national projects funded from the Cohesion Fund. Additionally, nearly €140 million are allocated to non-SUD ITIs located in 6 sub-regional urban functional areas. Overall, Poland invests nearly €4 billion in ISUD, out of which over 3 billion comes from ESI funds, while the remaining amount is an own contribution of targeted municipalities (Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2015).

ESI funding available for particular FUA equals on average €153 million, and there is a significant variation between budgets: from €40 million to €739 million. Available funding differs from €61 to €542 per capita, and from €2.1 million to €19.4 million per municipality. Such variations can be explained by the different amounts of allocations from particular ROPs invested through the ITI instrument. Another issue regarding integration of investments is the use of various kinds of financial aid (grants, financial instruments, private funding), in order to ensure higher sustainability of investments. Here, the only type of available funding for SUD and non-SUD ITIs is non-repayable grants.

Table 16 Legal form, size and budget of SUD ITIs in Poland

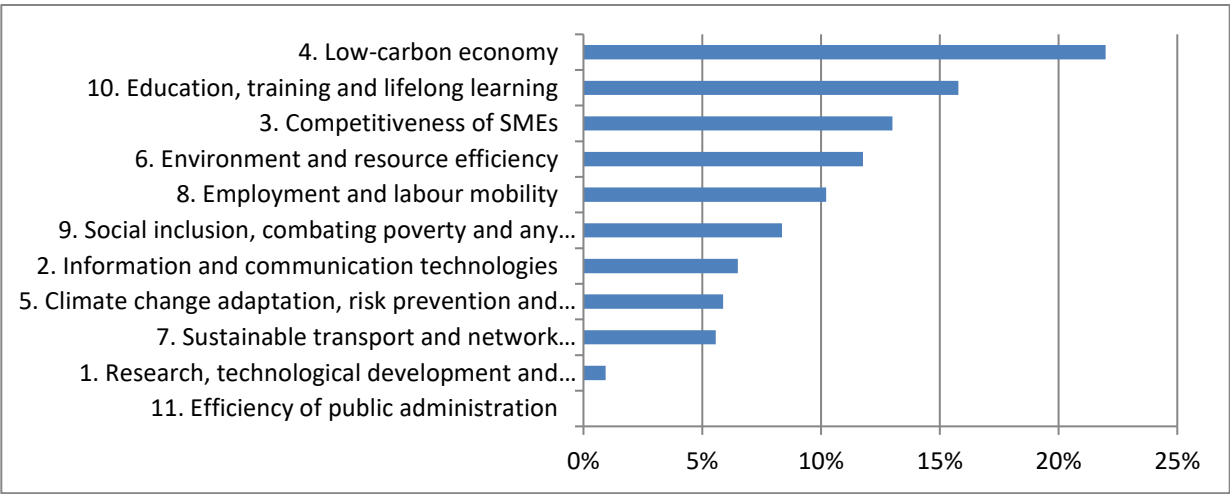
Voivodeship (region)	ISUD ITI Functional Urban Area	Legal Form	Number of municipalities	Number of inhabitants	ERDF [mIn EUR]	ESF [mIn EUR]	TOTAL ERDF + ESF [mIn EUR]	TOTAL per capita [EUR]	TOTAL per municipality [mIn EUR]
Dolnośląskie	1. <b>Jelenia Góra</b> Functional Area	Agreement	18	209,108	87.0	26.4	113.4	542	6.3
	2. <b>Wałbrzych</b> Agglomeration	Agreement	22	415,800	152.4	41.3	193.6	466	8.8
	3. <b>Wrocław</b> Functional Area	Agreement	15	725,219	240.8	50.5	291.3	402	19.4
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	4. <b>Bydgoszcz-Toruń</b> Functional Area	Agreement	24	853,000	143.3	23.5	166.8	196	6.9
Łódzkie	5. <b>Łódź</b> Metropolitan Area	Association	23	1,100,000	181.6	30.6	212.2	193	9.2
Lubelskie	6. <b>Lublin</b> Metropolitan Area	Agreement	16	547,784	93.3	12.1	105.4	192	6.6
Lubuskie	7. <b>Gorzów Wielkopolski</b> Functional Area	Agreement	5	153,300	42.5	6.8	49.3	321	9.9
	8. <b>Zielona Góra</b> Functional Area	Agreement	6	185,209	46.9	11.5	58.3	315	9.7
Małopolskie	9. <b>Cracow</b> Functional Area	Association	14	1,030,000	202.1	34.0	236.1	229	16.9
Mazowieckie	10. <b>Warsaw</b> Functional Area	Agreement	40	2,700,000	142.1	23.7	165.8	61	4.1
Opolskie	11. <b>Opole</b> Agglomeration	Association	21	334,000	56.9	14.5	71.4	214	3.4
Podkarpackie	12. <b>Rzeszów</b> Functional Area	Agreement	13	359,336	65.5	7.3	72.8	203	5.6
Podlaskie	13. <b>Białystok</b> Functional Area	Association	9	415,531	67.2	8.8	76.0	183	8.4
Pomorskie	14. <b>Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot</b> Metropolitan Area	Association	30	1,270,000	193.4	65.8	259.3	204	8.6
Śląskie	15. <b>Central Subregion</b>	Association	73	2,759,961	639.1	100.0	739.1	268	10.1
	16. <b>Northern Subregion</b>	Agreement	34	527,575	95.9	11.2	107.1	203	3.2
	17. <b>Southern Subregion</b>	Agreement	38	665,269	92.9	12.2	105.1	158	2.8
	18. <b>Western Subregion</b>	Association	24	637,712	92.9	12.5	105.4	165	4.4
Świętokrzyskie	19. <b>Kielce</b> Functional Area	Agreement	12	340,317	68.6	13.8	82.4	242	6.9
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	20. <b>Olsztyn</b> Functional Area	Agreement	7	230,000	42.1	16.5	58.6	255	8.4
Wielkopolskie	21. <b>Kalisz-Ostrów Wielkopolski</b> Agglomeration	Association	24	358,012	61.3	7.8	69.1	193	2.9
	22. <b>Poznań</b> Functional Area	Association	22	1,014,194	174.4	22.2	196.6	194	8.9
Zachodniopomorskie	23. <b>Koszalin-Kołobrzeg-Białogrod</b> Functional Area	Agreement	19	298,740	34.0	6.0	40.0	134	2.1
	24. <b>Szczecin</b> Metropolitan Area	Association	13	687,247	97.9	11.2	109.1	159	8.4
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>522</b>	<b>17,817,314</b>	<b>3113.9</b>	<b>570.2</b>	<b>3684.1</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>7.1</b>

Source: Adapted from Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak 2018

**Thematic scope**

One of the most visible aspects of investments integration in Poland is the use of various thematic objectives, in order to tailor different kinds of investments to the needs and potentials of a particular territory and to allow a synergy effect. Thematic objectives realised in the Polish ITI strategies are quite diverse. All ITIs planned investments within the thematic objective (TO) 4. *Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy*. It is also the most popular objective among all member states in relation to SUD investments (Van der Zwet et al., 2017). Its various sub-priorities constitute 22% of all priorities of the ITI strategies (on average there are 3.2 sub-priorities of this objective per strategy). Besides TO 4, the most frequently chosen investment priorities are: TO 10. *Investing in education, training and lifelong learning* (16%, 2.3 priorities per strategy), and TO 3. *Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs* (13%, 1.9 priorities per strategy). These latter objectives differ from those chosen by other member states, which more often opted for TO 6. *Environment, resource efficiency*, and TO 9. *Social inclusion*. A summary of all general priorities targeted by Polish ITI strategies can be seen in Figure 16.

Figure 16. General thematic objectives of EU cohesion policy: % of all priorities of the Polish ITI strategies

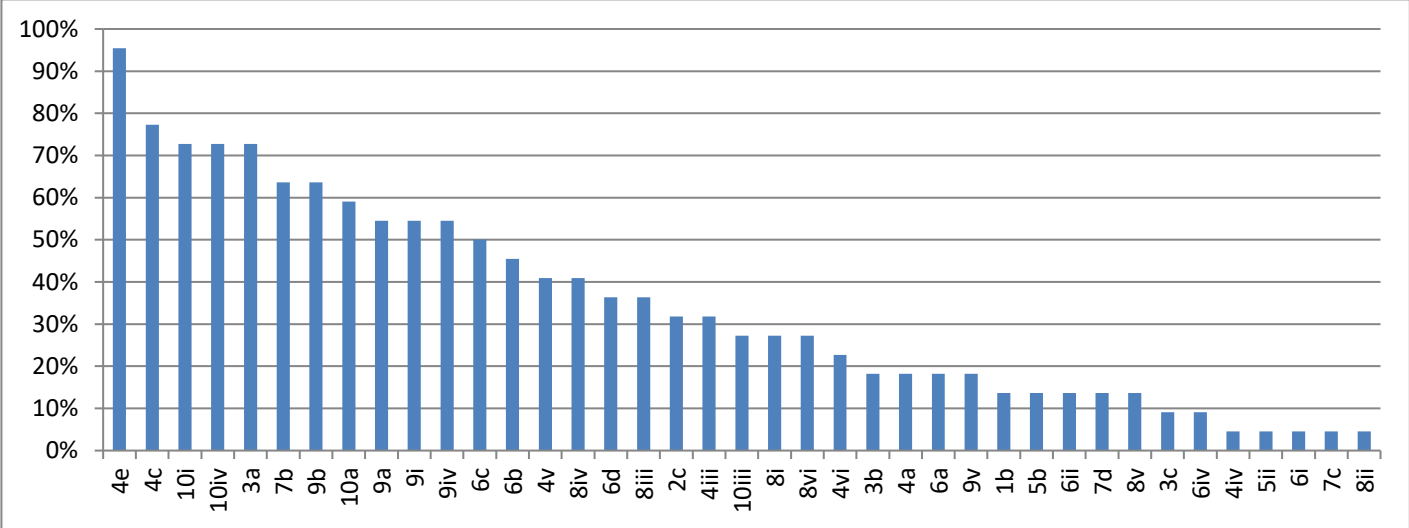


N=22 strategies. Source:(Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak, 2018)

In total, there are 39 sub-priorities, or thematic areas (see Annex VII) financed under Polish ITIs, among which the most popular are 4e, 4c, 10i, 10iv and 3a (see Figure 17). On average an ITI strategy covers 12 investment priorities (max. 23 in the Wrocław FUA, min. 7 in the Warsaw FUA). It is striking to note that none of the ITIs in Poland is investing in TO 11. *Improving the efficiency of public administration*, and only 3 out of the 22 analysed strategies invest in TO 1. *Strengthening research, technological development and innovation*. However, it does not have to mean that targeted urban functional areas do not invest at all in public

administration and innovativeness from EU funds. **ITI IBs were mostly funded from the national OP Technical Assistance**, dedicated to supporting administrative capacity of organisations involved in CP implementation. Local authorities could apply to other sources of EU funding, e.g. the national OP Innovative Economy. However, these areas were not included in any Polish ITI strategies.

Figure 17. Detailed thematic objectives of EU cohesion policy: % of Polish ITI strategies



N=22 strategies. Source: (Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak 2018)

**Existing literature on Polish ITI**

The implementation of ITI in Poland has been the subject of academic publications (Churski, 2018; Churski et al., 2018; Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak, 2018; Frankowski, Szmytkowska, 2015; Kaczmarek, Kociuba, 2017; Kociuba, 2015, 2017; Kozak, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Krukowska, Lackowska, 2017; Mendez et al., 2021). Among other issues, researchers analysed the governance models, institutional embeddedness, geographical scope, relation to ‘place-based’ policy, main challenges. An official evaluation of ITI implementation was conducted by independent experts for the Ministry of Economic Development (Wolański, 2018). Moreover, think-tanks and academics specialising in urban development issued monitoring reports in this regard (Janas, Jarczewski, 2017; Truskolaski et al., 2016).

The evaluation of ITI is not the purpose of this research, but information provided in the publications mentioned above contribute to a better understanding of the overall context of the implementation of ITI in the two analysed metropolitan areas.



### 3.2. Characteristics of the two Polish metropolitan areas

The FUA chosen for this research are the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS) and the Lublin Functional Area (LFA). They are located in the same country, share the same legal framework and national administrative rules of ITI implementation. Beyond this, however, the two FUA have very different characteristics that are crucial for understanding the role of political factors in collaboration within ITI implementation.

The FUA were carefully selected on basis of four criteria: varying legal form, mode of project selection, socio-economic and cultural characteristics, and the scale of the area and allocated resources (see Section 2.2.1). In general, LFA can be perceived as an ‘average’ Polish ITI in terms of a number of municipalities, allocated budget and a non-competitive mode of project selection. CS, on the contrary, is the largest FUA implementing ITI in the whole EU in terms of number of municipalities and allocated resources, and the only one in Poland using a competitive mode for selecting ERDF-funded projects. LFA is located in one of the poorest, while CS in one of the richest regions in Poland. Key characteristics of both metropolitan areas are summarised in Table 17.

Table 17 Key characteristics of the analysed metropolitan areas

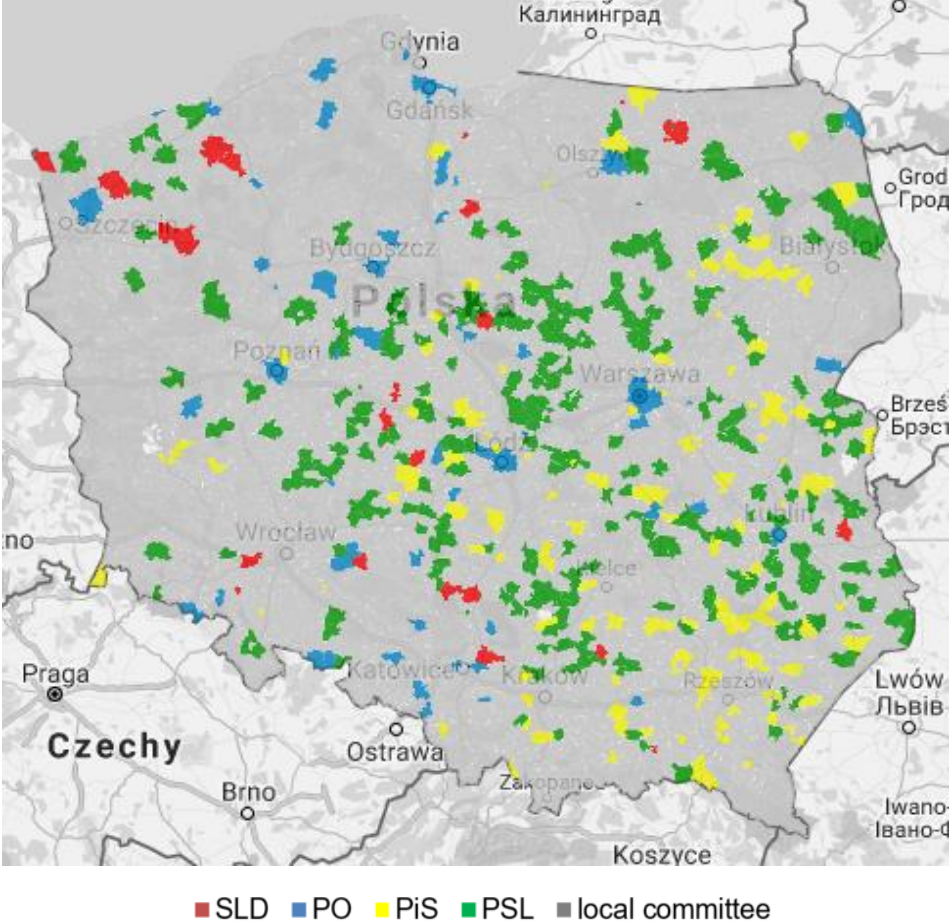
Characteristic	CS	LFA
<b>Legal form</b>	Association	Agreement
<b>The core ITI city</b>	Katowice/Gliwice <sup>32</sup>	Lublin
<b>Number of local government units</b>	81	16
<b>Number of inhabitants</b>	2.76 million	0.55 million
<b>Area</b>	5.577 km <sup>2</sup>	1.582 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>ITI budget</b>	€739.1 million	€105.4 million
<b>ITI budget per capita</b>	€286	€192
<b>ITI budget per local government unit</b>	€9.12 million	€6.6 million
<b>Main project selection mode</b>	Competitive	Non-competitive

Source: ITI strategies of CS and LFA (Association of the Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship, 2016; Lublin City Office, 2016)

<sup>32</sup> The official regional capital is Katowice, while the headquarters of the ITI association are in Gliwice;

Another important comparative aspect of the two metropolitan areas is the **political affiliation** of municipal mayors, and of the marshals in each voivodeship (region). At the time of field research, the politicians in power both at local and regional levels were elected in 2014. At the local level, it is worth highlighting that 85% of elected mayors in Poland were officially **not affiliated with any political party** (see Figure 18).

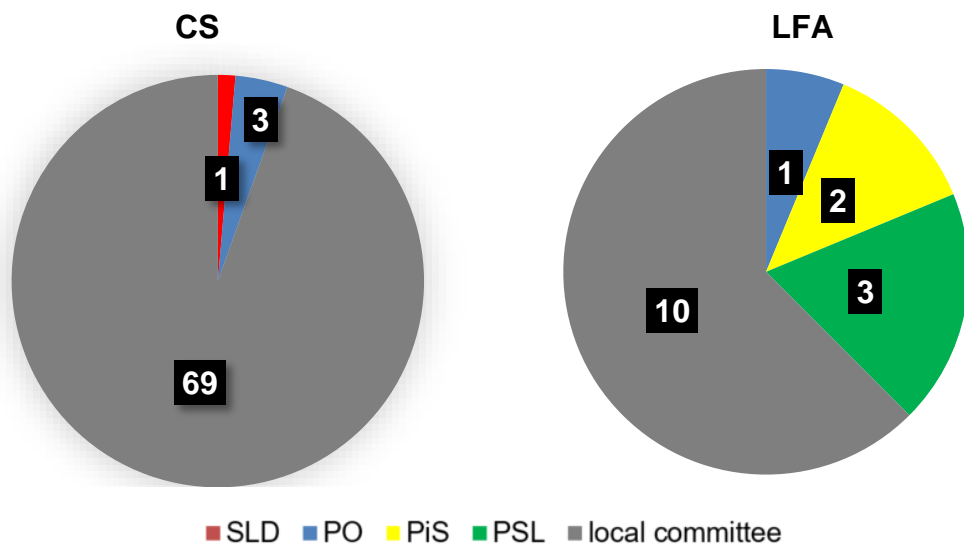
Figure 18 Winners of local elections in Poland in 2014



Source: [www.mojapolis.pl](http://www.mojapolis.pl)

Similarly in the two metropolitan areas, a great majority of mayors won elections representing local committees (see Figure 19). In CS, only four mayors represented either Platforma Obywatelska (PO, in English the Civic Platform, a centre-right party) or Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD, in English the Democratic Left Alliance, a post-communist left-wing party). In LFA, the six party-affiliated mayors came from Platforma Obywatelska, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL, in English the Polish People’s Party, an agrarian party), and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS, in English the Law and Justice, a right-wing party that in 2015 won the national elections).

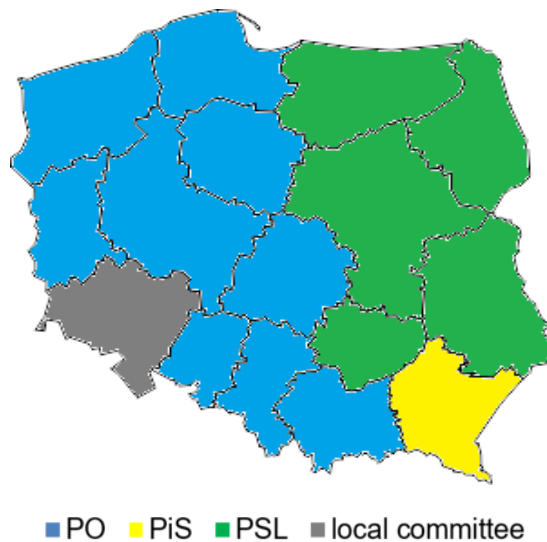
Figure 19 Party affiliation of the mayors in the Central Subregion and the Lublin Functional Area



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Bank Danych Lokalnych (<https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/start>)

The regional elections in 2014 had a more partisan character than the local ones. In Śląskie, the majority of votes was secured by PO. This party won in the majority of regions, located mostly in the West-Centre part of the country (see Figure 20). PSL won the regional elections in Lubelskie, similarly to other four Eastern regions of Poland. Until the elections in 2015, both parties constituted the coalition ruling the national government.

Figure 20 Winners of regional elections in Poland in 2014

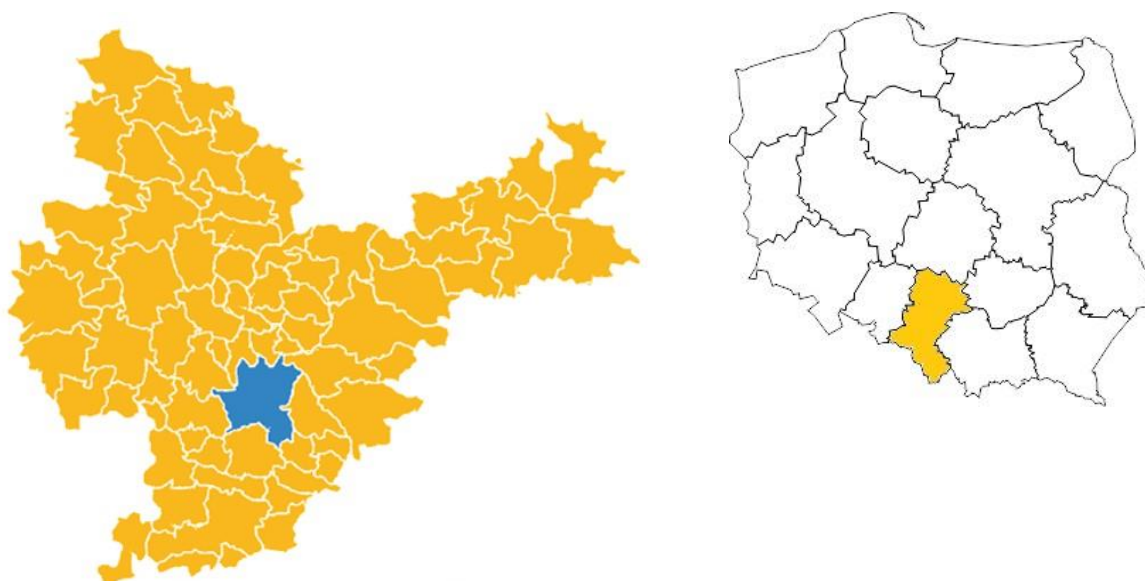


Source: own elaboration based on data from the Bank Danych Lokalnych (<https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/start>)

### 3.2.1. The Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship <sup>33</sup>

CS is the biggest functional urban area targeted by ITI instruments in the EU. It is one of the two biggest metropolitan areas in Poland with nearly 2.7 million citizens. It is a polycentric area, including 15 cities with around 100-250 thousand inhabitants each, and 58 surrounding municipalities (see Figure 21). On top of the 73 municipalities, eight counties located within CS joined the association. The whole area covers 5.577 km<sup>2</sup>, and the distance between some municipalities of the FUA exceeds 100 km.

Figure 21 Map of the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship



Source: [www.subregioncentralny.pl](http://www.subregioncentralny.pl)

Due to the large size of the CS, the subregion was divided into five ‘under-regions’, following the borders of NUTS 3 classification<sup>34</sup> (see Figure 22). They group a number of counties (in Polish ‘powiat’) and correspond with a comparable number of inhabitants in each part. This division was used in forming governance and resources division among members, as explained in Chapter 7 and 8.

<sup>33</sup> This section is based on the CS ITI strategy (Association of the Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship, 2016). Parts of the text were used by the author for the Polish case study in the World Bank’s report on organisational models for inter-jurisdictional agreements within the project ‘Romania Catching-Up Regions’ (Kriss et al., 2019).

<sup>34</sup> More information: [www.stat.gov.pl/en/regional-statistics/classification-of-territorial-units/classification-of-territorial-units-for-statistics-nuts/the-nuts-classification-in-poland](http://www.stat.gov.pl/en/regional-statistics/classification-of-territorial-units/classification-of-territorial-units-for-statistics-nuts/the-nuts-classification-in-poland)

Figure 22 Division of the Central Subregion into 5 'under-regions'



'Under-regions': 1. Bytomski, 2. Gliwicki, 3. Katowicki, 4. Sosnowiecki, 5. Tyski. Source: [www.subregioncentralny.pl](http://www.subregioncentralny.pl)

The Śląskie region is in general highly urbanised, and the majority of citizens live in CS. It has four times higher population density than average in Poland - 494 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. The density however differs from 37 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (Szczekociny) to 3,869 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (Świętochłowice). In 2016, registered unemployment in CS was lower than in the whole country. However, it differed internally, from 3.8% in Katowice to 17.2% in Bytom. It was the highest among persons with low competences, among women and among people older than 55 years old.

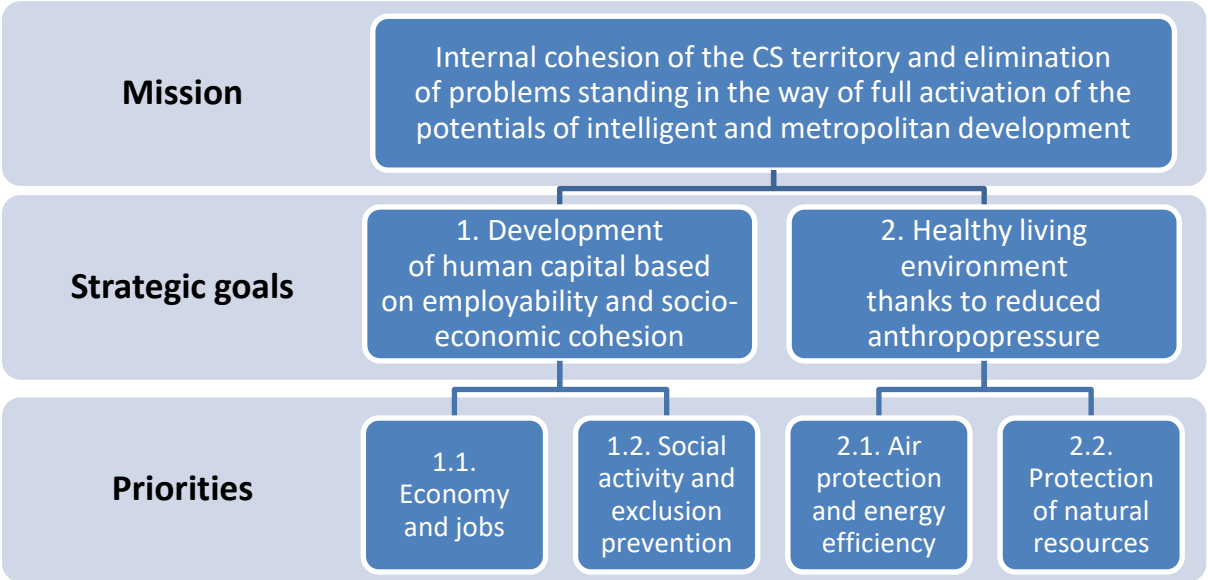
CS is characterised with a dominant mining sector and is the key industrial centre of the country. The high level of urbanisation and industrial character led to environmental degradation processes, including pollution of air, water and soil. Consequently, a significant part of the CS requires revitalisation. This includes not only a physical aspect of the territories, but also restoring and creating their new socio-economic functions.

In 2013, 65% of GDP of Śląskie was produced in CS, which was also nearly 10% of national GDP. GDP per capita of CS was 43,834 PLN, which is higher than in the whole region (44,760 PLN) and in the whole country (43,020 PLN). Despite the restructuring of the coal, metallurgical and energy industries, CS still plays an important role in these areas. Since the year 2000, the role of the modern technology sector has been growing, in the electronics sector, automotive industry, chemical industry and food processing. Many companies in the new sectors invested using the support of special economic areas, incubators and technological parks opened in the CS. In total, over 60% of small and medium companies from Śląskie is located in the CS.

CS has a well-developed transport infrastructure, including railway, national and regional roads. Moreover, it belongs to territories belonging to the Baltic-Adriatic corridor within Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)<sup>35</sup>. Also the internal public transport is important, especially considering the polycentric character and the particularly high density of population.

The CS Strategy contains a more detailed diagnosis of the socio-economic characteristics of the territory, as well as a typical SWOT analysis. It formulates the main mission, strategic goals and priorities of the ITI strategy (see Figure 23). On this basis, it lists main activities, specific aims and planned areas of ITI investments. Moreover, the strategy includes financial plan of the strategy implementation, division of responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation. Particular projects are not defined due to competitive mode of project selection.

Figure 23 Structure of the mission, strategic goals and priorities of the CS ITI Strategy



Source: Own elaboration based on (Association of the Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship , 2016)

### 3.2.2. The Lublin Functional Area<sup>36</sup>

The Lublin Functional Area (LFA) is located in the Lubelskie region in the Eastern part of Poland. It is characterised with similar features to an average Polish ITI. It includes 16 municipalities (see Figure 24), covers a population of nearly 550 thousand people, and disposes a budget of over 100 million EUR. It is a monocentric area focused around the capital city of

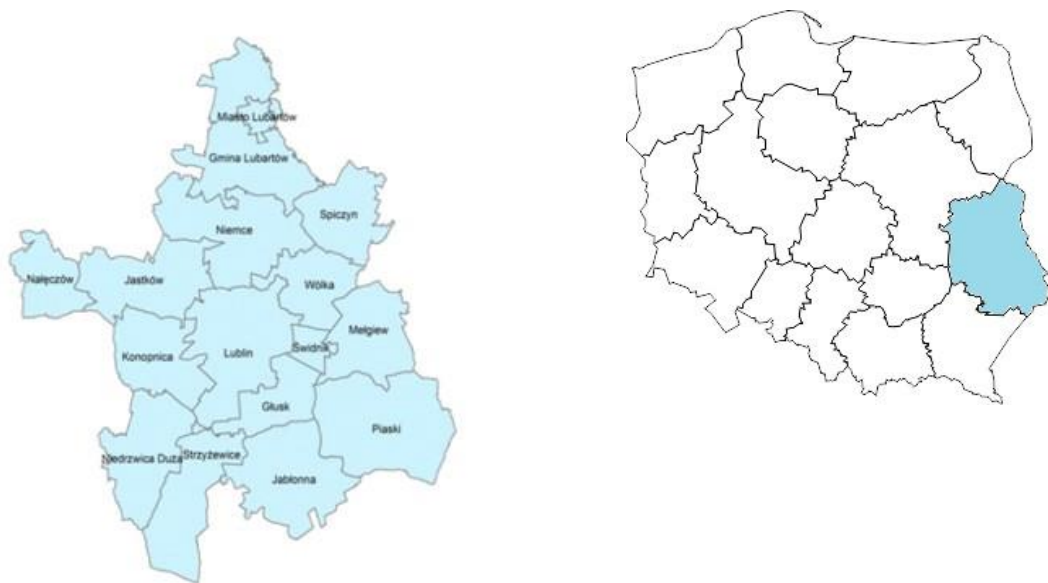
<sup>35</sup> More information [ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t_en)

<sup>36</sup> This section is based on the LFA ITI strategy (Lublin City Office, 2016). Parts of the text were used by the author for the Polish case study in the World Banks’s report on organisational models for inter-jurisdictional agreements within the project ‘Romania Catching-Up Regions’ (Kriss et al., 2019).

Lublin, scoping around 64% of LFA's inhabitants. The remaining 15 municipalities are located nearby each other and have similar sizes, representing from around 1% to 8% of the population.

For historical reasons, the Eastern regions of Poland are among the poorest parts of the country. The LFA economy has an agricultural-industrial profile, with nearly 80% of the area dedicated to agriculture, mostly fruit, vegetable and wheat production. In 2013, SMEs constituted 99.7% of all companies registered in LFA, out of which most has a micro character (0-9 employees). Industry has mostly dairy and meat specialisation, and has brewing and distilling traditions. Other branches include machinery and aviation.

Figure 24 Map of the Lublin Functional Area



Source: (Lublin City Office, 2016)

The accumulation of industrial entities belonging to the high technology sector occurs mainly in Lublin, Świdnik and Lubartów. In the capital city and two towns there are located a number of technological parks, a special economic area, a start-up incubator, and a couple of research and development institutions. Lublin accumulates the majority of jobs offered in the LFA. In 2013, registered unemployment was at the 8.1% level, 2.7 percentage points than in 2008. It was slightly lower than in the whole Lubelskie region (9.9%) and Poland (8.8%).

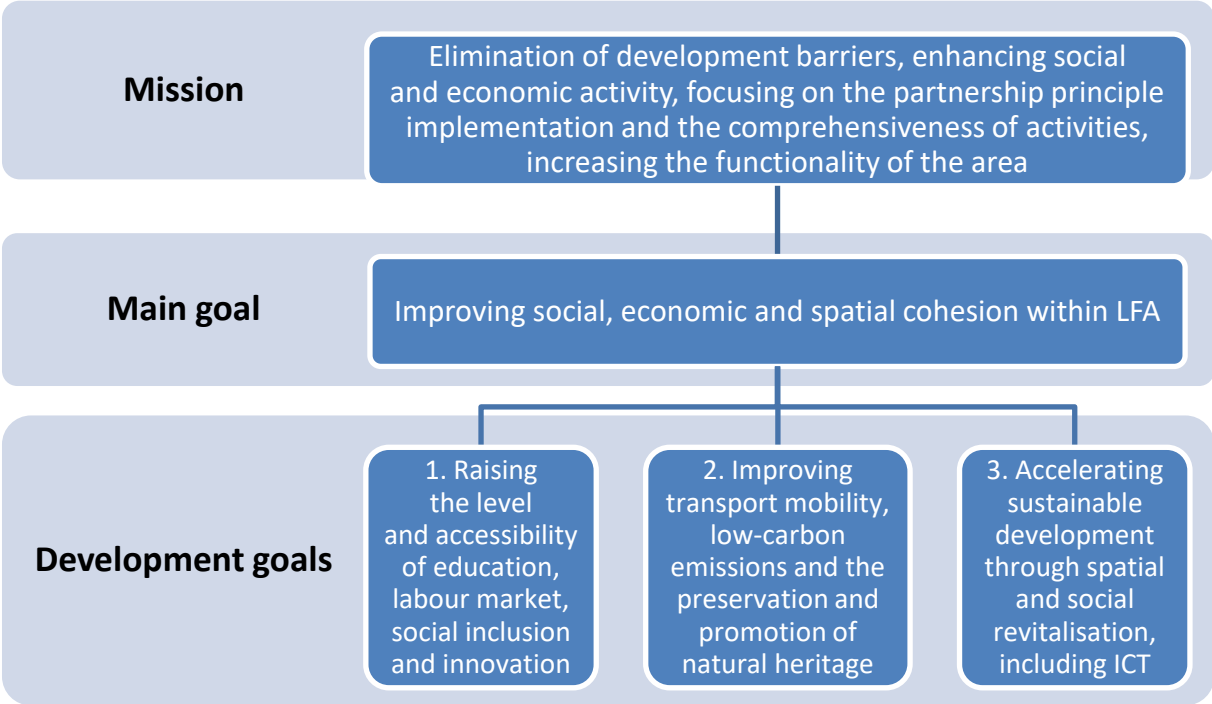
The Lublin region is a valuable natural area, therefore there are many legally protected areas and objects forming the nature protection system. Among other, this system consists of national parks, nature reserves and landscape parks. Moreover, the town of Nałęczów is specialised in spa, medical and tourist services, based on precious minerals included in the underground water

sources. Nevertheless, both Lublin and Lubelskie have problems with air pollution (PM10 indicators exceeding the maximum norms).

Transport infrastructure in Eastern Poland is less developed than in other parts of the country. Consequently, spatial accessibility of LFA is relatively poor, both in the multimodal variant and road-only variant. This includes lower than average in Poland length of roads and railway per km<sup>2</sup>. This poorer is connected to the peripheral location of the region in relation to national and European development centres, and historic reasons.

The ITI Strategy includes a more detailed diagnosis of the socio-economic situation in the LFA, and provides a SWOT analysis, highlighting the key development potentials and challenges. On this basis, the Strategy specifies the main mission of ITI implementation, its main goal and specific development goals (see Figure 25). The document identifies the relation between ITI with national, regional and local strategic documents, and defines the division of the Strategy implementation responsibilities regarding project preparation, assessment and selection, monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 25 Structure of the mission and goals of the LFA ITI Strategy



Source: Own elaboration based on (Lublin City Office, 2016)



The Strategy includes a detailed financial plan of how to achieve its goals. It specifies 10 preselected projects, to be funded from the ERDF (see Table 18). Projects funded from European Social fund are not included, as they are selected in a competitive procedure described in the strategy. Each project is mostly financed from EU funds (see the co-financing rate column), while the remaining resources come from the municipal budgets. Four of them are realised by multiple municipalities, while six have an individual character. Within this, projects 1-5, consuming the majority of ITI funds allocation, are located on the territory of the capital city.

**Table 18 Preselected ITI projects in LFA**

Project title	Total project value (PLN)	Total amount from ITI funds (PLN)	Co-financing rate	% of allocation within the ITI funds	Number of municipalities
1. Integrated Communication Centre for LFA	190,860,178.63	136,687,647.65	85%	34.4%	1
2. Construction and modernisation of stops and transport hubs integrated with other types of transport for the needs of LFA	49,576,598.24	34,911,916.89	85%	8.8%	1
3. Development of the Traffic Management System in Lublin	24,121,349.65	20,503,147.17	85%	5.2%	1
4. Revitalisation of a part of the Lublin City Centre	67,805,422.77	42,775,139.39	71%	10.8%	1
5. Natural revitalisation of the People's Park in Lublin located in the area of the Integrated Communication Centre for LOF	19,724,452.09	15,399,050.18	83%	3.9%	1
6. 'Mobile LFA'	99,925,641.41	77,484,810.24	78%	19.5%	11
7. 'Green LFA'	21,718,660.00	18,460,861.00	85 %	4.6%	5
8. Improving the spatial, social and cultural cohesion of LFA through revitalisation	41,300,460.66	28,408,646.09	71%	7.2%	9
9. 'E-communes' in LFA	4,493,347.00	3,662,519.95	85%	0.9%	4
10. Optimisation of connections between the S17/12 expressway and the Airport by building the Kusociński Street	28,310,589.00	17,000,000.00	67%	4.3%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>547,836,699.45</b>	<b>395,293,738.56</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>n/a</b>

Source: Own elaboration based on (Lublin City Office, 2016)

## 4. A guide through the empirical analysis

The next four chapters contain the comparative analysis of the empirical material gathered during field research in two metropolitan areas: Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS) and the Lublin Functional Area (LFA). They aim to answer the two research questions:

- 1. What are the political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?**
- 2. What is the impact of the identified political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?**

**This section explains how the four chapters respond to the research questions** (see Table 19) **and to the ICA Framework** (see Figure 26). It also sets out the method used for assessing the impact of political factors, covered in Chapters 7 and 8. Finally, it indicates which categories from the coding exercise fed into the analysis in each chapter (see Table 21), and captures key observations from the quantitative summary of this first stage of the analysis.

**Table 19 Mapping the empirical analysis contributing to particular research questions**

Chapter	RQ 1: Identifying political factors	RQ 2: Assessing the impact
5	x	x
6	x	
7		x
8		x

**Chapter 5** explores the meaning of politics and its impact according to the research participants. It contributes to both research questions with the most inductive insights, capturing how these matters were understood on the ground. This chapter is based on a single coding category ‘understanding of politics’, that is not included in the ICA Framework. It concludes with a matrix with the identified political factors and the elements of ITI implementation affected by them, to the extent acknowledged by research participants when speaking about politics.

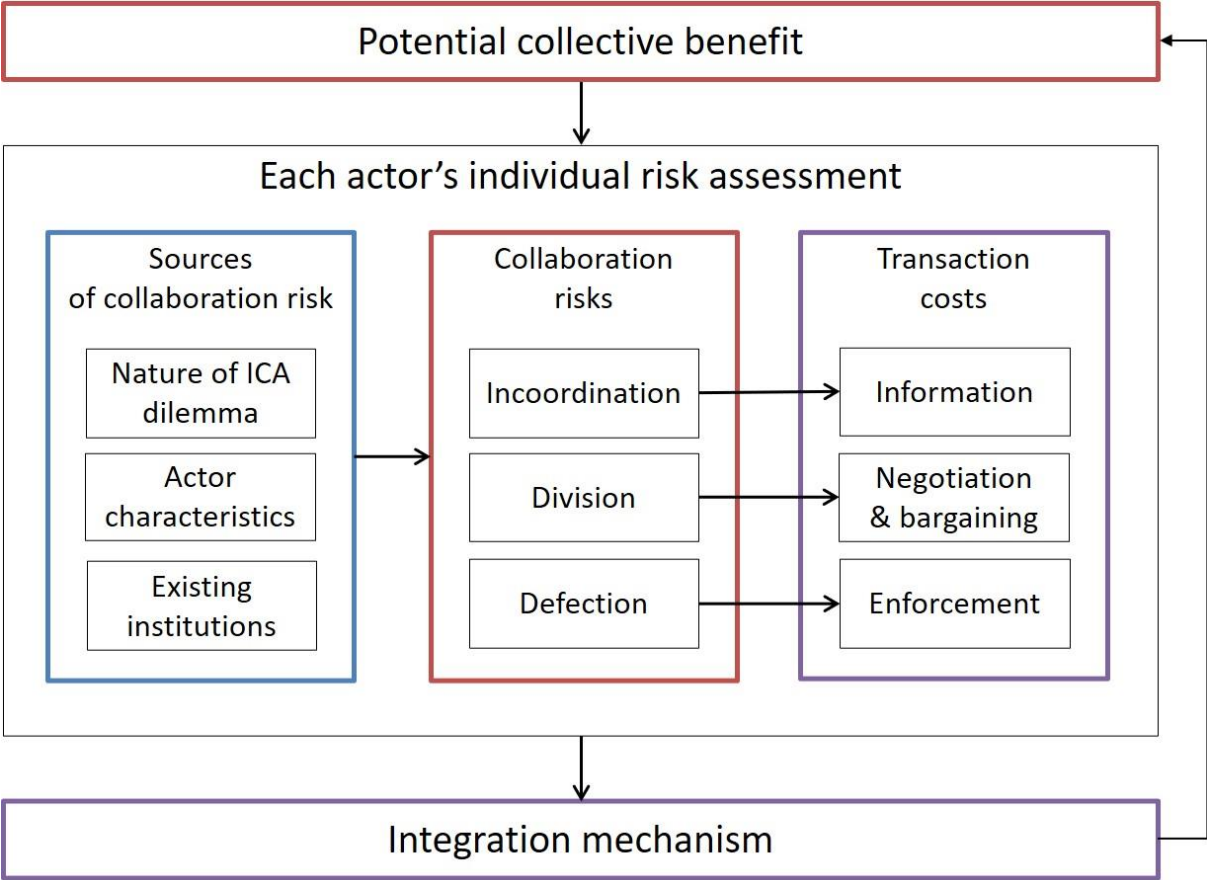
The next three chapters deepen this analysis, following the structure of the ICA Framework (see Figure 23). Chapter 6 focuses on the list of identified political factors, Chapters 7 and 8 assess their impact on particular elements of inter-municipal collaboration.

**Chapter 6** contributes to the first research question. It broadens the scope of political factors identified in Chapter 5 by exploring the sources of collaboration risks involved in joint ITI implementation. Following the ICA Framework, Chapter 6 includes the analysis of the empirical material related to three subcategories within this element: the nature of the ICA dilemmas related to ITI, the characteristics of actors involved in collaboration, and the institutions existing in both metropolitan areas. Under each of these categories, the analysis aims to identify political factors present in the two metropolitan areas, even if research participants did not perceive them as political. The chapter concludes with a list of identified political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in CS and LFA.

**Chapter 7** contributes to answering the second research question. It assesses how the political factors identified in chapters 5 and 6 shaped two elements of the ICA Framework: perception of the collective benefit from ITI implementation, and the collaboration risks involved. Usually, the collective benefit is considered in the ICA literature as the first element, influencing each actor's individual risk assessment. However, due to the discovered dynamic element of the ICA Framework (see Section 1.1), on top of the initial, potential collective benefit, the analysis also includes the assessment of how the benefits' perception changed over time, and identifies political factors involved. The chapter finishes with a matrix of a qualitative assessment of the impact of political factors on the two ICA Framework elements.

**Chapter 8** equally assesses the impact of identified political factors, but in relation to how they shaped transaction costs of ITI implementation. Additionally, it looks at how political factors shaped the costs of choosing integration mechanisms, and influenced their perception in the context of future collaboration in both metropolitan areas. This chapter also concludes with the assessment of political factors' impact on transaction costs and integration mechanisms.

Figure 26 Visualisation of empirical analysis within particular elements of the ICA Framework



\* Legend: Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Chapter 8

**The assessment of impact in Chapters 7 and 8**

Assessment of the impact of political factors on joint ITI implementation includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The **quantitative** aspect of this assessment is based on the number of research participants acknowledging the impact of a particular political factor on an element of ICA Framework. The grade additionally includes a **qualitative** assessment of the importance that each factor played in shaping the particular aspect of collaboration. On the basis of analysis, each political factor is given a grade of impact: high, medium, low or none. The grade of influenced is then operationalised with numbers (see Table 20). The numbers achieved for each ICA category are then **aggregated** to assess the total impact. These overall findings are presented in Chapter 9.

Table 20 Approach to the assessment of the political factors' impact

Impact score		Quantitative strength of evidence: number of research participants acknowledging the impact			
		High	Medium	Low	None
Qualitative strength of evidence: assessment of importance	High	3	3	2	1
	Medium	3	2	2	1
	Low	2	2	1	0
	None	1	1	0	0

In total there are 10 categories in which each political factor can score 3 points: four subcategories of both collaboration risks and transaction costs<sup>37</sup>, one category for collective benefits and one category for integration mechanisms. The consequent higher weight of risks and costs in calculating the total score is justified by their importance in the collaborative process. Therefore, the maximum score in each metropolitan areas is 30, and minimum 0 (see calculation below). These scores can be compared and translated back to qualitative measures.

<i>Impact on collective benefit</i>	+	<i>Sum of impact on all collaboration risks</i>	+	<i>Sum of impact on all transaction costs</i>	+	<i>Impact on integration mechanism</i>	=	<b><i>Total impact score</i></b>
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This assessment is **not relevant for chapter 5** due to insufficient data, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative assessment of the impact grade. It highlights the elements of ITI implementation in which the impact was acknowledged, but it was not possible to assess to what extent.

<sup>37</sup> Three categories following the ICA Framework, and one additional discovered during data analysis. See respective sections on collaboration risks and transaction costs for details.

## The quantitative summary of the coding exercise

Before starting the in-depth analysis, a quantitative overview of the segments coded in relation to particular categories presents initial insights from the collected data (see Table 21). The main observation is that the three categories related to the sources of collaboration risks included slightly over 50% of all codes. In both regions, the majority were related to actors' characteristics, which can be expected to contribute to the main source of factors influencing collaboration in the analysed regions.

The second most frequently commented category is related to transaction costs. Here, one can observe the biggest difference between the two case study regions: 12 percentage points more segments coded under this category in CS than in LFA. This can be initially assessed as related to the competitive mode of project selection and consequent more complex ongoing collaboration processes. It will, however, be verified in a deeper qualitative analysis in the next sections.

Other categories gathered in total between 4% and 12% of coded segments. It is worth highlighting that relatively few segments were coded under the descriptive subcategory 'understanding of politics', created on top of the ICA-framework-based categories. This can indicate that research participants did not often speak about politics directly. Further analysis of this issue can be found in the next chapter.

**Table 21** Quantitative summary of the segments coded under all main subcategories

Chapter	Code subcategory	CS	LFA	TOTAL	CS %	LFA %	TOTAL %
5	Understanding of politics	78	83	161	4%	4%	4%
6	Nature of ICA dilemma	99	166	265	5%	8%	7%
	Actors characteristics	583	797	1380	<b>32%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>
	Existing ICA institutions	192	224	416	10%	10%	10%
7	Collective benefit	95	172	267	5%	8%	7%
	Collaboration risks	237	264	501	13%	12%	12%
8	Transaction costs	533	385	918	<b>29%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>23%</b>
	Integration mechanism	33	114	147	2%	5%	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1850</b>	<b>2205</b>	<b>4055</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 5. Local actors' understanding of politics and its impact on joint ITI implementation

This chapter provides initial insights contributing to both main research questions. The chapter is based on the analysis of the material coded under a descriptive category 'understanding of politics', that is outside the ICA Framework (see Table 21). Following the interpretive research design, identifying the meaning of the term 'politics' for local actors was an important starting point in the field research on politics in inter-municipal collaboration. The literature review revealed a range of meanings, and it was crucial to avoid the risk of selecting a narrow definition that could limit relevance to local actors. This was especially important due to the tensions and ambiguities in the politicisation literature, which were confirmed by the field research.

Given these potential ambiguities, an open approach was taken to understanding politics and political factors, in order to capture **what these concepts mean for research participants**. Separate coding was carried out for all sentences in which the words 'politics', 'political', 'politician', 'party' (or similar) were used directly, or when research participants described situations related to the national or lower level political situation.

A quantitative summary of how the key words listed above were used reveals that in total, research participants in each regions mentioned them less than 90 times (see Table 22). Considering that the coding exercise included over 4000 coded segments, these numbers show that research participants did not speak about political issues eagerly. This was also acknowledged directly in the field notes from CS: *The subject of politics almost never appears in conversations. It is a kind of taboo* [S\_Fieldnotes]. Research participants spoke even more rarely about 'politicians' and 'parties'<sup>38</sup>.

Table 22 Frequency of the use of words 'politics' (and other related) by research participants

Key word	CS	LFA	TOTAL
Politics/policy*	23	40	63
Political	48	34	82
Politicians	10	2	12
Party, political group	7	10	17
TOTAL	88	86	174

\* in Polish the word 'polityka' has a double meaning, and often it was impossible to determine which one was intended.

<sup>38</sup> The word 'party' has a pejorative meaning in Poland as a result of the Communist past (there was only one 'Party'). This phenomenon can be seen in the current political scene of Poland, where none of the parties in the parliament use this word in their names. More often, participants used words 'ugrupowanie' and 'opcja', which can be translated as 'political groups'.

Nevertheless, the collected empirical material provides valuable observations related to the meaning and impact of politics in LFA and CS. The first section contributes to the first research question by identifying the political factors following the understanding of politics by research participants. The second section contributes to the second research questions by exploring which aspects of joint ITI implementation research participants acknowledged to have been affected by politics in the various meanings identified in the first section.

## **5.1. Identifying political factors acknowledged by local actors**

This section contributes to the first research question. First, it explores the meaning of politics and ‘political actors’ according to research participants. In what context were these terms used and what meanings were attached to them? This section summarises the key themes identified, producing a nuanced understanding of the most relevant factors in research participants’ understanding of politics. It finishes with a list of identified political factors within various meanings of politics used by research participants.

### **5.1.1. Meaning of politics for local actors**

The word ‘politics’ as such was mostly used by research participants in reference to the following issues:

1. Mayors’ decisions and activity
2. Relations of mayors with other actors
3. Elections and their consequences
4. Government’s activity and policy

#### **Politics as mayors’ decisions and activity**

Research participants identified politics with the activities of mayors in executing their prerogatives by making decisions and committing to certain measures and investments from the municipal budget. In both regions, it was perceived as a natural element of politics that mayors have a tendency to follow their **individual interests** – mostly the objective of re-election - and focus on activities appealing to voters of a particular municipality. In this way, politics is related to the **pressures influencing mayor’s** decisions: the expectations of citizens, councillors and media. From this perspective, although the commitment to inter-municipal collaboration was perceived as the mayors’ political decision, at the same time other political pressures prevented them from it.



*In the end, we cannot expect that someone who decides on these strategic directions, will act against himself and his political interest. It would be even unauthorised. [S\_AC2\_M6]*

*Generally, whoever rules, each mayor has inhabitants and he or she must satisfy their interests [L\_IO\_M5].*

*Due to the fact that there is still a lot to be done, everyone thinks about themselves first, and only then a little bit further. If only due to the fact that it is easier to fulfil one's own election promises than to get along and try to convince others, because it takes more time, and you know that there is not much time and you have to show something to citizens, so politics is entering again, and sometimes there is no such a vision for the future that results can be seen in 10-15 years. You are rather looking for something that will be visible in 2-3 years. [S\_IB\_2]*

At the same time, research participants in both CS and LFA referred to politics in relation to the **strategic thinking** of mayors, highlighting their vision of municipal development and individual ideas for projects and investments [S\_IB\_3, L\_DMayor\_M1]. In this context, many mentioned **mayors' personal characteristics**, e.g. age and maturity, charisma and leadership skills, understanding of the inter-dependencies with other municipalities and support for inter-municipal collaboration.

*A little politics functions also in ITI strategies. Everyone somehow decides, if I have 5 million, the question is whether I will put it here or there. There is a strategic decision to be made. [L\_Coor\_M3]*

*I think that age did matter. Or maybe the maturity of the mayors who either understand these needs or if they do not, they rely on their deputies or employees who advise the head of the village that it is worth doing this because it will bring us some benefits. (...) It is of great importance for the commune (...) but this is not very visible. Hence, it does not directly impact on the popularity of the mayor. [L\_DMayor\_M1]*

The political aspect of particular types of mayors' activities were highlighted to a higher extent in each region. In CS the word 'politics' was associated with **clientelism**. Research participants acknowledged that mayors may have preferences for particular companies carrying out investments in the municipality. In LFA, research participants commented on politics in the context of the **appointments for managerial positions** in public administration following politicians' recommendations.

*If there were another person in this position, the cooperation would be completely different, but there are political issues that mean that (s)he is there. (...) - Do you think (s)he has the competence to run these projects? - Definitely not personal. - And substantive? – Limited. [L\_IB\_3]*

*This may be a bit biased, but a commune may want to give [funds] to one entrepreneur, it may not want to give to another. [S\_MA\_1]*

### **Politics as relations of mayors with other actors**

For research participants, one of the most frequently occurring meanings of politics in the ITI context concerned mayors' alliances and conflicts, particularly with **higher-level politicians** at **national**, [L\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Mayor\_M5; S\_AC1\_M6; L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_2, L\_Fieldnotes,

S\_Fieldnotes]; and **regional levels** [S\_AC2\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_3, L\_Fieldnotes]. In LFA, these relations were also acknowledged at the **county level** [L\_Mayor\_M6]. In both regions, research participants acknowledged that **party affiliation** strongly influenced these relations.

*The mayor's potential competitors are just sitting there [County-level politicians], in terms of the 2018 local government elections and now the point is not to give him a decision [investment approval], so that he does not have anything to brag about, and they will also say that he is inept, because he has money in his pocket, and he cannot even spend it. [L\_Mayor\_M6]*

*At the higher level, there are more problems. - Higher, that is? - Ministry. In the Marshal's Office there is the same political option now [as the majority of mayors], I don't know what it will be like next year. [L\_IB\_3]*

*We see what are the clashes in Warsaw and this also translates below; that if someone is with the other grouping, they do not necessarily get along. [L\_Coor\_M5]*

Some research participants acknowledged also the importance of party politics in **relations between mayors and the local council** in their municipality [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Mayor\_M2, S\_AC1\_M6]. Some described local councillors as part of the political environment, and highlighted the importance of the **party affiliation** of the majority group and their alignment with the mayor's party affiliation. In these cases, research participants used words related to political 'fights':

*We have a scuffle here. And the biggest problem is the lack of own resources. Now the city was supposed to take out bonds, but the mayor lost the majority in the council, the council blocked it. [S\_AC1\_M6]*

*Not everyone would see enough benefit in this. I am talking more about politics. Because in general, the authorities are held accountable. Not only by the locals, but by councils etc. (...) And it would be much more difficult for some councillors to invest in an uncertain future. [L\_Coor\_M3]*

However, it is important to note that the understanding of the role of politics in influencing the interaction of mayors with other actors went beyond party affiliation. In some instances, the reasons for positive or negative relations between mayors and other actors was assessed as having a **personal rather than partisan character** that became more influential over time [L\_Mayor\_M2; S\_AC1\_M6].

Research participants in both regions mentioned party-based divisions as mostly present in the beginning of collaboration [S\_IB\_1, S\_DMAYOR\_M7]. However, they highlighted how alliances were built among municipalities regardless of political affiliation [S\_IB\_3], often despite differences and tendency to follow individual interests [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M2]. Some research participants suggested that on the level of particular projects, a similar age and view on the priority investments led to collaboration [S\_DMAYOR\_M7, L\_DMAYOR\_M1]. Another

aspect influencing these relations was the level of trust built among mayors, based largely on longevity and continuity (the number of terms of mayors in office).

*It was earlier, it was in 2013 or even 2012, when this association was being formed and I had no role here, it was just negotiations, negotiations and again negotiations, meetings after meetings and finally an agreement was reached at some point. It was also a stage with a lot of politics, it was mainly about such political scuffles, the Civil Platform was strong, there were a few against them. Now we are in a comfortable situation that the 'main players' here in our subregion, have largely cut themselves off from party politics, and this helps us. [S\_IB\_1]*

*From my perspective, I somehow do not notice the difference that this commune, this mayor is for one option, and we are with another option. I think that when it comes to this cooperation, this does not directly play a major role. [L\_IB\_3]*

*These mayors are aware of the importance of cooperation. That we must make good use of these billions. That to do it, effectively would change the face of it sub-region. [S\_DMayor\_M7]*

It is also important to note that the majority of Polish mayors are **officially independent**. Research participants acknowledged that unofficially mayors collaborate with parties, and that both official party affiliation and the informal alliances are characterised with **high fluctuation** [S\_AC2\_M6, L\_Coor\_M4]. Thus, analysis of the political factors shaping mayors' relations with actors must go beyond purely party political affiliations and address these other factors.

*I would say 30%, maybe 25%, [of mayors] are party functionaries, connected with these nationwide forces. And they are so to speak, faithful to their environment. The rest of this scene is very mobile. [S\_AC2\_M6]*

*Our president is such that he can get along with everyone. I mean, [they may be] non-partisan, but they have their roots somewhere [L\_Coor\_M4]*

*On the one hand you can say that a lot of people in local government are outside this political system. Many mayors, especially in their second or third term, they cut off, even if they were associated with an option, they try to cut it off, because it comes out badly in the local government. [S\_IB\_1]*

## **Politics as elections and their consequences**

Research participants often spoke about 'politics' in the context of local, regional and national elections (in Lublin 24, while in CS 11 times). In terms of **local elections**, politics was mentioned in relation to intensified pressure on mayors from the media, citizens and opposition groups during the campaign, and the influence this had on **mayors' motivations, decisions and activities**. Regarding the post-election period, research participants acknowledged the role of politics in relation to the turnover among mayors. In this way, elections directly determine who will be involved in inter-municipal collaboration, with their personal characteristics, strategic thinking and party affiliation. Elections shape the **stability of power** at the local level, influencing mayors' relations as explained above. Research participants also highlighted intensified political appointments of administrative staff following elections [L\_Fieldnotes].

After elections, the priorities of newly elected authorities may change the strategy and consequent investments [S\_Fieldnotes].

*Just before the elections, everyone will be focused on campaigns, on their activities, and they may miss something [important aspects of ITI implementation [L\_IB\_2]*

*Previous elections brought a profound change to the design, the timing and the scope – everything changed. Now, after the current elections, we do not expect major changes [S\_Fieldnotes].*

Regarding **national and regional elections**, the term ‘politics’ was used in relation to the expected or previous changes of persons in higher-level political positions and uncertain how such potential changes could influence the relations of mayors with regional and national politicians. As explained above, change of party affiliation among higher-level politicians was observed to play a significant role in shaping mayors’ relations with them. Moreover, after elections research participants noted a period of uncertainty, when newly elected national or regional authorities prepare new policies, potentially introducing changes in the approach towards the ITI instrument or other relevant policies.

*After elections not only will people change, but the points of view will change. I do not want to dress it in politics, in the sense of a party or groups, but a new man comes and this new man has the right to have a new perspective. [L\_IB\_2]*

### **Politics as government’s activity and policy**

Research participants used the word ‘politics’ also in relation to various activities, laws and policies of the government affecting ITI implementation. This included the Polish government’s relations with EU institutions [L\_IO\_M5, S\_Fieldnotes], and how this influences EU funds implementation. Moreover, Polish legislation regulating the rules of inter-municipal collaboration and ITI implementation prepared by the government can be of varying quality [L\_IB\_2], determining the framework in which research participants operate. The extent of legal and financial autonomy of municipalities is also regulated by the national law and this obviously has a direct influence on the scope of mayors’ decision making power, and collaboration resources [L\_Mayor\_M5]. Another example of politics as government activities highlighted by research participants was electoral law, defining the maximum number of terms that can be held by mayors and in this way determining the longevity of actors involved in collaboration [L\_IO\_M5] and stability of power. Any potential changes in this regard were referred to as ‘politics’.

Concerning specific policies, research participants mentioned decisions on regional policy (and ITI) support for metropolitan development versus small and less-developed towns

[S\_Mayor\_M5; L\_Mayor\_M5]. Research participants perceived this choice of priorities as a political decision, as they observed that it was motivated by the location of voters of the ruling party rather than merit-based purposes [L\_IO\_M5].

*There may be attempts to dismantle this [ITI] strategy towards more medium-sized cities, i.e. Zamość, Chełm, and in general, to the county towns, with less focus on Lublin. PiS will evidently want to do this if they win this election. [L\_IO\_M5]*

*As a result of some completely incomprehensible for me political decisions, out of a few million promised for the transport study, but not in writing, by the Ministry, they gave us 1.5 million. Suddenly there was no money for it (...). And the study really is what everyone needs. [S\_IO\_M5]*

### 5.1.2. Meaning of political actors for local actors

There are uncertainties about what is meant by political actors, notably the ‘purple zone’ that exists between politicians and administrators (see Section 1.2.2). Research participants rarely spoke about ‘politicians’. More often they referred to political functions when referring to actors at different administrative:

- **Municipality:** Mayors, deputy mayors and councillors
- **County:** Starosta
- **Region:** Marshal, Voivod<sup>39</sup>
- **State:** ‘Government’, politicians of the ruling party, ministers, ‘Ministry’

These political actors were either directly elected, elected by the councillors/members of regional parliament, or appointed by politicians. In some instances, civil servants’ functions had a **dual, administrative and political role**. Deputy mayors, whose political role was acknowledged by research participants (including some deputy mayors themselves) are a prominent example of this duality.

*Everything is political, because we are elected. I am an official, but my boss is elected. (...) For efficiency, there has to be a good organisational construction and someone has to create it, i.e. a quasi-official. This has to be someone with an understanding of management. In certain situations, quasi-political decisions must be made. [S\_DMayor\_M7].*

*The political role can be understood in various ways, either as a party-based or as a mode of action. [S\_IB\_1]*

This did not mean that all civil servants employed following politicians’ recommendations were considered as political actors. It was rather related to **the functions they performed**. One of the research participants specified that ‘*The role of the decision maker is to decide, to set certain*

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<sup>39</sup> In Polish regions there are two independent political powers: Marshalls are elected by the members of the regions’ parliament members, Voivods are appointed by the national government.

*directions. To define for the needs of your internal organization what are the strategic goals and decisions. Then to support the realization, (...) and control the quality of implementation.'* [S\_IB\_3]. Another described a political actor as a '*leader, representative, mobiliser, storyteller, mentor, lector, negotiator, project-creator*' [L\_IB\_4]. From this perspective, also the **ITI Office Directors** could be perceived as political actors: first, they had to fulfil these functions as representatives of their inter-municipal entity, and then they had to be accepted by all mayors involved. Their role will be further explored in the 'Actors characteristics' section of this chapter.

*I am aware that certain positions are political. The person who manages such an [ITI] association will also be a political person. - In what sense? - it will not be a person elected because of his/her merits, but it will be the person either supported by the city as the largest unit, or chosen by municipalities due to the fact that they may all be from a specific party after the next local elections. Perhaps they will have such strength that they will choose their boss. [L\_IB\_2]*

### 5.1.3. Identified political factors

Based on this analysis, it can be observed that research participants distinguished two political worlds – the **local sphere** of the mayors and other local politicians, and the **higher-level sphere** of the county, regional and national politicians and relevant administration jurisdictions. In both spheres there were a number of layers, indicating the various meanings of 'politics': activities and decisions of politicians, their relations with other actors, and elections.

The analysis showed which aspects of each of the categories above mattered, according to research participants. On this basis a list of political factors was created within each category (see Table 23). The most (11) identified factors are associated to relations of mayors with other local and higher-level actors.

Table 23 Political factors acknowledged by the research participants

Understanding of politics	Political factor
<b>Mayors' actions, decisions and characteristics</b>	1. Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development
	2. Number of personal ideas for projects/investments
	3. Age of mayors
	4. Perceived mayors' charisma and ambition
	5. Perceived corruption/clientelism level
	6. Level of administrative staff turnover after local elections
<b>Mayors' relations with other actors</b>	7. Party affiliation homogeneity among local mayors
	8. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayor and group dominant in the municipal council
	9. Level of fluctuation of mayors' party membership
	10. Level of trust among mayors
	11. Mayors' age of homogeneity
	12. Mayors' vision on priorities homogeneity
	13. Homogeneity of the number of terms in the function of mayors
	14. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and national authority
	15. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and regional authority
	16. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and county authority
<b>Elections and their consequences</b>	17. Perceived personal conflicts or likings between mayors and higher-level politicians
	18. Time before local elections
	19. Time after local elections
	20. Turnover among mayors after elections
	21. Time before national/regional elections
	22. Time after national/regional elections
<b>Governments' activity and policy</b>	23. Turnover among key political parties in power at various levels
	24. Level of support for metropolitan development
	25. Quality of higher-level rules of joint endeavours
	26. Government's relations with EU institutions
	27. Scope of financial and legal autonomy of mayors
	28. Maximum number of terms in the function of mayors

## 5.2. Exploring the impact of politics acknowledged by local actors

This section describes how research participants perceived the influence of politics on joint ITI implementation. The previous chapter specified particular factors based on perceived meaning of politics. The analysis allows to identify, from the research participants' point of view, which aspects of the implementation process were affected by these factors, and how this happened.

### 5.2.1. The neutral-negative character of the perceived impact

Uncertainties in the literature concerning the **positive or negative impacts of political factors on policy processes** were apparent among research participants. The varied connotations of politics were observed when analysing the words they used when referring to the term 'political' (see Table 24). The term 'political' was used to characterise a variety of nouns, out of which the majority had a neutral character (e.g. issue, decision, comment). Among the words that can be clearly marked as positive or negative (by definition or from the context of a particular sentence), only four are in the first category (marked in green), while 12 are in the latter (marked in pink). Strikingly, the positive words were used only by research participants in CS, while the majority of negative words (18 out of 28) were used in LFA. This suggests that a difference can be expected in terms of assessment of the role of politics between the regions (see Chapters 7 and 8).

The positive meaning of politics was related to strategic thinking and quality actions of individuals, and consensus among collaborators. The pejorative understanding of politics was expressed in relation to conflicts between particular actors, and non-merit-based decisions and staff appointments (see Section 1.2.1). The importance of civil servants' neutrality was expressed in particular by ITI Office directors in both regions, who strongly highlighted that they are not politically engaged. Their neutrality was important for gaining legitimacy and support by all collaborating municipalities connected with various parties.

An extreme view was expressed by two interviewees in CS, who stressed that **everything is political**. For one of them this meant that *'our whole life, every decision is political, because politics is in fact a strategy or a tool to achieve goals. We also achieve our goals in everyday life, we follow our own little politics'* [S\_AC2\_M6]. For the other person, this was related to the fact of being elected or appointed by politicians, and therefore responsible to the voters.



Table 24 Words described by research participants as political

Number	Political...	CS	LFA	Total
1	Issue, topic, aspect, dimension, factor	9	4	13
2	Decisions	4	4	8
3	Reasons, logic	4	1	5
4	Comment, opinion, point of view, assessment	4		4
5	Interest	2	2	4
6	Job position, person		4	4
7	Party, group	1	3	4
8	Circuit	1	2	3
9	Influence	2	1	3
10	Animosities, fights, turbulences	1	2	3
11	Activities, engagement	1	1	2
12	Break (slow-down)		2	2
13	Connections, liking	1	1	2
14	Context, situation	1	1	2
15	Division, polarisation	1	1	2
16	Environment, surroundings	2		2
17	Everything, whole life	2		2
18	Game, victory/failure	1	1	2
19	Nature, character	2		2
20	Puzzle, power distribution	2		2
21	Tension, friction	1	1	2
22	Acceptance	1		1
23	Agreement	1		1
24	Discussions	1		1
25	Strategic move	1		1
26	Pressure		1	1
27	Responsibility	1		1
28	Scene	1		1
29	Speech		1	1
30	Uncertainty		1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>82</b>

\*Legend: positive, negative, neutral

## 5.2.2. Perceived impact on particular aspects of ITI implementation

Thematic analysis showed that research participants observed the following areas affected by politics, described below:

1. strategic planning and investments
2. tempo of joint ITI implementation
3. discussions and negotiations
4. future prospects of collaboration

### Strategic planning and investments

Research participants observed both positive and negative influence of politics in this context. The positive one was related to the proactive role of mayors in **creating the strategic vision** for joint development, proposing concrete initiatives or giving green light for strategic projects [S\_DMayer\_M7, S\_IB\_3, L\_IB\_2]. This potentially leads to higher-quality joint investments and metropolitan development, however it is too early to assess such effects on the basis of data collected at this stage of implementation.

*The selection of co-workers and openness to contacts and people's ideas is a key issue. Good municipalities develop when the decision-maker allows people to proceed with well-prepared, cool ideas. He doesn't necessarily have to invent it himself. [S\_IB\_3]*

*Politics can also help, if it has good strategic thinking, if it works in a way that speeds up, simplifies. Then it is absolutely necessary and it does not matter who, when and where. [L\_IB\_2]*

*Discussion among two ITI Coordinators and ITI Office employees. ITI Coordinator in M3 says 'It makes no sense that politics is formally excluded, because it is of great importance, at the personal level if someone is entrepreneurial, experimenting or allowing himself to make mistakes, because only the one who does nothing is never wrong'. ITI Office employee observed 'There is the role of mayors - a chance for innovation, and the sphere of agreements between us is crucial and here is the role of the mayors. [L\_Fieldnotes]*

On the other hand, many research participants observed that politics can **block strategic projects** due to partisan and other tensions between mayors and other actors: regional [S\_Expert\_2, S\_AC1\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_IO\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5], local councillors [S\_AC1\_M6, S\_Expert\_2, S\_IB\_3], county politicians [L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_IO\_M5,], and national actors [S\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M5]. In many cases, they provided concrete examples of projects that they assessed to have been blocked due to political reasons.

*It was not possible to introduce this road project, because the political circuit did not want it due to the fact that the mayor with PiS-like preferences is ruling there. [L\_IO\_M5]*

*There is also the question of how local politics and the local atmosphere are shaped. Where you can allow yourself to act openly and boldly, and where it will be raised against you. Obviously groundlessly, but it can be used against a given mayor. And that's what they fear [S\_IB\_3]*

*Politics probably creates more problems, because I think that in our activities, we look at the content, to make it better for the residents, and somewhere above they argue because someone wants to snatch or cheat somebody. [L\_Coor\_M5]*

### **Tempo of joint ITI implementation**

Research participants in both regions observed a **slowing down** influence of politics. Interestingly, each person referred to a different political factor leading to a similar effect. Two participants spoke about higher-level politics: turnover among higher-level politicians and consequent delays in specifying the national and regional ITI-related rules [S\_Mayor\_M1], and government reforms changing the scope of ITI projects [S\_MA\_1]. Another participant highlighted aspects related to local elections: during the campaign freezing the decisions on joint activities, and after elections the time needed to get to know details of policies, and adjust them to the changed strategic vision. [L\_IB\_2]. On the other hand, the same person highlighted that ‘good politics’ can speed up the process of implementation, which is then a positive influence.

*It bothers us when political turmoil stops certain things, that there is absolute zero at ambient temperature and we wait for a response, we wait for action. This is the election, pre-election and post-election period for me. It is natural, nothing can be done about it, because then everyone is afraid of what will happen. So then politics gets in the way because it inhibits. [L\_IB\_2]*

### **Discussions and negotiations**

Research participants acknowledged political aspects making **discussions among mayors more difficult**. Some highlighted the need to respond to voters’ needs, which pushed mayors towards the individual, municipal interests rather than metropolitan development and therefore led to conflicts [S\_DMayor\_M4]. This aspect became even more visible before the elections, as mayors wanted to show results of investments to the voters during the campaign [L\_IB\_2]. One research participant observed that the personal ambitions of mayors could hypothetically even lead to destroying collaboration, but observed that in the case of ITI, this does not happen [S\_DMayor\_M7].

*It would be very easy to destroy everything. An ‘idea fix’ of one person who will convince other four, and there is a problem. I don’t know if you’ve had any contact with the people who govern, well it’s easy to break it. Half a year and it’s gone. It is a very delicate structure. On the other hand, it’s strong because it works [S\_DMayor\_M7].*

## Future of collaboration

Most research participants highlighted the **uncertainty** that politics brings. Some of them mentioned the turnover among mayors after elections and the need to rebuild power relations among mayors, including the decision to engage inter-municipal collaboration [S\_Coor\_M3, S\_AC1\_M6, L\_Coor\_M3]. A number of actors in LFA focused on the national politics' influence: government's relations with the EU which put in question the scope of available joint resources from the EU, and the turnover among national ruling party, affecting the future of ITI and metropolitan development [L\_IB\_2, L\_IO\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5].

This uncertainty was observed after the previous elections, but also about the upcoming ones. Research participants in LFA did not want to discuss future collaboration before results of local, regional and national elections. In CS this was not an issue, as the future collaboration was ensured by legally introducing the Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolis consisting of the main big cities of CS and closest surrounding area.

*A change in the government came, and everything was changed in January... Another brake, an example of politics' impact, where we had an agreement in September and I was hoping that the strategy would be approved. No, suddenly November, December, holidays, confusion, January, February, March, new authority, new minister, new directors are coming in, a great revolution in the civil service law, and in fact only in March they got organised. And the mayors stepped back again: 'Oh no, we don't believe now, we don't know if this strategy is going to be approved, so we'll not prepare these projects, because we won't spend money on documentation with the risk of not getting that funds. [L\_IB\_2]*

## 5.3. Summary

The analysis of the empirical material has identified a range of political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two metropolitan areas. Research participants acknowledged these aspects when speaking about 'politics', which they understood mainly as mayors' activities, decisions and relations with other actors at the local, regional and national level. Politics also meant for them the local and national elections and the consequences of their results, and policies and activities of the national government.

Research participants also specified the actors involved in collaboration which they perceived as political. Apart from elected politicians (mayors, councillors, higher-level politicians), they acknowledged also the political role of politically-appointed civil servants with political functions, among others deputy mayors and directors of metropolitan administrations (ITI offices). This extends the traditional understanding of politics, which in ICA literature was usually related only to the party affiliation of elected politicians.

As for the impact of identified factors, there was not enough data in the segments coded under the analysed category in order to conduct a detailed assessment. However, it is possible to indicate the key aspects of the ITI implementation that the research participants acknowledged to be affected by politics in the various meanings.

Mayors’ decisions and activity reportedly affected strategic planning and investments, shaped discussions and negotiations, and influenced the future of collaboration. Mayor’s relations with other actors appear to mostly influence the discussions and negotiations. Consequences of local and higher-level elections were acknowledged in the context of the tempo of ITI implementation, ongoing negotiations and the future prospects of collaboration. Lastly, national governments’ activity and policy was assessed to affect the tempo of ITI implementation, and put in question the future prospects.

This assessment is visualised in the Table 25, and developed in more detail within the ICA Framework in the next empirical chapters.

**Table 25 Impact of politics in various meanings on joint ITI implementation according to research participants**

	Strategic planning and investments	Tempo of joint ITI implementation	Discussions and negotiations	Future prospects of collaboration
Mayors’ decisions and activity	x		x	x
Relations of mayors with other actors			x	
Elections and their consequences		x	x	x
Government’s activity and policy		x		x

## **6. Political factors within the sources of collaboration risks**

This chapter contains the first part of analysis of the empirical material gathered during field research in two metropolitan areas: Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS) and the Lublin Functional Area (LFA). It aims to answer the first main research question: ‘What are the political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in CS and LFA?’ This question is addressed through a comparative analysis of the empirical data gathered in both regions.

The subsequent three sections follow the structure of the ICA Framework, including analysis of the empirical material related to three kinds of sources of collaboration risks. The first section defines the nature of the ICA dilemmas related to ITI. The second section characterises the actors involved in collaboration. Third one analyses the institutions existing in CS and LFA, explaining the broader framework in which the actors collaborate.

In each section, the analysis aims to identify factors present in the metropolitan areas, even if research participants did not perceive them as political, or did not acknowledge their influence on collaboration. The chapter concludes with a list of identified political and non-political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in CS and LFA.

### **6.1. Nature of the ICA dilemma**

This section focuses on the purpose and motivation of the collective action undertaken through ITI implementation in CS and LFA. The ICA literature calls this purpose the ‘nature of the institutional collective action dilemma’, highlighting that collaboration can differ in terms of the substance and scope of the collaboration, and consequently, how complicated and potentially risky it is. The ICA framework lists the four most common types of ICA dilemmas: coordination gains, economies of scale, minimising common-pool resource problems, and internalising effects of externalities. The following section contains analysis of the empirical material relevant for each of these types, and identifies the political factors involved.

A quantitative summary of segments coded under the subcategory of ICA dilemmas (see Table 26) shows that research participants in both regions focused predominantly on coordination gains. Economies of scale were also mentioned but much less frequently. Other, more complex categories from the ICA Framework were of limited relevance. All categories are qualitatively analysed below.

Table 26 Quantitative summary of codes related to the nature of ICA dilemmas

Type of the nature of ICA dilemma	CS	LFA	TOTAL	CS %	LFA %	TOTAL %
Coordination gains	70	122	192	71%	73%	<b>72%</b>
Economies of scale	22	32	54	22%	19%	<b>20%</b>
Minimising common-pool resources problems	0	3	3	0%	2%	<b>1%</b>
Internalising externalities	7	9	16	7%	5%	<b>6%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 6.1.1. Coordination gains

The coding exercise demonstrated that in both regions, the main motivation for collaboration was coordination gains. All actors directly involved in ITI implementation (mayors, ITI coordinators, ITI office employees) described joint activities that can be characterised under the broad category of coordination. In LFA, this was mentioned by 23 out of 25 interviewees.

The analysis revealed three recurring themes in research participants' perception of coordination:

- **territorial:** joint planning of investments that are physically and logically linked to across municipal borders
- **functional:** joint planning of investments that are logically linked to each other and create a coherent system, but without the physical connection,
- **thematic:** joint planning of investments related to a similar topic, but without the logical connection.

#### Territorial coordination

Examples of territorial coordination were evident in both regions, however they were rare. Research participants talked about them with pride, praising the individuals - in CS a mayor, and in LFA a civil servant - who devised initiatives for projects coordinated in such way.

In CS, this type of coordination was noted by six interviewees, mostly local ITI coordinators and representatives of ITI administration [S\_Coor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_3, S\_MA\_1]. They provided concrete examples of coordination at project level, including urban revitalisation and transport initiatives. The first example was related to post-industrial urban areas, cutting across municipal borders. Coordination covered support for revitalisation of the whole area based on a common approach and timescale. A more advanced example concerned joint planning of investments in cycling infrastructure, and coordinating the location of cycling paths in five municipalities to create a coherent system. Interviewees emphasised that it was a **mayor's initiative** [S\_MA\_1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_1]. Each municipality was involved in joint planning of investments: each municipality had its own piece to realise, but *'they fit together like a jigsaw'* [S\_Coor\_M2]. Similarly, in the case of a joint transport hub providing a strong basis for coordinating investments in this area, was another mayor's initiative [S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_2].

*We are linking with Lubliniec. There is only 10km, so it is not a problem to cycle to work there. I am really proud, that this will go on, that inhabitants will be able to commute by bike from municipality to municipality, safely and nicely [S\_Mayor\_M1].*

In LFA, territorial coordination was mostly related to transport, e.g. cycling paths [L\_Mayor\_M2; L\_Coor\_M3], roads [L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_Coor\_M7], etc. This understanding of coordination was so dominant that other projects were often criticised for not being complementary, due to the fact that they were not territorially linked [L\_IB\_5, L\_Coor\_M5]. This coordination was obvious to interviewees when speaking about roads, but the linking of cycling paths were presented as an exceptional example. This was achieved through the efforts of a local civil servant, who encouraged other municipalities to employ the same cycling paths designer with the indication that the paths should be linked to allow commuting between municipalities. The initiative resulted not only in linking the paths, but also allowed commuting from a municipality that does not have a border with Lublin, with a route through two other municipalities to the city [L\_Coor\_M3].

*Knowing what projects the Lubartów commune has, I suggested that they create bicycle routes as a continuation of ours. When we designed our paths, we took into account all trips from the town, because it is not just about the cyclist moving around the city. We wanted the cyclist to be able to leave this town, get to the landscape park, go to Lublin. Naturally, these exit routes run through the Lubartów and Niemce communes (...). The designer was required to fit into what we have already done. If we look at the map, everything matches perfectly [L\_Coor\_M3].*



## Functional coordination

Functional coordination was also identified as a motivation for inter-municipal collaboration in both regions. In CS, for instance, coordination in the location of kindergartens was noted, ensuring that they were not too close to each other across the municipal border. Research participants highlighted that it was an initiative of an ITI director [S\_MA\_1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_1]. Municipalities also coordinated the type of courses offered by vocational schools in the metropolitan area, to distribute specialisations among schools and avoid unnecessary duplication and competition. The process of coordination was facilitated by the ITI Office on the operational level, during the preparation of particular ITI projects. In this way, the collaboration contributed to a clear coordination gains and a broader, complementary approach to planning municipal investments in the CS.

*Just informing each other about planned investments led to municipal representatives observing neighbouring municipalities and many projects changed as a result of assessing plans in the context of the surrounding environment. Municipalities started thinking not only about their projects, but how they are complementary to each other [S\_IB\_1].*

*We made one functional and utility program for all the centres in our county plus bicycle paths. Then the first project call was announced (...). However, we decided to do each [municipal] part each separately. We know that when everybody does their part, they will match each other like a puzzle and everything will function as we originally wanted. But if one municipality falls out, only one element will miss, and the others will be ready [S\_Coor\_M2].*

In LFA, interviewees assessed transport projects to be the most functionally coherent [L\_MA\_1; L\_IB\_1]. An example was a project supporting multiple transport hubs – one in Lublin (Integrated Communication Centre, later ICC), and others in the surrounding municipalities. This system aims to allow inhabitants of smaller municipalities to commute to Lublin more efficiently, e.g. leaving cars or bikes at a parking space (Park&Ride) and continuing the journey to the city by public transport. The ICC, and its corresponding hubs was perceived by many interviewees as the most important investment of ITI [L\_IB\_4; L\_IB\_3; L\_Mayor\_M5; L\_DMayor\_M1]. The smaller transport hubs were created in 10 locations, some in Lublin and others outside the city. The scope for functional coordination was limited by the absence of a joint study indicating the most relevant locations.

## Thematic coordination

Thematic coordination was only noted by the research participants in LFA, where projects with a similar topic planned by various municipalities were linked in a formal partnership. This included investments in revitalisation, transport and environment. In the view of several

interviewees, although these investments formally created a single project, in fact they were not developed in an integrated way – they were planned following individual needs and then put together [L\_IB\_5, L\_DMayor\_M1; L\_Coord\_M3]. The MA required this formal linkage of projects [L\_MA\_2; L\_IB\_6; L\_Coord\_M5]. Thematic coordination in this context can be perceived as superficial, however, some interviewees assessed that they jointly play a role in developing the area, e.g. raising its attractiveness [L\_Coor\_M3]. This can be supported by the argument that the process of selecting the projects included joint choice of the most important problems for the area, which are being resolved in more locations in parallel.

*We talked about this all the time, as it was required that the projects have to be related to each other. In order to be integrated, they have to be linked with one another [L\_Coor\_M7]*

### 6.1.2. Economies of scale

In both regions, the achievement of economies of scale was identified as a motivation for collective action. This ICA dilemma was mentioned in ITI joint activities by various research participants (mayors, ITI coordinators, ITI office employees). Analysis identified two types of scale effects:

- joint public procurement [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_Coor\_M7, L\_DMayor\_M1; S\_Fieldnotes, L\_Fieldnotes);
- joint service operators [S\_Mayor\_M5], S\_IB\_2, L\_DMayor\_M1]

In CS, the first scale effect was achieved by municipalities entering a joint procedure when designing similar investments (e.g. cycle path, transport hub) and contracting services (e.g. selecting the same provider, achieving a coherent documentation system). Local actors argued that thanks to the collective approach, they saved money as the sum of smaller, individual orders would be more expensive than a larger, inter-municipal one.

The need for a joint service operator was expressed in the context of public transport and the establishment of broadband infrastructure. Although some of the partnering municipalities belong to a joint transport system, there are still multiple operators in the area. Apart from the basic inconvenience for passengers with only a limited area covered with a single ticket, the connections between particular municipalities needed to be planned more systematically.

In LFA, both types of scale effects were visible in the partnership project ‘E-municipalities’ which establishing a common broadband network across all municipalities. The municipalities prepared the project together, designing the broadband network for all of them. Later, they

organised a joint public procurement procedure to choose a company to deliver network services to all municipalities. In the opinion of local research participants, both the joint preparation of the project and the selection of a joint service operator saved costs for individual municipalities and ensured the same quality of service [L\_DMayor\_M1; L\_Fieldnotes].

Moreover, interviewees in LFA provided examples of bilateral agreements on various services delivery outside the ITI implementation. They included joint sewage and waste management [L\_DMayor\_M1; L\_Mayor\_M5], and extending the urban public transport from the main city to neighbouring municipalities [L\_Coor\_M5; L\_TA\_M5; L\_Mayor\_M2; L\_IB\_1].

Those few initiatives aimed at achieving scale effects were limited to joint procedures, while awareness of more advanced benefits was very limited. It is also clear that such scale effects require other integration mechanisms working in synergy with those currently used for ITI. An example in the CS context is increasing focus on metropolitan strategies and plans, aiming to provide a joint public transport operator for the whole Subregion.

### **6.1.3. Common pool resources and internalising externalities**

Other sources of potential motivation for inter-municipal collaboration is to address the use of common pool or core resources (such as access to clean air, parks or forests), and the risk of negative externalities (where the actions of one actor have negative effects on third parties). Within joint ITI implementation, minimising common-pool resources problems were not acknowledged in either region. In LFA such resources were mentioned by two interviewees regarding a green territory crossing the border of Lublin and another town. The potential for future collaboration in developing this area was observed by representatives of both municipalities [L\_Mayor\_M5; L\_DMayor\_M6]. However, these common pool resources were not included in any ITI project.

**Typical negative externalities in urban development such as air quality management were not directly addressed** in the substantive content of ITI projects in these regions. In CS, research participants acknowledged a broader aim of internalizing negative externalities in relation to environmental issues. Actors observed that environmental quality was an attribute that stretched across municipalities, and that allocating the burden or costs of pollution to specific municipalities was not feasible. As a result, low-emission transport was perceived as a truly common aim, as the interdependence between municipalities was particularly high.

Nevertheless, at the time of the fieldwork, discussions on solving the environmental externalities problems through ITI remained at an early stage.

*When we hear that tap water is a few percent more polluted than it should have, then we stop drinking it and go to the store for bottled water, but for example, we cannot do the same when we hear stories related to air, because it cannot be taken from elsewhere. [S\_IB\_1]*

However, in both cases this type of ICA dilemma was recognised and addressed in the process of implementing ITI projects. Research participants were aware of the reciprocal relationships and a formal inter-dependence between municipalities when forming an official project partnership and jointly applying for EU funds. This dilemma was solved differently in both regions.

In CS, municipalities initially planned partnership projects, but they realised that if one partner's input was delayed, everyone would lose out as nobody would acquire the funds, and their investment plans would be postponed. As a result, municipalities decided to split their partnership plans into individual smaller projects, that were compatible with each other, but realised at different stages, depending on individual capacities [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_3]. Thus, if one municipality's input was delayed or cancelled, the others could continue without their funding being blocked.

In LFA, externalities were substantial, because forming the project partnership was a formal requirement. As in CS, research participants noted that if any municipality failed to deliver necessary documents on time, none of them would obtain EU funds [L\_MA\_1; L\_Coord\_M4; L\_Coor\_M7; L\_Coor\_M9]. The formal relationship led to a situation in which some municipalities were ready to realise their part of the project, but were delayed by others experiencing various kinds of difficulties, some of **political nature**. For example, one municipality could not obtain approval for the investment by a higher authority led by a political competitor of the local mayor [L\_DMayor\_M6].

## 6.2. Actors' characteristics

As well as focusing on the 'nature of the problem' analysed above, the ICA literature argues that collaboration risk emerges from the characteristics of the actors involved. This section explores the actors' characteristics in ITI collaboration, and identifies the political factors involved. The ICA framework usually specifies two groups in this category: individual actors involved in collaboration and the inhabitants living in the collaborating municipalities. It

highlights the divergence of individual participants' interests and power and the extent of homophily (i.e. the tendency for people to seek out or be attracted to those who are similar to themselves) in community attributes as key variable shaping the collaborative process. The assumption is that similar persons and communities will share preferences and priorities, which would make the collaboration easier.

This section sets out the characteristics of key ITI actors and crucial community attributes that were observed to play a role during the collaborative process. The quantitative summary of the coding exercise (see Table 27) shows that over 90% of the segments coded in relation to actors characteristics focused on individuals rather than communities. In total, 1249 segments were coded on this topic, which constitutes almost 1/3 of the whole coding exercise. The frequency with which research participants talked about individual actors, suggests their crucial role in collaboration and an important source of factors influencing it.

The coding exercise created eight **descriptive codes** to capture the types of individual actors. Two of these clearly were political actors: mayors and local councillors. Some actors seemed to have played a dominant role in the process of collaboration (metropolitan administration officials and mayors), while others appeared rarely (e.g. local councillors). However, an important caveat is that the interviews were conducted to a greater extent with representatives of certain groups, so this observation can be biased. Three descriptive codes were created for community attributes, out of which the most frequent in both regions was the population size.

Comparing the two regions, **quantitative differences in the coding exercise relate to actor characteristics were generally insignificant**. The biggest difference was that the characteristics of metropolitan administration officials in CS was commented on by 14 percentage points more often than for mayors, while in LFA the difference between these groups was only 2 percentage points. The characteristics of the identified actors are qualitatively analysed below.

Table 27 Quantitative summary of codes related to actors characteristics

Type of actors	Descriptive subcategories	CS	LFA	TOTAL	CS %	LFA %	TOTAL %
<b>Individual</b>	ITI Office employees	179	187	366	31%	23%	<b>27%</b>
	Mayors	102	169	271	17%	21%	<b>20%</b>
	Leaders	79	113	192	14%	14%	<b>14%</b>
	All participants	65	95	160	11%	12%	<b>12%</b>
	Regional Actors	43	74	117	7%	9%	<b>8%</b>
	Local civil servants	20	52	72	3%	7%	<b>5%</b>
	National Actors	30	24	54	5%	3%	<b>4%</b>
	Local councillors	7	10	17	1%	1%	<b>1%</b>
<b>Community</b>	Population size	35	48	83	6%	6%	<b>6%</b>
	Proximity	9	23	32	2%	3%	<b>2%</b>
	Cultural/historical differences	14	2	16	2%	0%	<b>1%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>583</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>1380</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 6.2.1. Individual actors

Among the individual actors typically analysed in the literature there are mayors, local civil servants and local councillors. In the analysed context, the first two categories played a particularly important role. The analysis of the empirical material distinguished between specific groups of administrative actors with roles in ITI implementation: ITI Office employees and local ITI coordinators. Research participants also highlighted the importance of regional and national actors. Finally, the analysis of the material revealed a new, cross-cutting type of actor: leaders, identified among mayors, metropolitan administration and local ITI coordinators. All actors identified in the two cases are summarised in the Table 28.

In the following sections, each type of actor is assessed in terms of the main tasks in joint ITI implementation and their power relations towards other actors. The analysis identifies factors that shaped actors' behaviour and their inter-relations, highlighting the political aspects involved. The analysis showed to what extent each type of actor played a political role in the collaboration process. In Table 28, political actors are highlighted in blue, administrative in red while actors linking these characteristics are marked in purple, following the 'purple zone' concept (see Section 1.2.2.).

Table 28 Actors involved in collaboration within ITI implementation in CS and LFA

Level	Actors	CS	LFA
Local	1. Political leader	CS Association Leader, Chief of the ITI Board, Mayor of the Gliwice City since 1992, leader of the Polish Cities Association	LFA Agreement Leader, Mayor of the Lublin City since 2010, deputy leader of the Polish Cities Association
	2. Mayors	73 mayors, including 15 in the ITI Board (3 per each under-region)	16 mayors forming a ITI Council
	3. Local councillors	Councillors of partnering municipalities	Directly elected councillors of partnering municipalities
	4. Project partnership leaders	Unofficial leaders of informal collaboration among municipalities	4 official partnership leaders
	5. Local civil servants (ITI coordinators)	15 employees of municipal administration: 3 ITI coordinators from each of the 5 'under-regions', from the units represented in the ITI Board)	16 employees of all partnering municipalities, given an additional function of ITI coordinators
Metro-politan	6. Administrative leader	CS Association Office Director	ITI Office Director in the Lublin City
	7. ITI Office	10 employees of the ITI Office within the CS Association	10 employees of the ITI Office in the Lublin City
Regional	8. Marshal of the Śląskie Voivodeship	Chair of the Voivodeship Board, Wojciech Saługa, Civil Platform	Chair of the Voivodeship Board, Sławomir Sosnowski, Polish People's Party
	9. Managing Authority (MA)	Employees of the Marshal's Office, including a person responsible for ITI implementation and units assessing ITI projects	
National	10. Government	Members of the ruling party, Ministers responsible for policies affecting ITI and inter-municipal collaboration	
	11. Ministry of Investments and Economic Development	Employees of the departments responsible for Regional Operational Programmes and urban policy	
EU	12. European Commission	Employees of the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy	
Other	13. County politicians (Starosta)	8 county representatives as official members of the Association	County representatives not officially involved in collaboration
	14. External local organisations	Companies, institutions, NGOs and media active in the CS	Companies, institutions, NGOs and media active in the LFA
	15. Citizens	Inhabitants of the CS, voters	Inhabitants of the LFA, voters
	16. Independent experts assessing ITI projects	Experts employed by the ITI Office to assess ESF and ERDF projects	Experts employed by the ITI Office to assess ESF projects

## Mayors

Mayors are generally considered in the ICA literature as key political actors, usually in the context of the power that they exert, the political party that they belong to, and the networks they build. In terms of their **scope of power** in joint ITI implementation, it is important to define the scope of formal tasks in this process as well they informal functions that they perform. In both regions, mayors' **formal role** included decisions on joining inter-municipal collaboration on behalf of their municipalities (with municipal councils' approval), agreeing of joint goals and approval of a joint strategy (with municipal councils', Managing Authority's and Ministry's approval), agreeing on the rules of collaboration, and strategic decision-making regarding ongoing collaboration (within the higher-level rules, see Section 6.3.1).

In LFA, mayors were also responsible for agreeing joint projects funded from ERDF within the ITI (with the regional Managing Authority's approval). In CS, initially mayors were supposed to have the same task, but this was changed due to the imposed competitive project selection mode. In this way, mayors in LFA had a broader scope of formal power.

However, in both FUA mayors ensured strong influence on the project selection in an **informal way**. They personally initiated and provided expertise for key projects, coordinated projects prepared by various municipalities at the strategic level (see Section 6.1.1), influenced project selection criteria (with approval from the regional Managing Authority, the Ministry and the European Commission) (see Section 8.14). While their formal role can be summarised as decision-makers, their informal contribution is much broader: visioners, innovators, experts, negotiators, lobbyists.

In terms of formal interaction with others and accountability, mayors were direct employers of municipal ITI coordinators, and indirect employers of ITI office staff. Within this, there was some variation in the two regions. In LFA, most power was held by the mayor of Lublin, as the ITI office was under the direct jurisdiction of the city authority, and the rules of collaboration gave him an exclusive right to veto any decision of the ITI council. In CS, most power was given to 15 municipalities forming the Association's Board in taking key decisions affecting members. At the same time, mayors themselves were accountable to their voters and media. They were also dependent on their local councils in terms of key decisions and strategic investments, and also on regional and national actors due to their imposition of EU funding rules, as explained above.



The set of tasks in ITI implementation gave mayors a **stronger role than usual in EU funds** implementation, when their participation is often limited to project applicants or participants in consultation processes on strategies or programmes (Mendez et al., 2021). However, **mayors' powers were limited in comparison to other forms of inter-municipal collaboration outside of EU funds framework**, as normally the scope and rules of collaboration do not need to be approved by higher-level administrations.

The empirical material collected on **factors influencing mayors' behaviour, decisions and relations**, provided extensive evidence confirming the aspects directly mentioned by research participants when referring to the political dimension. (see Chapter 5). A key insight from this analysis was that **collaborative relations among mayors in ITI did not follow a typical partisan logic**. Several research participants highlighted that politics in the partisan meaning was predominantly found at higher administrative levels, leaving the local dimension mostly independent.

When asked about the importance of informal relations in collaboration, ITI office employees answered that *'of course everybody has more friends somewhere, but here in ITI it doesn't matter, and we do not even become interested in it'* [S\_Fieldnotes]. There is a risk that these research participants may have been reluctant to acknowledge the role of informal partisan ties in ITI collaboration. Indeed, in the last days of participant observation in CS one conversation indicated that before formally launching the ITI there were party-based conflicts and negotiations related to the power division on the Civic Platform-opposition axis.

Nevertheless, the absence of partisan ties in ITI collaboration was clear throughout participatory observation during various ITI-related meetings of mayors, high-level officials and civil servants. Although potentially playing a part at the initial stage, local actors asserted that subsequently partisan politics did not play a substantial role in relations among mayors. According to research participants in both regions, a key factor in this was the **trust built among mayors** over time [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_IB\_2, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Coor\_M7].

*Now we are in a comfortable situation that, the 'main players' in our sub-region cut themselves off from politics, and this is what helps us. All resolutions are adopted unanimously, while it was not the case before. There was distrust, stormy discussions, accusations of ignoring the interests of small communes and favouring Katowice [S\_IB\_1]*

Thus, non-partisan factors were important in considering the role of mayors in ITI collaboration. Analysis of the data produced a distinction between mayors' personal **human capital** (e.g. level of expertise, innovativeness, entrepreneurship, strategic vision, project

management, team building and inter-personal skills), and their **social capital** (trust among mayors, collaboration skills, personal and professional networks, friendships and circuits).

**The role of personal relations** was repeatedly mentioned as a factor in building alliances at the strategic, political level and operational, project level. These links were often mentioned in opposition to the role of party affiliation in influencing collaboration, highlighting that good personal relations or even friendships make the process easier, allowing exchange of information and mutual learning. Both types of capital were especially important in the small municipalities, where mayors are often directly involved in preparing all projects, including ITI operations [S\_IB\_1].

*It can be observed that in communes, in which the mayors are particularly active, they not only obtain these funds but also other investments. Where mayors are less dynamic, it can also be seen that these investments are maybe... more conservative. [S\_Coor\_M1]*

In this context, a crucial factor that emerged from data analysis was the presence and commitment of **leaders among mayors**. This leadership was important both in terms of the development of the whole metropolitan area and in the design and implementation of specific collaborative projects. The human and social capital of these leaders was a factor influencing other mayors and their commitment to collaboration. Thus leaders can be seen as a separate category of actors (assessed below).

The research also identified some new factors, not covered so far in ICA literature, shaping relations between mayors. First, in both regions there were strong **tensions between the capital city and the other municipalities**. Regardless of party affiliation, there was little trust that the capital would genuinely take into consideration other municipalities' interest and the joint interest of the metropolitan area as a whole. In LFA, 16 interviewees stressed this point and the perception was confirmed during participatory observation [L\_DMAYOR\_M1, L\_MA\_1, L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_3, L\_IO\_M5, L\_Coor\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_Coor\_M8, L\_IB\_4, L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M9, L\_Fieldnotes]. In CS these tensions were highlighted especially in reference to the beginning of the ITI collaboration process [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_IB\_3, S\_Fieldnotes].

*There were fears that Lublin, as the dominant city, would mainly want to use these funds for itself. On the other hand, integrated territorial investments in dispersed communes will have a smaller impact, than if Lublin implemented it alone. Lublin's plan was to strengthen its role in these investments. Of course, there was resistance from the neighbouring communes. [L\_Mayor\_M6]*

*Nobody trusts Katowice unless they show in black and white what they are planning. [S\_Fieldnotes]*

Second, the analysis revealed a ‘**common enemy**’ **phenomenon** in both regions. This strengthened unity between mayors despite other tensions. In LFA, this was related to the previously mentioned capital city status and to an alliance built by all other member municipalities. In CS, an alliance of all municipalities including the capital was built in response to partisan political pressures from the national level.

*This very diverse self-government resisted such brutal, unacceptable pressures of a political nature, there were personnel pressures, political pressure based on money, the subsidizing of various undertakings in the commune by the national government administration, personal threats, everything. I was convinced that with such an incredible pressure from the ruling party they would force through whatever they wanted. However, this local government has resisted it for the most part and this is a very good testimony. It also builds trust and reveals who is who, we got to know each other a little better and for me it was inspiring, it really is a big deal and a great success, it is not about who was elected (...), but the methods used in these elections and the behaviour of colleagues, fellow mayors was, in my opinion, impressive. [S\_Mayor\_M5]*

Third, an important factor in explaining collaboration among mayors was variation in how **efficiently municipalities prepared ITI projects and absorbed the EU funds available**. This was connected to inter-dependencies when using common resources. Mayors of municipalities that were faster in collecting required documents and preparing projects started to have similar interests in opposition to the slower municipalities. This kind of tension was noted in interviews by research participants [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M8, L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_MA\_1], and observed during meetings among mayors, attended during field research [L\_Fieldnotes, S\_Fieldnotes].

*This discrepancy, and the multiplicity of partners in general, means that some communes are more advanced and already want money, so they will simply want to shorten the deadline for collecting documents. This may possibly lead to internal conflicts: some municipalities will say that they do not have these documents and won't be able to say when they will. [L\_Mayor\_M6]*

Other observed alliances among mayors followed the **community characteristics** described in the next section, and **previous experiences** of inter-municipal collaboration described in Section 6.3.3.

### **ITI Office**

Civil servants were in the main focus of the studies based on the ICA literature. However, little attention was put to the employees of the organisation administering the collaboration itself. This is mainly because ICA focuses on the process leading to choosing an integration mechanism, while such an organisation is often established as a result of this process, with the aim of managing joint activities. Both in CS and LFA, the joint ITI administration at metropolitan level was launched after deciding on the integration mechanism, and officials at

this level naturally were not involved in the initial collaborative processes (unless in other roles, e.g. municipal civil servants).

Nevertheless, the analysis shows that their role in preparing detailed rules of collaboration, integrated development strategies, managing relations between partners and ongoing collaborative activities was vital. Therefore, this research argues that factors related to actors in ITI offices at metropolitan level should be included in future studies on collective action.

The analysis identified the most important **tasks and roles** of the ITI offices in both regions, as well as the factors influencing their relations with other actors. **Formally**, the ITI Offices performed the function of an Intermediate Body in the administrative structure of ITI implementation. In both regions, Managing Authorities for CP programmes officially delegated to them a selection of administrative tasks, including ITI strategy drafting, proposing ITI-specific project selection criteria, the organisation of training for member municipalities and other potential ITI project developers (this function was much more important in CS), and the monitoring of progress in funds absorption.

In LFA, ITI office employees also assessed the projects regarding the ITI-related selection criteria. In CS, external independent experts were used to assess projects in this regard. Eventually, CS delegated to the ITI Office also substantive criteria assessment, also conducted by independent experts. The formal scope of tasks of metropolitan administration in both regions is thus understood in terms of **administrators of joint ITI implementation**. In addition, their **tasks regarding inter-municipal collaboration** were specified in the collaboration agreement documents signed by mayors in both regions. These tasks related to collaboration include organisation of regular meetings of municipal representatives at political and operational levels, preparing progress reports and moderating ongoing collaborative arrangements.

The metropolitan administrations in the two regions differed substantially in terms of **informal, strategic tasks**. In LFA, such tasks were limited. The ITI Office organised meetings between municipalities and the Lublin Transport Authority to stimulate integrated metropolitan transport development [L\_IB\_1], advised municipalities on the quality of prepared joint projects and their adjustment to EU and MA requirements [L\_Mayor\_M2], and invited external partners to ITI Council meetings in order to expand the scope of inter-municipal collaboration, e.g. private operator of urban bikes system [L\_IB\_1]. They also represented the LFA municipalities in

dealing with higher institutions, e.g. asking for legal interpretations for all of them and negotiating project selection criteria representing municipalities' joint interests [L\_IB\_2].

However, some research participants perceived the ITI office's strategic role to be insufficient in stimulating metropolitan development and partnership building [L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_4, L\_IO\_M5]. Interestingly, this opinion was expressed by civil servants but not by the mayors, which can show that from the administrative point of view, a strategic guidance of the ITI Office could be useful, but would be too much of an interference into the power of mayors. The ITI Office director in LFA acknowledged the barriers and obstacles preventing them from taking up these more extensive, strategic roles, notably lack of support from MA and politicians for extending the Office's capacity and competences.

*As the ITI office is too small, it does not have such good relations with everyone and it is more a technical tool. The 'metropolitan spirit' is missing (...) ITI is something that was introduced to this city somewhere from the outside, ... I am not saying that the composition of the staff is bad, because it is very good, but they do not engage with these metropolitan issues. They deal with issues such as executing the budget, executing this program and implementing it. [L\_IO\_M5]*

On the contrary, in CS, the informal role of the ITI office was extensive with a stronger role in stimulating metropolitan development and partnership brokering. A range of specific functions were highlighted by research participants:

- Moderating the coordination of projects [S\_Coor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMAYor\_M7, S\_IB\_1];
- Building consensus in politically difficult situations to support the collective interest [S\_DMAYor\_M4, S\_AC1\_M6, S\_DMAYor\_M7, S\_IB\_3];
- Raising awareness about the benefits of pursuing the common interest [S\_AC1\_M6],
- Representing the joint interests of municipalities in dealings with higher level institutions: MA, Ministry and EU, negotiating on behalf of the municipalities [S\_DMAYor\_M7, S\_IB\_1];
- Strategic planning of initiatives to change ITI project selection criteria or the ITI Strategy [S\_IB\_1];
- Organizing meetings to connect partners and stimulate projects in a strategic investment area [S\_Fieldnotes];
- Mobilizing municipalities to speed up the process of project preparation [S\_IB\_3];
- Supporting smaller municipalities in project preparation and influencing project selection criteria in a way that promotes small municipalities [S\_Fieldnotes].

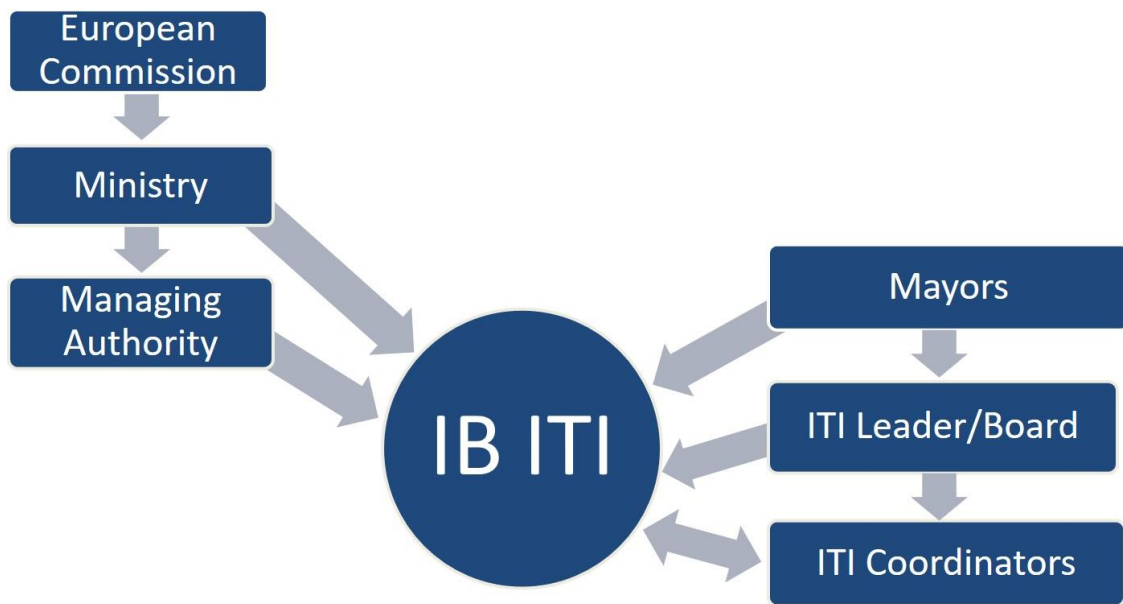
The majority of these functions have strategic importance and a **political character**, as they helped promote a vision of metropolitan development and build relations between municipalities. Unlike the case of LFA, these functions of the ITI office were acknowledged and valued by different types of research participants: ITI Office employees themselves including their director, but also mayors who were satisfied with their support in this regard. This can be associated with a further-developed and shared metropolitan vision among mayors in CS than in LFA. Consequently in CS, ITI Office had a strong position among the partnering municipalities in the metropolitan area, which was visible during formal and informal meetings attended during field research [S\_Fieldnotes].

*I think that we are doing very well with this communal cooperation. We have to work out some common solutions that are not always politically compatible, because it is known that every mayor primarily thinks about his own unit. The ITI [Office] primarily thinks about the whole area, it covers us from above like an umbrella. [S\_DMayor\_M4]*

Such a combination of tasks linking administrative ITI implementation and strategic/political inter-municipal collaboration aspects resulted in very **complex accountability** of the ITI Offices in both FUA. They are accountable to higher levels of administration, having an obligation to formally report and be evaluated by the regional Managing Authorities who delegated to them concrete tasks and expect specific targets to be met. Staff salaries in the ITI Offices are paid from an EU project managed by the Ministry of Investments and Economic Development, which has its own, sometimes conflicting, expectations. At the same time, the ITI Office in CS is directly accountable to the ITI Assembly that consists of all ITI partners (73 municipalities and 8 counties). The ITI Council in LFA is accountable to 16 member municipalities, out of which the majority are small-size municipalities. This suggests that the association would mainly represent their interests.

However, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the executive body of ITIs in Poland, the ITI Boards, are constituted mainly by big cities. In LFA the Council Chair and a direct employer of ITI Office was the Lublin city authority. Thus, relations between the ITI Office and municipalities were influenced by perceptions that the Office might favour the interests of the municipalities with the biggest power. Moreover, ITI Office employees coordinated work of municipal ITI coordinators, often acting as their principal: collecting reports, information and opinions, issuing guidelines, offering trainings etc. These complex lines of accountability are illustrated in the Figure 27.

Figure 27 Lines of accountability relations between various actors in ITI implementation



Such accountability relations created more substantial management challenges than a typical metropolitan initiative which was only accountable to its members, and a typical EU initiative, where accountability ran only to higher-level public authorities. These multiple lines of accountability led to the situation, in which the metropolitan-level ITI Office employees needed to strike a **balance between meeting sometimes contradictory local and higher-level interests**. In particular, pressure for timely absorption of EU funds was often in conflict ensuring the quality of the collaborative process and the subsequent strategic planning of metropolitan development, which required time for negotiation and consensus building. Simultaneously, the ITI Office was expected to mainly represent the **metropolitan interest**, which was sometimes compatible with neither of the two. The dilemma was illustrated by one of the ITI Office employees in the LFA:

*I work for the organizational unit in the city hall.. I also work for the unit that performs the tasks of an intermediary body. So on the one hand, certain issues that I want to do in order to be able to work efficiently, require the consent of the voivodeship board and on the other hand I have issues that require the consent of the mayor of the city, and on the third hand there are issues that I have to agree with the ministry. And when you ask what it is like to work for the ITI office, it is interesting and difficult, because I actually have three superiors. [L\_IB\_2]*

The decision on how to strike this balance was left to the Office employees, who could favour any of the three possibilities (local, metropolitan, higher-level). Some research participants recalled that at first they had been unsure which interest the ITI Office would represent, and that it took time to build trust towards them. Therefore, **the level of perceived legitimacy of the metropolitan administration among mayors** was an important factor influencing

collaboration. Beyond this, the research revealed other, **factors related to the characteristics of ITI Office employees**, which played a role in building their legitimacy and determining their role and relationship with other actors.

For instance, the residence of ITI office employees was highlighted by some research participants as influential in the process of trust-building and collaboration. In CS, employees lived in various parts of the sub-region and it emerged that this had been a deliberate decision by the **ITI political leader**. The aim was to build trust among partners by showing that the institution was not dominated by one municipality's interest. This had been effective as local actors expressed their appreciation and the ITI Office employees managed to build relations with all ITI Board members.

In LFA, employees were mostly selected from persons previously employed in the Lublin City Office, and their municipality of origin did not play a role. However, research participants acknowledged that some of them lived in small municipalities in the LFA, and assessed this fact positively [L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_IB\_1]. When asked about it, they asserted that it was much fairer if ITI Office employees came from different municipalities, while noting that it is more important who they were employed by rather than when they come from [L\_IB\_4, L\_Coor\_M4, L\_IB\_6].

*I told him, if possible, try to recruit in such a way that there is as much territorial dispersion of employees as possible. Of course, this is not the main priority, substantive considerations are more important, but if possible it would be good to diversify the committees evaluating projects [consisting of ITI office staff]. - Why is it important? - Because first of all, people, social capital is at a very low level in Poland and an element of this is that people are not honest and this dishonesty is accepted as common and obvious that if you go to the jury, you go there not to settle the competition, but to do your own business, I watched it a thousand times.*

A final factor to note was the importance of leadership in the ITI Office as a personal attribute in the collaboration process. This related to the leadership style of the ITI director and the support of political leaders in strengthening the strategic role of the ITI Office. These points are addressed in the section on leadership below.

### **Local civil servants (ITI coordinators)**

The role of local civil servants is not generally addressed in ICA literature. However, analysis of the empirical material gathered in both regions revealed that local civil servants appointed to coordinate ITI implementation at municipal level played a significant role in the collaboration processes. In LFA local civil servants were appointed in each of the 16 members of the agreement, while in CS coordinators were appointed from the 15 municipalities with



representatives on the ITI Board. These civil servants were responsible for preparing joint projects in their municipality (LFA) or coordinating the participation of their municipality with others in the same subregion (CS). To carry out these extra tasks, they received an additional salary paid from a nationally-funded EU project. Several of these local officials had been active in the ITI context from an early stage (e.g. drafting municipal projects to be funded from ITI, or participating in the creation of initial documents and rules of collaboration).

All ITI coordinators played an important role in the implementation of joint activities. In LFA, they prepared the content of municipal sections of partnership projects, and engaged in regular operational collaboration with other coordinators. Some of the coordinators also had the function of deputy mayors, which allowed them to link the **political negotiations**, strategic decisions and management functions with operational knowledge of the content of the projects.

*Coordinators who are deputy mayors have a shorter decision path, what they say at meetings, what they recommend does not have to be approved, but is in some sense consistent with the opinion of the mayor. On the other hand, coordinators who are simple employees can very often hide behind phrases like: I don't know, I have to ask, it's not up to me. [L\_IB\_1]*

In CS, ITI coordinators did not hold such a high positions, but this ‘double function’ was evident in another way. Three coordinators covering each of the 5 ‘under-regions’ shared the task of moderating collaboration among all the municipalities located in their territory. This included typical administrative matters, (e.g. monitoring the preparation of ITI projects in the area) and more **political tasks**, (e.g. moderating informal coordination between the projects of municipalities within each ‘under-region’). The latter task was performed under the direct supervision of mayors, but participant observation showed that civil servants usually had more knowledge of exact numbers related to available ITI funds, and therefore played an important role in inter-municipal negotiations.

Moreover, some ITI coordinators in both regions mentioned their own initiatives developing collective projects [S\_Coor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_DMayor\_M1], which they proposed to the mayor who made final decision. If the projects were accepted, these ITI coordinators often become **joint project leaders**, described later in this section. In many municipalities, however, the initiative and strategic planning was expected to come exclusively from the mayors [S\_Coor\_M8, S\_IB\_3]. Overall, the role of local ITI coordinators may seem marginal, but these civil servants pursued contacts across municipalities on everyday basis, exchanging experiences and knowledge, building reciprocal relations and trust among municipalities at operational level.

*It was first on our level, because here the initiative came from us in fact, and then we presented these ideas to each of our mayors. These conditions, needs and potential impacts were then accepted... we signed a joint agreement, and it developed from there [S\_Coor\_M7]*

## **Local councillors**

Local councillors are often considered as important actors in the ICA literature, as they usually have a say in deciding whether or not a municipality can enter a collaborative arrangement. In the ITI context, this was indeed one of their roles, as well as approving the ITI strategy and each investment planned under it from the municipal long-term and annual budgets, including the own contribution to EU projects funded from ITI. These tasks made local councillors significant actors, as key joint actions **required their approval** [L\_Coor\_M9, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M4, S\_AC1\_M6]. In this way, mayors were accountable to local councillors.

However, this role was usually not proactive and had more of a passive, **veto-based character**. In the view of research participants at the local level, councillors did not engage in ITI projects and collaborative activities, neither formally nor informally, unless they were trying to block mayors' investment initiatives. The view of several research participants, of different types, on the role of councillors was essentially negative. This was especially the case when opposition to mayors' plans stemmed from different party affiliations [S\_AC1\_M6, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Fieldnotes, L\_Coor\_M3], as described in the Section 5.1.

*Councillors completely do not engage with [ITI] it, they do not get involved, do not work conceptually, or in a visionary way, only ad hoc things. [S\_Mayor\_M5]*

Two participants noted that there were occasional proactive collaboration initiatives from councillors, stemming from their contact with citizens [S\_Coor\_M7, L\_DMayor\_M1]. Only one mayor assessed the role of councillors as very high in this regard, noting some discussions with them on planned ITI project details [L\_Mayor\_M2]. Thus, local councillors' role in collaboration within ITI was rather marginal. No additional factors influencing their behaviour were identified during data analysis.

## **Regional actors**

In both regions, both administrative and political actors at the regional level were involved in ITI implementation. Administrative actors in the Marshal Office, as the Managing Authority (MA) of the Regional Operational Programme, played an important role in shaping collaboration within ITI **and had a strong position among actors involved in ITI implementation** in both regions. This is mainly due to the formal superiority in the

administrative hierarchy they exercised in relation to the ITI Offices, their longer experience in managing EU funds, and the substantial tasks related to ITI implementation.

Regarding the first aspect, the Marshal's Offices put in place a comprehensive set of **regional rules** that ITI Offices had to comply with (see Section 6.3.1). In both regions, these requirements were perceived as a burden, especially in LFA where research participants complained about excessive complexity and extensive formality and control by the MA [L\_IB\_6, L\_Coor\_M4]. The Marshal Board formally delegated tasks to the ITI Offices, approved the ITI strategies and other ITI documents prepared by the ITI Office and Board.

In terms of ongoing implementation, Marshal Offices organised all ITI project calls, assessed the applications, and conducted all financial management of the projects. They also conducted evaluations of ITI activities in relation to the Regional Operational Programme of the Voivodeship. They have exerted pressure on ITI Offices as the IBs in Regional Operational Programmes for quick absorption of EU funds, and for the achievement of ITI-related target indicators that are part of the ROP. In turn, MA had to respond to the similar pressure from the Ministry and the European Commission.

The MA, however, have not been actively involved in shaping collaboration, developing relations among partners or preparing the content of ITI projects [S\_IB\_1, S\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5]. One exception to this was mentioned in LFA, where the ITI Office asked the MA to act as an arbiter in a conflict of interest between the mayors in different municipalities [L\_IB\_2]. This shows that regional actors have been mainly interested in the quantitative effects of implementation rather than quality of collective action. Research participants in both regions observed that relations between local and regional levels were difficult as mutual trust and the flow of information was limited. However, they observed that these relations improved over time and during the field research regular contacts between the MAs and the ITI Offices were observed [S\_Mayor\_5, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_IB\_2].

*The Marshal here has a lot to say throughout his office, but this is more of a clerical job, not a creative one. (...) Now they help, at the beginning there were a lot of collisions. We invited them to each of our meetings, so that there would be some information flow, so that there would be no tensions, now these are gone and but it is a matter of building the position of the ITI office. [S\_Mayor\_M5].*

*A little nod to the Marshal's Office. In conflict situations, we presented separately comments from the municipalities, and the position of the city. It was impossible to establish one common position, because there were extremely different views. So then the Marshal Office replied to us, favouring one or the other. [L\_IB\_2]*

Additionally, the Marshals in both regions plays a **political role** in ITI join implementation. It was their political decision to set the amount of EU funds to be allocated for joint ITI resources from the ROP beyond the minimum level required by EU regulations. This allocated funding increased the political interest in collaboration from the perspective of partnering municipalities. In CS, this amount was increased substantially, while in LFA it was kept at the minimum, and the Marshal Office sought to limit the level of ITI funding available.

*You see, we got ripped off on a big project now. And I don't belong to any party. But if we really thought in terms of strategic development of Lubelskie, it is hard not to consider our municipality one of the most important elements of this development. Unfortunately, we are not perceived by the Voivodeship Board as strategic. If you see the direction of funds, there are some random municipalities... These are party steps. [L\_Mayor\_M2]*

*No one will change this approach now that it has been decided how the money will flow. However, later there may be attempts in the future to reorient this [ITI] strategy towards more medium-sized cities, with a smaller focus on Lublin. PiS [the ruling party] will clearly want to introduce this if they win these elections. [L\_IO\_M5]*

This can be explained by the party affiliation of Marshals. In CS, the Marshal belonged to the party that had the most voters in the main cities across the subregion, which would benefit from ITI funding. In LFA the Marshal's voters were located outside the LFA and were less likely to benefit [L\_IO\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_IB\_2]. Party affiliation was also the reason why in LFA the Marshal tried to block some key projects from the metropolitan development point of view [L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_3, L\_MA\_1]. Some local actors in both regions mentioned former and current personal or party-based conflicts between the Marshal and particular mayors, which influenced the implementation of some projects planned to be funded from ITI [S\_AC1\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M2]. Marshals could still choose the order of ITI projects to be assessed by the MA, which could determine the timing of project implementation. This timing was potentially important, for instance in the context of local elections (see Section 5.1).

However, the scope for the Marshal to influence ITI project selection was lower than in typical EU funds distributed from the Regional Operational Programme Projects ultimately had to fit in with the ITI Strategy, and pass ITI-specific criteria both of which were organised at sub-regional level. In CS, additionally some experts assessing projects were employed by the ITI Office which gave it additional independence from the regional level. In this way, **political power by the Marshal over ITI was limited**, a point acknowledged by the research participants [S\_AC1\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M2].

## **National actors**

National actors are not typically analysed in the ICA literature. The main actor involved in ITI implementation at state level in Poland is the Ministry of Investments and Economic Development (Ministry). The Ministry reports directly to the European Commission regarding ITI implementation in all regions, and is the principle for both regional MA and ITI Offices. This places the Ministry in a strong position in the hierarchy of actors involved in ITI implementation. The Ministry prepares the legal basis (subject to approval from the Polish Parliament) and issues guidelines for ITI implementation. It formally approves ITI strategies and the budgets of ITI Offices, as the latter is funded mainly from a national EU project. The Ministry also approves ITI project selection criteria in each region and evaluates both ITI implementation and the whole Regional Operational Programme, to which the ITI contributes.

The Ministry also monitors ITI implementation and organises meetings for ITI Office Directors to allow them to exchange experience and information. During such meetings the Ministry inquires about joint initiatives beyond ITI implementation and about progress in metropolitan partnership building [L\_IB\_2, S\_Fieldnotes, L\_Fieldnotes]. A key evaluation indicator of ITI activity from the Ministry's perspective is speed of EU funds absorption. This is reflected in the fact that the Ministry established specific mechanisms allowing it to move resources from one region to another if the speed of using ITI funds is insufficient [S\_MA\_1, L\_IB\_2]. In this way, it can directly influence ITI actors behaviour and investments, even if they do not interfere directly in the process of collaboration. Research participants felt to a large extent dependent regarding the future of the ITI instrument, as such rules and the government's overall policy may change as a result of elections [S\_MA\_2, L\_Mayor\_5, L\_IO\_M5, S\_IB\_1].

*The Ministry was completely absent. Their only communications were about how it all was going and making sure that there would be an ITI strategy in place. Before giving money and signing contracts, the Ministry wanted to know what the strategy would look like and whether we would meet all the rules and conditions. [L\_IB\_2]*

## **Leaders – political, administrative and of joint projects**

A crucial finding of the analysis was the role played in collaboration by a type of actor that has not been considered before in the ICA literature: the leader. Leaders' role have been acknowledged in literature on local government and urban development (e.g. Sotarauta, 2016; Sotarauta et al., 2017; Swianiewicz et al., 2004), and EU cohesion policy implementation (e.g. Vironen, Dozhdeva, 2019, Sielker 2016a, 2016b). Leaders can be defined as individuals with a vision of collaboration, bringing other members together around a common goal, building trust,

strengthening relationships between them, mobilising joint activities, initiating and taking responsibility for collective action.

Three types of leaders were identified in the research: political, administrative and at the joint project level. The analysis identified all three types of leaders in both regions. However, research participants' perception of leaders' approach, activity and role differed significantly between the two metropolitan areas.

**The political leader's** function was officially performed by a mayor chosen from among members of the Association Board in CS and the ITI Council in LFA. In both regions, their influence on ITI collaboration was observed during the field research. In CS the positive and crucial role of the leader was noted by research participants, highlighting that his personality, initiative and attitude towards other municipalities built trust, gave direction and ensured the success of collaboration [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_IB\_1]. In LFA, participants were critical of the negative influence of the political leader, mostly due to his insufficient presence [L\_IB\_2, L\_Coor\_M8]. Both political leaders acknowledged their leadership role, but they highlighted its different aspects: in LFA the mayor emphasised the creation of a cooperative culture, in CS, issues of trust were underlined.

*The leader's role is to build a friendly climate for cooperation. - How do you do it? - You can say that it is a personal charm (laugh) - I'm kidding. We all know each other. It is a question of mutual credibility. This is the simplest answer. So I am known for not creating conflicts, but trying to build areas of cooperation. Secondly, of course, it is about (...) showing that creating synergy from cooperation is a better solution than competing. Another issue is that Lublin has had huge success from investments and management of infrastructure resources. So they are watching, they follow. We also want to show that we can implement such joint ventures together. [Political leader in LFA]*

*What matters is honesty, people have to believe that I will not take more for myself. If someone breaks this rule, he will not gain trust. I think, that's why this association, this Board can work like that, because for over 20 years I have proved beyond any doubt that I am honest. Gliwice does not benefit more than others because of my position. They know that I will defend decency and the rules that we have established, (..), I simply do not let go and in defence of a small commune, I can go to a dispute with the voivode or marshal (...). It is built on trust., for there to be trust, it has to be what I said earlier and now these people trust each other. [Political leader in CS]*

The leaders' roles in the two regions differed in terms of the source of their legitimacy among other mayors, their vision of metropolitan development, and crucially, **personal commitment to joint ITI implementation**. In LFA, the political leader was the mayor of Lublin. This was perceived as natural due to Lublin's capital status, its dominant position in the metropolitan area and the administrative capacity of the city authorities in comparison to other municipalities [L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_3, L\_Coor\_M8].

The choice was more complex in CS, where the capital city initially wanted to lead, but eventually the mayor of Gliwice was chosen. He gained **legitimacy among other cities and smaller municipalities** through setting out a strong vision for the metropolitan development and through his commitment to represent the interest of all municipalities [S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_2, S\_DMayor\_M6, S\_Mayor\_M1]. He also had personal experience in inter-municipal collaboration and leadership from other collaborative institutions (see Section 6.3.3), which strengthened his trustworthiness in pursuing collaboration through ITI.

One of the crucial principles introduced by the political leader in CS was a special focus on the smallest municipalities in the area. He stressed their importance for the development of the metropolitan area and his focus was acknowledged by the metropolitan administration, other mayors and municipal civil servants [S\_IB\_2, S\_Mayor\_M1]. He **personally attended and chaired every ITI Board meeting**, and treated this institution as a forum and tool of discussion about other joint development issues with other mayors [S\_IB\_1, S\_Fieldnotes]. This demonstrated the importance of ITI collaboration and **increased its political significance**.

*Identical structures can be built but some function and some do not. Sometimes it's a matter of some people, a leader, maybe just someone with charisma, maybe a chairman of the board, who influences others so much that he can make it work. Recently there has never been any argument on the board. Although there are difficult matters they are always somehow amicably resolved. [S\_Coor\_M5]*

*The fact that it works in a changing environment that often puts us under pressure is a miracle. In order to control the team, there must be a clear, clear message, regardless of the topic. The Mayor of Gliwice is the binder of everything. He can. He can categorise and put things together without emotions. We pose topics and solve problems. It works really well, sometimes even everyone votes in favour. [S\_DMayor\_M6]*

This approach differed significantly from that of the Lublin's Mayor, who looked mainly at Lublin's interests in the collaboration process and did not commit to ITI-related collective activities. He **perceived ITI implementation in an instrumental way** to spend EU funds rather than as an institution facilitating broader metropolitan development. In the interview, he acknowledged the need for it and the inter-dependencies of Lublin with smaller municipalities, but stated that the existing legal and national political context did not support building collaboration. Consequently, after the scope of ITI projects and rules of collaboration were accepted, he stopped participating ITI Councils with other mayors. He assessed that *'there are no problems with ongoing collaboration'* and did not see the need to engage in it [Interview with the political leader in LFA]. This was different from his engagement at the beginning, when his role in building agreement among mayors was important [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_2].

During ongoing collaboration, many research participants were disappointed by the leader's approach and some expressed openly that they were missing his initiative [L\_IB\_2, L\_Coor\_M8], as it also **demonstrated the low importance he attached to this collective institution**. Some understood his absence to be due to a busy agenda, the accumulation of other investment initiatives and higher-level political pressures [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_IB\_2].

*I would like to tell you the way I feel, I miss the [Lublin] mayor's support as a leader a bit, because he's so busy [L\_IB\_2]*

During field research, the ITI Council was attended by Lublin's deputy mayor. However, he often arrived and did not play an active leader's role: hosting responsibilities were taken on by others and the deputy mayor only spoke when asked about a particular issue related to Lublin's projects rather than collective action [L\_Fieldnotes].

It should be noted that different research participants highlighted the openness of the Lublin mayor to other municipalities' **bilateral initiatives of collaboration** with Lublin [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_TA\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7]. However, the function of the leader in the ongoing joint collaboration process was fulfilled either by the ITI Office Director, or one of the other mayors.

**The administrative leaders'** function was performed by ITI Office directors. Participant observation and interviews with a range of research participants in both regions revealed their importance in joint ITI implementation. At the beginning of the ITI process Office directors had to gain **legitimacy with the involved municipalities** and earn their trust in representing not only the interests of their political leaders, but of the whole metropolitan area. Both directors emphasised that representing the collective interest was their key function. In LFA, despite complex accountability relations, the positive role of the director in representing smaller municipalities' was expressed in the nickname they have her: 'ITI Mama'.

In both regions, ITI directors ensured that collaboration progressed at the operational level. However, the ITI Office directors' strategic – or political - role differed due to their personalities and the context in which they operated. The ITI Office director in CS had full, active **support from the political leader to pursue inter-municipal activities** exceeding the administrative aspect of ITI implementation. In one of the fieldnotes I observed that '*The ITI director's role among politicians is administrative, while among officials – political*'. This broader political support was absent in LFA, and consequently the strategic role of its ITI director was lower than in CS.



This difference emphasised by the **personal characteristics** of both leaders. While the CS Office Director enthusiastically took up the partnership animator's role with strong interpersonal skills of consensus building, the LFA administrative leader perceived her role as more procedural. She found the partnership animator's role uncomfortable and linked it to 'politics'. Her vision of metropolitan development focused on transport, and did not include initiatives in other thematic areas.

*When this role comes to leading, representing, mobilizing, storytelling, being a mentor, a teacher, it's not my nature. I cannot do it, I do not feel good in it. I do not like it, because there is a lot of politics there, and politics is not my cup of tea at all'[Administrative leader in LFA]*

In contrast, the ITI director in CS had a strategic vision of metropolitan development in various areas, and took the initiative to promote it among mayors and ITI coordinators. The ITI Office director in CS also highlighted his political neutrality, but this meant rather building connections among all partners regardless of their partisan affiliation rather than resigning from taking up the strategic, consensus-building and animating functions.

*I don't suppose I am treated as a politician, because I have never acted politically, I have no political connections. (...) I always try to attack both sides (laughs), say something negative on one side, but then add something negative in the other direction, that's probably the best for me. [Administrative leader in CS]*

*Do you deal with the negotiations between municipalities? - Yes. The [ITI] office director does this hard work and I must admit that he is very effective in it. [S\_IB\_3]*

**Joint projects leaders** were also acknowledged as actors in the collaborative process in both cases, although again their role differed in the two regions. In CS, this function was only mentioned in a number of cases, where mayors suggested initiatives for joint projects of multiple municipalities. These projects related to coordinating the location of cycling paths entering a joint public procurement procedure for energy delivery, and launching a metropolitan transport study [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_1]. The first two initiatives covered neighbouring municipalities, and were then coordinated by joint project leaders at the operational level in those municipalities. The transport study of the whole subregion, initiated by the mayor of Jaworzno, was operationally pursued by the ITI Office.

*There was a discussion at the management board, in which the point was made that we have a largest allocation for low-emission transport. (...) This was a topic that, even if not from the EU funds, we should now start integrating across our transport system. - Was there a leader of the topic? - Yes, the mayor of the city of Jaworzno, he pushed hard to finally implement this topic at the level of the whole Central Subregion, the rest of the municipalities agreed and this is how everything began. [S\_IB\_1]*

In LFA, four project partnerships were created on a 'top-down' basis by the MA, in cooperation with the ITI Office and after consultations with targeted municipalities. Multiple projects were

put together in the same thematic area and the municipalities chose project leaders afterwards. Initially, municipalities had expected that Lublin would lead all partnerships, but the city decided not to take part in partnership projects. Instead, Lublin realised its own part of the ITI as separate projects. This was negatively assessed by some municipalities [L\_Coor\_M8, L\_Fieldnotes].

Research participants described how joint projects leaders were chosen on the basis of their proactive approach, the level of trust from other municipalities and the perceived capacity of municipal ITI coordinators [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M3]. Two people observed that interpersonal skills are important: for trust building and conflict solving [L\_Coor\_M8], and one even noted the importance of personal friendship in collaboration [L\_IB\_3]. Two out of four leaders changed in the course of implementation due to deficiencies in joint project management [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M4, L\_Coor\_M7; L\_IB\_4].

The positive role of joint project leaders was highlighted by research participants, particularly in ensuring overall transparency and quality of inputs into projects, motivating partners to work on their inputs on time, and maintaining relations with municipal and regional institutions [L\_Coor\_M6, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_Coor\_M8, L\_Coor\_M9].

*Actually friendships mainly played a role here. If people are friendly with each other, it makes cooperation easier. [L\_IB\_3]*

*Somehow, we chose leaders among us, that is, communes that seemed to be leading from our point of view, or people, because they were often also personal factors. People who efficiently navigated in this subject. So we selected these communes to be the leaders of these projects. It was not always the right choice, because as it turned out, in the case of two projects, there was a change in the leadership position. [L\_DMayor\_M1]*

## **Other actors**

Research participants occasionally mentioned also other actors in the collaborative process, however their role appeared to be marginal. These actors were:

1. Inhabitants of the metropolitan areas, who - as voters - may insist on metropolitan investments from their mayors, [L\_Mayor\_M5], and may have participated in consultations of the ITI strategy [L\_Coor\_M9],
2. County-level politicians, who influence particular projects and can have a blocking power due to partisan competition [L\_Mayor\_M6] as explained in Section 5.1.
3. Independent experts assessing ITI projects, paid by MA or ITI Office [S\_Expert\_1, S\_Expert\_2, S\_Expert\_3, S\_Expert\_4, L\_Expert\_1]

4. External organisations, companies and media interested in ITI implementation, expressing opinions about metropolitan investments and strategy, and applying for funding from ITI resources [S\_Fieldnotes, L\_Fieldnotes].

### 6.2.2. Community attributes

The ICA literature explores how specific community characteristics influence collaboration processes, highlighting that they precondition the inhabitants' needs, and consequently shape interests of their representatives. This research has revealed that two such attributes were evident in ITI collaboration in both regions: population size and proximity of municipalities. Moreover, a new community attribute was identified: cultural-historical differences connected with geographical identity. Each of these aspects are discussed in detail below. The ICA literature mentions also homogeneity **of party membership among inhabitants**, but in the Polish context this attribute was of limited relevance due to marginal membership in any political party<sup>40</sup>. Overall, the political views of local communities were not identified as a relevant factor influencing ITI collaboration.

#### **Size of municipalities' population**

There are competing propositions in the literature concerning the role of municipality size on collaboration processes. Most studies within ICA literature show that similar municipalities are more likely to collaborate, as they usually have similar interests and problems (Kim et al., 2020). By contrast, other studies indicate that a large city can be a complementary partner for small municipalities, so differences can be an encouraging factor (Swianiewicz et al., 2016).

The two ITI areas covered in this research differed in this regard. CS has a polycentric settlement structure with 14 cities of a relatively large size (over 100,000 inhabitants). This created an environment of multiple strong players, potentially prompting competition and rivalry but also the scope for exchange of experience between equals, without a single dominating unit. In Lublin Functional Area, the structure is much more monocentric: the city of Lublin has over 600,000 inhabitants and the other municipalities have less than 20,000 each (see Section 3.3 for more detail). In this context, there is potential for collaborative relations to be much more one-sided with the capital dominating the rest.

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<sup>40</sup> This may be associated with Poland's communist past.

In both cases however, population size was an important factor shaping relations among actors. Research participants acknowledged the **dominant position of the big cities**: and in both cases the expected power dominance of larger cities limited levels of trust at the beginning of the collaboration process. Small municipalities were afraid that their interests would not be taken into consideration in the allocation of joint resources under ITI [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_3, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M3].

However, in CS trust was built over time, and research participants highlighted that the small municipalities collaborated effectively with each other and with larger cities [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_DMayor\_M4]. On the contrary, Lublin clearly distanced itself from the municipalities, notably by refusing to enter formal partnerships with them, or failing to attend official ITI meetings. This inhibited the building of trust throughout the collaboration process. Some research participants even described this situation as ‘being on two sides of the barricade’ [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M7].

*We were afraid of the dominance of Katowice or Gliwice, generally big cities. But this is not the case. Sometimes even the cities can transfer additional funds, and they don't want anything in return, as we have nothing to offer them. But there is definitely no dominance' [S\_Mayor\_M1]*

*It is a miracle that the ITI, that it all functions, because there are so many people, diverse cities, bigger and smaller, totally different mentalities' [S\_DMayor\_M4].*

*Sometimes it was so difficult and so painful, because Lublin threw out the list of projects here again, because they want to grab the entire allocation for themselves. [L\_Coor\_M5]*

Research participants also observed differences in **investment needs of larger and smaller cities**. In bigger cities the most needed investments were in the areas of biodiversity and low-emission transport, while small municipalities still needed basic infrastructure investments such as water treatment systems [S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_IB\_3, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_DMayor\_M5]. It was also acknowledged that depending on size, municipalities differed in terms of their legal competences. For example, cities with county status have responsibility to deliver services of secondary education [L\_IB\_2]. While in CS these difference were in general perceives as complementary, in LFA research some participants observed that ‘*there are no common interests*’ [L\_IB\_1], ‘*it is hard to link them*’ [L\_Coor\_M7] or even that they are sometimes in conflict [L\_IO\_M5].

*We noticed that these problems, possibilities and gaps are of similar nature in our communes [L\_DMayor\_M1]*

*The [smaller] municipalities have a slightly different strategy. This is a strategy for acquiring residents, and it is also in conflict with our priorities. [L\_IO\_M5]*

Others acknowledged differences in the **financial and administrative capacity** of municipalities, depending on their population size. The less inhabitants they have, the smaller budgets and less employees are in municipal administration. Consequently, there is less capacity to participate in collaborative projects [S\_Coor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M8, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_IO\_M5, L\_TA\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5]. ITI projects, similarly to other CP-funded investments, require a contribution from municipalities from their own resources of a minimum of 15%. They also require expertise and knowledge to prepare the necessary documentation, which again is very challenging for smaller municipalities. In LFA, these capacity differences were the most striking. Lublin city administration has over 500 employees, while some other municipalities have only 20 staff and a very limited investment budget.

*For projects involving some entrepreneurial and social issues. To be clear, I am talking about rural communes. (...) There is no understanding that it is possible to implement projects that create entrepreneurship, i.e. educational projects, for example in schools, municipalities, and projects related to the creation of places where young people could pursue their entrepreneurial passions, such as open spaces or a maker space. There is no such understanding at all. [L\_IO\_M5]*

Thus, it is unrealistic to expect the same expertise and speed in preparing EU projects and, consequently, equal participation in collaboration among partners [L\_MA\_1, L\_IB\_1, L\_IO\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7]. In this situation, the mutual support among municipalities, strengthened by formal partnerships, proved to be very valuable in pooling capacities, particularly among the smallest localities [L\_IB\_4, L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_Mayor\_M5].

Research participants noted that in cases of low administrative capacity the **role of mayor** in project preparation is emphasised, both in terms of their personal expertise and initiative and the capacity of the staff they employ [L\_IO\_M5, S\_IB\_3]. In some municipalities in CS, research participants highlighted that the capacity to acquire EU funds substantially increased after local elections in 2014, when the new mayor employed highly-trained specialists. This illustrates that **structural politicisation** can have positive effects, if a mayor appoints staff within their network, but based on expertise of particular persons.

*In one city, the former deputy marshal became the mayor, and for his deputy he nominated the person who had coordinated EU funds in the Marshal Office. They knew the plans of this period very well, and it can be said that in three years, they have already realised all projects from these plans. Very high efficiency of their implementation. [S\_IB\_1]*

### **Proximity of municipalities**

ICA literature shows that municipalities sharing a border are more likely to collaborate as they have more issues in common issues than those located at a distance from each other (Feiock,

2009, 2013). This seems to play a huge role when researching bilateral, fully bottom-up partnerships, while ITI concerns collaboration of numerous municipalities as a part of a broader area. However, neighbouring municipalities collaborated bilaterally already before ITI [S\_Coor\_M1, S\_DMayor\_M7], in LFA especially Lublin with surrounding municipalities [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M4, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_Mayor\_M5]. In LFA, research participants acknowledged interdependencies mostly with their neighbours [L\_IB\_5, L\_Mayor\_M6]. In CS, the polycentric character of the metropolitan area means that that citizens travel on daily basis in various directions, so the meaning of proximity was broader. Research participants acknowledged connections not only between neighbouring municipalities but also with more distant ones [S\_MA\_1, S\_Coor\_M3, S\_Coor\_M7, S\_IB\_2].

*We are like a district practically because we are very close. Sometimes they are just across the street, one does not realise they are in another town. [S\_Coor\_M3]*

Nevertheless, as described in Section 6.1.1, a number of projects in both regions including territorial coordination were located in neighbouring municipalities. Moreover, in LFA they collaborated on particular ITI investments located on the border [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7]. Formal project partnerships in LFA were created regardless of proximity as they were thematic.

*This transport hub is partly in the city, partly in the area of another commune. So we have an agreement with the commune that they take these areas for the transport hub. Of course, we buy the land, all financing is on our side, but they provide the land. [S\_Coor\_M5]*

### **Cultural-historical characteristics**

The cultural and historic attributes of communities have not been included in the ICA literature, but analysis shows that they played a role in ITI implementation in both cases. First, in both regions research participants acknowledged low **social capital** among the population was a historical legacy, resulting in limited levels of trust and challenges for collaboration processes [L\_Mayor\_M2, S\_Mayor\_M5]. **Level of trust** was mentioned as an important factor for relations of mayors, of ITI coordinators, trust of mayors to the ITI Office, ITI Office with the regional MA employees, political leader and other mayors. Several research participants observed the growth of trust, building up over time during collaboration. Some research participants highlighted the importance of this process in the context of traditionally low levels of social capital in Poland.

*In Lubelskie there is an additional problem. It is a region that is probably still very much affected by distrust of cooperation and a very critical approach to partners. We have this problem, we had socialism, so we have to learn some things. [L\_Mayor\_M2]*

Another cultural-historical attribute acknowledged in CS was a strong level of **identification with the area among communities**. This had a twofold meaning. First, the CS was characterised by research participants as having a strong regional identity [S\_Coor\_M1, S\_IB\_1, S\_Mayor\_5, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_Fieldnotes]. This had a positive influence on collaboration, as both inhabitants and local actors had a sense of belonging to a broader area than their municipality. As a result, the development of the region was perceived as a common good. This identity was also related to broad similarity in economic profiles based around the dominant industry in the subregion: mining. In this way, most municipalities shared similar past and current challenges connected to revitalizing post-industrial areas. This created an understanding of mutual needs.

*These communes suffer from similar problems, i.e. post-industrial heritage, the need to revitalise sometimes entire districts after collapsing mines. I think that at the level of problems, these integrated actions can be worked out as much as possible here. [S\_IB\_2]*

Within this, it should be noted that there is a strong **division of CS into two cultural parts**: Górny Śląsk and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie. The division follows the historic border between Prussia and Russia. Research participants acknowledged strong identities and differences of interests in these areas, which effected in rivalry and mutual prejudices [S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Fieldnotes]. This division is even visible in the official name of the legally created metropolis in 2017: Metropolia Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska. According to some research participants, this was an influence on how municipalities located in these two different areas collaborated.

*We also have such a typical Śląskie.. Zagłębie wanted to be separate. Because of a different mentality, there was a border long time ago. They wanted to be separate. [S\_DMayor\_M7]*

This identity with a regional area was not observed in LFA, neither among the representatives of the city, nor smaller municipalities. The only characteristic that was possible to identify among local actors, was the awareness of living in the **Eastern Poland** [L\_Fieldnotes]. This part has been called 'Poland B', indicating that it is poorer and less developed than the western part of the country. Although not noted by research participants, this attitude could have had a negative influence on collaboration by supporting the belief that the region still required most basic investments before more advanced, collaborative activities could be pursued.

All the discussed characteristics of communities **affected behaviour of mayors** and in this way are considered as political factors. Mayors are part of these communities and can be expected

to represent similar characteristics. Moreover, mayors are accountable to their voters and therefore need to follow community attributes, interests and needs in their decisions.

### **6.3. Existing institutions**

The research also analysed the role of the institutional structures under which local actors interact in ITI collaborative processes, following the types of institutions typically included in the ICA framework: higher-level rules, political structures and existing collaboration mechanisms.

The quantitative summary of a coding exercise within the category of existing institutions, set out in Table 29, shows that over 60% of collected material in both regions related to the role of higher-level rules in ITI collaboration. Within this, eight descriptive categories were created in order to distinguish the type of rules involved. Research participants mostly talked about rules concerning the thematic scope of collaboration projects and project selection modes. In terms of differences between regions, rules related to territorial coverage, project forms and integration mechanisms were more often commented in LFA.

Political structure was slightly more frequently commented by research participants in LFA. Under this category, two descriptive codes were created, and the majority of codes in both regions concerned elections. As for existing ICA mechanisms, they were more often mentioned in CS. Two descriptive codes helped identify which actors used their previous experiences in ITI collaboration.



Table 29 Quantitative summary of codes related to Existing ICA institutions

ICA Framework category	Descriptive subcategories	CS	LFA	TOTAL	CS %	LFA %	TOTAL %
<b>Higher-level rules</b>	Thematic scope of collaboration	52	43	95	27%	19%	<b>23%</b>
	Joint project selection modes	39	38	77	20%	17%	<b>19%</b>
	Territory of collaboration	4	17	21	2%	8%	<b>5%</b>
	Scope of task delegation	6	10	16	3%	4%	<b>4%</b>
	Amount of external resources	6	6	12	3%	3%	<b>3%</b>
	Integration mechanisms	2	8	10	1%	4%	<b>2%</b>
	Project forms	0	9	9	0%	4%	<b>2%</b>
	Other	13	15	28	7%	7%	<b>7%</b>
<b>Political structure</b>	Elections calendar	17	33	50	9%	15%	<b>12%</b>
	Political stability	4	6	10	2%	3%	<b>2%</b>
<b>Existing ICA mechanisms</b>	Examples	33	26	59	17%	12%	<b>14%</b>
	Personal experiences	16	13	29	8%	6%	<b>7%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>192</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 6.3.1. Higher level rules

Higher level rules played an important role in shaping collaboration within ITI in both regions. ITI is a specific instrument that is dependent on EU, national and regional regulations. Research participants observed that in general, the quality of higher-level rules for collaborative processes was strongly related to political factors joint endeavours is related to politics (see Section 5.1). This section provides a short overview of particular rules that influenced the highest extent behaviour of actors involved in joint ITI implementation. It highlights the differences in how the rules were perceived in both case studies, and identify the political factors involved.

The coding exercise identified seven higher level rules that were most frequently mentioned by local actors (see Table 29). In each of them, the thematic analysis identified patterns, described in detail below.

## Thematic scope of collaboration

The thematic scope of collaborative projects undertaken by municipalities under ITI was conditioned by specific rules at EU, national and regional levels. The rules included the general topics of investments and their specific types (i.e. concerning the priority axis and thematic objectives of Regional Operational Programmes within which ITI operated). There were also specific guidelines, requirements and standards that the investments had to comply with. There were specific, substantive indicators that ITI investments were required to contribute to through their investments (e.g. lower CO2 emissions), and limits were placed on the level of funds to be used for particular thematic areas. There was an initial lack of clarity regarding the impact of these rules on possible investments, especially as these rules changed multiple times before and after the official launch of the ITI the association in CS and the ITI agreement in LFA [S\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_2].

The impact of these higher level rules were to some extent a topic of negotiation between regional MA and ITI Offices, but the regional Marshal had a decisive role [L\_IB\_3, S\_IB\_1, S\_MA\_1, L\_MA\_2]. The kind of investments to dedicate to the ITI instrument was therefore a **political decision at the regional level**, and some of them would potentially attract voters to a greater extent, e.g. roads, sewage systems, kindergartens, thermo-modernisation (see Section 5.1.1).

*A lot of election pledges are adjusted to what the European Commission said could be realised with EU funds. [S\_Fieldnotes]*

This was not an serious problem in CS, where the allocation was so substantial that a variety of available priorities could be supported to respond to different needs within higher level rules [S\_MA\_1]. In LFA, however, funding was more limited and several research participants assessed the kinds of investments available within ITI rules as **not attractive** [L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_1, L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M5].

*I am a supporter of bottom-up thinking and that local government authorities know best what they need. I understand the Commission gives away funds, or that the Ministry looks at development from the national level. But between the ITI IB and the regional MA, at least at this level for management, the relationship should be reversed. The ITI IB should have the right to choose from the ROP what priorities it would like to dedicate funds for integrated projects. However, the priorities to be invested was strongly imposed by the regional MA because they take the rest [the remaining ROP priorities] for themselves. [L\_IB\_1]*

According to them, several collaborative projects that had a clear logic in the LFA context were not eligible or had to be adjusted to fit within the formal requirements [L\_DMAYOR\_M1, L\_IB\_1]. One research participant in LFA stated that the available thematic scope of

investments within ITI did not cover the most important challenges for metropolitan development [L\_Mayor\_M5]. Another argued that municipalities should define what they need, and then the MA should adjust distribution of resources from the Regional Operational Programme [L\_IB\_1]. However, many research participant from both regions acknowledged that some form of higher-level rules was important. Without this, the majority of funds would be used for local roads, sports infrastructure and sewage systems [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M6, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_Coor\_M7], the impact of which would be questionable from the strategic metropolitan development point of view.

*The MA rightfully reduced the priorities related to tourism, entertainment, i.e. the construction of amusement parks, the construction of new swimming pools, such facilities, because on the one hand every municipality would like to have a new swimming pool in the city, and on the other hand, these are the costs that would lead us to the situation analogous to Spain or Greece. These are not profitable objects, they have to be maintained, and local communities simply are not able to pay enough taxes to maintain them. [S\_IB\_1]*

The analysis revealed two additional factors shaping actors motivation and behaviour: perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration, and its relevance for metropolitan development challenges diagnosed in a particular area.

### **Joint project selection modes**

In assessing the role of existing institutions in ITI collaborative processes it is important to distinguish between two different models for generating and selecting EU-funded projects. For each metropolitan area targeted by ITI, the Managing Authority under strong supervision from the European Commission, decided whether ITI projects would be selected under competitive or a non-competitive procedures. The latter was a preferable option for research participants in both regions, as it reserved ITI funds for municipal projects, without the need to compete in a call with project applications from external entities. This non-competitive mode was accepted for LFA for projects funded from the European Regional Development Fund, while ITI-dedicated resources from the European Social Fund were allocated through a competitive procedure, open to NGOs and other institutions. In CS, the non-competitive mode was supported by the Managing Authority, but was refused by the EU due to the substantial resources (nearly 1 billion EUR) dedicated to the area. Several research participants were disappointed by this decision, as the resources were not guaranteed to municipalities anymore [S\_Mayor\_M2, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_AC1\_M6, S\_Coor\_M8].

*It was a bit of a disappointment among local governments, because at the beginning it was said that this money is guaranteed if the projects are well prepared. Suddenly, it emerged that everyone could apply, and money*

*was not entirely dedicated to local governments, because, of course, all entities can participate equally.*  
[S\_Coor\_M8]

The initial expectation before starting the field research was that the non-competitive mode of project selection would be more politicised as it gives more decision-making power to local politicians in deciding on investments to be funded. This could explain the European Commission's decision to exclude this possibility where such substantial resources were involved. However, this research did not include interviews with Commission representatives. Otherwise, no other political factors were identified in the context of this rule.

### **Territory of collaboration**

Higher level rules also conditioned the territorial coverage of ITI collaboration. EU regulations predefined that ITI was as a way to of promote sustainable development in urban areas, while rules introduced at the national level in Poland determined that they will be implemented in functional urban areas. The definition of these functional urban areas was based on an academic study on functional connections between municipalities around regional capitals (as described in Section 3.2.2). The delimited territory was then the subject of negotiations with authorities from the targeted areas. As a consequence, in LFA one municipality was added to the 15 originally selected. In CS, the study indicated an area including 41 municipalities, while local actors successfully negotiated enlarging the area up to 73 municipalities. In this process, different actors played a role in both regions: in CS the political leader [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_IB\_1], while in LFA the administrative leader [L\_Mayor\_M2].

**The number of participants** is typically mentioned in ICA literature as one of the factors. Here, research participants mentioned it in relation to the number of municipalities increasing the coverage of the metropolitan area, the number of mayors participating in meetings and the number of ITI coordinators. In LFA the number of partnering municipalities was considered as relevant, and mentioned only in the context of Marshal's plans of extending the LFA formally by a number of new municipalities. This was criticised due to the need to renegotiate the rules rather than the fear of too many partners [L\_Fieldnotes].

In CS, the number was assessed as high and making the collaboration more complicated, but well managed [S\_Coor\_M5, S\_MA\_1, S\_IB\_1]. However, the political leader intended to extend the metropolitan area covered by ITI due to functional connections between municipalities and the will to highlight solidarity among them.

*It was a political decision. We said we want something universal. Not only 14 cities, but 82 local government units [S\_DMayor\_M7]*

*It was me who applied for such a wide range of ITI, and this is because, as you said, we try to keep solidarity. Please note that the money is calculated 40-ish municipalities, and there are 81 units in the relationship. This is such an obvious proof of solidarity (...). In order to convince, I used the argument that the population in these redundant communes is so small, that it will not burden us much, we will maintain solidarity, because we formed an association of 81 entities and it was caused by something, some delimitation etc. And there was not a single counter argument here. [Interview with the political leader in CS]*

### **Scope of task delegation to the metropolitan level**

Higher level rules were also influential in defining the competences allocated to local actors in managing and implementing collaborative ITI projects. The extent of delegation of these competences was mainly defined at the regional level, under the supervision of national government. These rules were especially important for positioning the ITI Office as an actor, as they defined which prerogatives regarding ITI implementation were delegated to these newly created institutions in both regions. ITI Offices were given the status of an Intermediate Body in the EU funds implementation system, and were given some of the tasks typically held by managing authorities. These are described in detail in Section 5.3.1., together with analysis on how the task division affected ITI Offices' accountability. The set of delegated tasks in CS was eventually extended [S\_IB\_3]. This was not the case in LFA and some research participants there complained that the delegated tasks were not sufficient and that their role was limited as a result [L\_IB\_3].

*The MA did not give us sufficient powers to create such a genuine intermediate Body. We had limited possibilities on the one hand from the top. On the other hand, the city also did not want us, in the sense of a department of European funds, to get too involved in the projects of the city, so we were left behind by both sides [L\_IB\_3]*

### **Amount of external resources**

The level of EU funding to be allocated for the supporting sustainable urban development, including through ITI, was set by EU rules to at least 5% of ERDF funding available for each EU Member State. This minimum level could be increased at the national and/or regional level. In Poland, national rules left this decision to regions. While the Śląskie Voivodeship substantially increased the amount of funds dedicated to ITI, LFA did not extend beyond the minimum requirement. These higher level rules on funding amounts were important in setting the limits for collaboration through ITI and the consequences of the different rules taken at the regional level in the two case studies were highlighted by research participants. For many municipalities in both regions, ITI was the main source of investment budget. In CS, some

research participants assessed that the increased amount of resources meant that potential tensions in the collaboration process were reduced as there was ‘enough for everybody’ [S\_Coor\_M5, S\_IB\_3]. In LFA the funds, limited by regional-level rules, were considered insufficient [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5]. As discussed in Section 5.1, this decision could have been associated with **partisan affiliation of the Marshals**. Moreover, the **perceived attractiveness of the amount of joint resources** could be another factor influencing actors’ behaviour.

*The availability of these funds is not so great. This is not enough for this functional area and it will create barriers to the implementation of all the tasks that could have strengthened integration. [L\_Mayor\_M5]*

### **Integration mechanisms**

National-level rules determined that there were two available legal forms for ITI collaboration mechanisms: an inter-municipal association and an inter-municipal agreement. The final decision between the two forms depended on the local actors forming the ITI. The rule left the actors with a simple choice between a more advanced form of collaboration (through an association) or a more limited form (through an inter-municipal agreement). Research participants did not comment often on the national level rule itself, although one mentioned that the text of the agreement in the LFA case was revised by the Ministry and had to be changed [L\_IB\_1]. This illustrates national authorities’ role not only in narrowing down the rules, but also controlling their execution. Other comments concerned the consequences of the choice of integration mechanism, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Project forms**

This aspect was only commented on by research participants in LFA. The Managing Authority required that investments from multiple municipalities under the same thematic heading be put together in a partnership project. The decision was taken by the MA following discussions with the ITI Office and JASPERS<sup>41</sup> experts advising on the ITI model in LFA. However, Lublin successfully insisted on being excluded from this rule and as a result all of its projects had a separate, individual character. This different treatment was perceived as unfair by research participants, as the partnership requirement demanded additional formalities and lengthy coordination processes [L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7]. This different treatment had a negative impact on collaborative relations between Lublin and other municipalities [L\_Fieldnotes].

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<sup>41</sup> Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions, initiative funded from the European Investment Bank. More information: [www.jaspers.eib.org](http://www.jaspers.eib.org).

Consequently, a factor that can be observed here is the **unequal application of higher-level rules among partners**.

*At the beginning, the approach was that partnerships must be created, Lublin and the surrounding areas had to come together in partnerships. For Lublin it emerged that this would not exactly be the case and this has interfered with the objective of comprehensive, integrated territorial investment. It is well-known that the bigger municipality one can do more, and we had to combine our projects. [L\_Coor\_M9]*

In CS, the regional MA created a rule encouraging municipalities to formally apply for funding together, adding extra points in project selection scoring for the partnership character of a project during the assessment procedure. Consequently, formal partnerships in CS were very rare. Even though municipalities initially planned applying together for funds, they realised the externalities of each other's delays and other formal interdependencies, and decided to coordinate their investments only informally (see Section 6.1.1).

### 6.3.2. Political structure

The role of political structures in inter-municipal collaboration has been acknowledged in the ICA literature. One conclusion is that municipalities with the same local government and election systems are more likely to collaborate, as they determine similar incentives and interests for mayors and local councils (see Section 1.1.4). This might facilitate collaboration in Poland in general, as there is only one electoral model in the whole country. Additionally, studies indicate that municipalities with a strong mayor system are more likely to collaborate than those with a council or a technocrat system.

In Poland, all municipalities have a **strong mayor system**, and so this aspect is generally supportive of inter-municipal collaboration. This aspect was acknowledged by two mayors [S\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5]. However, these aspects of political structure were not regarded as important in analysing collaboration within ITI. These basic features of the Polish local government system were treated by local actors as obvious and consequently were not considered as influential factors in ITI collaboration.

For research participants in both regions, a much more important factor related to political structure was the calendar of **local, regional and national elections**. The timing of elections shaped mayors actions and decisions, including those related to ITI collaboration (see Section 5.1). Moreover, the electoral calendar influenced the activities of the ITI Offices and their joint activities. In general, research participants observed that all kinds of elections slowed the collaboration process down [S\_Mayor\_M1, L\_IB\_2].

In LFA, the ITI Office began planning their calendar of activities for the next year adjusted to the elections. This meant not planning any major activities in the run up to an impending election and postponing any discussions about the future of collaboration until after any elections.

*Being aware of this, you need to arrange all this cooperation, even such a thing as next year's summary of the ITI Council, I already know today that I have to plan it not do it in November, because it may happen that I will make a summary then for a different group of mayors. [L\_IB\_2]*

In CS, the electoral timetable created substantial tensions between civil servants and politicians, as the former had an interest to postpone the projects to the last months of the year, while politicians preferred not to plan anything after August. The latter was especially valid for controversial, risky projects including bigger public procurement procedures, as they could be used by mayor's opposition to point out mistakes and use them in campaign [S\_Fieldnotes]. In this way, the electoral calendar influenced which joint projects were conducted and when.

*Certainly the change of power delayed everything a bit, but this is logical and normal. [S\_Mayor\_M1]*

Moreover, of key importance in the Polish context is **political stability**. This was already addressed in Section 5.1, but further analysis provided additional insights. Some research participants highlighted that **mayors who held their office for longer than one electoral term were more likely to collaborate** [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_IB\_2]. This can be explained by the value of participating in networks over an extended period for the development of trust, experience and capacities to maintain longer-term, reciprocal relations.

*More experienced mayors know that collaboration does not have to provide immediate results and that it can be beneficial anyway. At some point in the future a municipality that has benefited from our actions can agree to something beneficial for us. In the longer-term, everybody wins [L\_Mayor\_M7]*

*I believe that cooperation with those mayors whom you have known for years, is going well and I think that everyone has confidence in each other.... When new ones arrive, of course, it has to be adjusted a bit.[S\_Mayor\_M1]*

### 6.3.3. Existing ICA mechanisms

The ICA literature argues that municipalities that have engaged in collaboration in the past are more likely to enter collective action again (see Section 1.1.2). Analysis of the empirical material shows that this factor was important in two ways two aspects of this issue: the **number** of existing ICA institutions, and **personal experiences** in collaborating with other



municipalities by leaders, mayors and civil servants. This section summarises both aspects in the two analysed metropolitan areas.

In CS, research participants listed existing inter-municipal collaborative actions in the area. Some of these went beyond the CS territory, some covered the same territory and some included only a few neighbouring municipalities:

1. Górnośląski Związek Metropolitalny (previous attempt of metropolitan collaboration);
2. Śląski Związek Gmin i Powiatów (association of all the municipalities and counties in the region);
3. Związek Miast Polskich (association of Polish cities);
4. Związek Gmin Małej i Górnej Panwii i Dolnej Liswarty (association of a number of neighbouring municipalities);
5. Program Rozwoju Subregionu (former subregional collaboration based on joint applying for EU funds);
6. KZK GOP (inter-municipal public transport authority);
7. Partnership projects among particular municipalities (EU-funded), e.g. Miasto3.

In LFA, there were also examples of previous or existing collaboration among particular municipalities, although none of them included the whole LFA or a bigger territory:

1. EU-funded project for 13 out of 16 municipalities in the 2007-2013 period, with the aim to start preparing a joint ITI strategy, led by Lublin;
2. Waste Management Plant of 9 municipalities within LFA, including Lublin;
3. Touristic triangle 'Kraina Lessowych Wąwozów': collaboration of 3 municipalities in Lubelskie with a tourist profile, out of which 1 was part of LFA;
4. The Jan Sobieski Path project – 6 partnering municipalities from LFA in 2006, 3 from LFA, 1 as a leader;
5. Lubelska Wyżyna Motoryzacyjna i Maszynowa, Lublin's sector-based collaboration of a number of municipalities in Lubelskie;
6. Lubelska Wyżyna Lotnicza -collaboration in the airplane sector in Lubelskie;
7. Lublin's bilateral collaboration regarding particular economic sectors, some in LFA, some outside LFA but in the region, some international.

These lists demonstrate that many municipalities in both metropolitan areas had previous experience of some kind of inter-municipal collaboration. This was important, as it meant that

the networks established for ITI had something to build on. The examples of collaboration experience in both regions differed in terms of their scope. In CS, the collaboration was more institutionalised. There were some formally launched associations, one of them including all municipalities in the whole region. In LFA, the ICA mechanisms were more project-based, small scale, ad hoc and sector-based.

A distinction can also be made between institutional experience of inter-municipal experience and how personal experience of collaboration was important for leaders, civil servants and mayors. Both regions had mayors and civil servants experienced in small-scale bilateral or broader projects and it was clear that some municipalities engaged more in collaboration, because a civil servant used established personal networks. When this employee moved to work in another municipality, the new unit started collaborating more. [S\_Fieldnotes]. The same process was evident for mayors, but at the strategic rather than operational level.

It should be noted at the outset that existing experiences of collaborative mechanisms could have a **positive or negative influence on ITI collaboration**: negative experiences could decrease already weak levels of trust among actors and lower their eagerness to enter new collaborative arrangements. Research participants highlighted that they have both negative and positive experiences with the ICA above.

*We knew each other from a project that we led with other municipalities. We developed some patterns of mutual communication and cognition. I personally got to know the methods of conducting meetings, the needs of individual mayors in the communes that collaborated, so it is certainly easier to communicate on this axis. The advantage is also, maybe I speak on behalf of the mayors, that we have already shown many times that we feel more responsible for each other. It is easier to communicate and trust someone with whom these relations have already turned out positively. And the relationship is different with someone completely new. [L\_Coor\_M8]*

*The subregion development program (PRS) had an established association, one city volunteered to run it, it was a big mess, I never knew what was going on there, I did not like it completely, I did not criticise, I was one of the participants, I came, I listened politely, but it worked ineffectively and I used this experience to do thing differently next time. [S\_Mayor\_5]*

The personal experiences in previous collaboration were particularly crucial for political and administrative **leaders**. In CS the most experienced person in inter-municipal collaboration was its political leader. For 20 years he was the Chair of an organisation of all municipalities in CS, and during field research the chair of the Polish Cities Association (ZMP). He stated that he consciously did not want to repeat some previous mistakes and to use his experience to improve relations among partners. Previous experience not only raised his personal skills, but also built his credibility and legitimacy among other partners. During interviews and participant observation, several actors observed that he had earned their trust before the launch of the ITI.

In LFA, the mayor of Lublin was the deputy chair of association of Polish cities (ZMP) but this role was not mentioned by research participants. The mayor did not engage personally in formal inter-municipal arrangements, and apart from strategic negotiations with mayors, Lublin's inter-municipal collaboration was carried out mainly at the operational level. In LFA, the most experienced person in inter-municipal collaboration from the city of Lublin was not involved in ITI implementation, so this experience was not used in building collaboration in LFA.

The analysis above highlights **three factors related to existing ICA mechanisms**, which should be taken into account regarding political actors involved in collaboration. Each of these has a clear political dimension: the number of existing ICA mechanisms, the presence of actors involved in previous collaboration, and these actors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration activities.

#### **6.4. Summary – identified political factors**

This chapter has set out to identify political factors in collaboration within ITI implementation in two Polish metropolitan areas. It analysed the collected empirical material through the lens of ICA Framework, in particular within the category 'sources of collaboration risks' with three main elements: nature of ICA dilemma, actors characteristics, and existing institutions.

Regarding the **nature of the ICA dilemma**, the collaboration involved within ITI implementation was mostly related to coordination. Research participants identified three types of joint projects coordination: territorial, functional and thematic. The scope and depth of coordination at strategic level, as well as involvement in collaborative arrangements allowing achieving economy scale, depended on mayors and project leaders. Evidence showed that pushing joint investments towards higher coordination gains was related to individual's initiative and determination. Some research participants highlighted that political will is needed for an effective coordination of municipal investments. In some instances, this factor was crucial. Economies of scale were rarely involved in collaboration, and depended on the homogeneity of priorities among mayors, mayors' strategic decision, and scope of potential savings as a political incentive. All political factors identified within this category are included in Table 30, as they were associated with actors' characteristics.

Most political factors were identified in the subcategory of **individual actors** (see Table 30). The analysis confirmed the presence of actors typically considered in the ICA literature: mayors and local councillors, although the latter played a veto-player and a marginal role in joint ITI

implementation. Moreover, the analysis revealed new kinds of political actors that have not been considered in the ICA literature before. First, it emphasised the specific function of **leaders**, identified at the political level (the leader among mayors), administrative level (the leader of the ITI metropolitan administration), and the joint project level (the mayor or civil servant initiating and coordinating a particular collaborative initiative). All leaders fulfilled political functions in the collaboration process. Second, the metropolitan ITI administration proved to be an important actor with in both administrative and political functions. Third, local civil servants involved in ITI implementation played a role in shaping collaborative arrangements at operational level. Lastly, regional and national politicians were also involved in ITI implementation. For each identified actor group there were political factors identified.

Within a second kind of actors' characteristics - **community attributes** - the analysis identified two factors typically considered in the ICA literature (administrative capacity, social capital and population size), and demonstrated the irrelevance of other: party membership among citizens and proximity. Political factors identified within this category are included in Table 30.

In terms of **existing institutions**, the analysis identified political factors in all three ICA Framework categories. First, it specified concrete higher-level rules that shaped actors behaviour, relations and attitude towards collaboration. Second, it revealed that the typically analysed elements in ICA literature in relation to political structure are not relevant for the Polish context. Instead, the analysis showed other aspects, mainly the electoral calendar and political stability. Third, it showed the importance of personal experiences in previous ICA mechanisms of mayors, civil servants and leaders. Most of the factors identified in relation to existing institutions can be considered political, they are summarised in Table 31. The table also includes some factors identified as political by research participants and described in Section 5.1.

In general, the analysis showed some **key differences** between the selected metropolitan areas. As for **nature of the ICA dilemma**, the research found more cases of more advanced, strategic coordination between projects in CS than in LFA. This was mostly related to individual initiatives of particular project leaders among mayors and civil servants. In LFA the process of putting projects together had a top-down, formal character, which ensured a minimum extent of coordination at the thematic level, but did not guarantee a strategic added value.

As for **actors' characteristics**, individual actors involved in ITI implementation were similar, but the attributes of some differed. Crucially, political and administrative leaders defined their

informal role differently, with those in CS embracing a broader set of functions, especially in terms of promoting strategic joint development and paying attention to small municipalities' interest on top of the core cities. Regarding community characteristics, there were separate factors identified in CS, not present in LFA: regional identity and cultural-historical divisions.

Regarding **existing institutions**, key differences were related to the higher-level rules defined at the national and regional levels: project selection mode (competitive in CS), thematic scope of ITI investments (more attractive for mayors in CS), and project mode (formal partnership imposed by the MA). Moreover, although in both metropolitan areas actors had previous experience with inter-municipal collaboration, only in CS it had a metropolitan scope, while in LFA it had a local and more narrow character. Also the political leader in CS had a personal experience in leading metropolitan and regional organisations, while in LFA the leader was mostly involved in bilateral contracts.

In summary, this research identified a **broad selection of political factors**, some of which were so far not considered in ICA literature. The distinction between political (in Tables 30-31 marked in blue) and non-political (marked in orange) factors was made on the basis of the meaning of politics and political actors to research participants (see Chapter 5). The impact of the identified factors on collaboration within ITI implementation is analysed in the next chapter.

Table 30 Political and non-political factors identified among actors characteristics

Category	Factor
Leaders	1. A number of leaders' initiatives for particular joint projects
	2. Level of support for the administrative leader among members of collaboration,
	3. Level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration,
	4. Perceived administrative leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests
	5. Perceived political leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests
	6. Personal qualities of the administrative leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc
	7. Personal qualities of the political leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc
	8. Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism
	9. Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism
Mayors	10. Homogeneity in the efficiency in EU funds absorption and project preparation
	11. Homogeneity of the number of terms in the function of mayors
	12. Human capital of mayors
	13. Level of approval of the division mechanism
	14. Level of fluctuation of mayors' party membership
	15. Level of trust among mayors
	16. Mayor's focus on electoral interests
	17. Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development
	18. Mayors' vision on priorities homogeneity
	19. Mayors' age homogeneity
	20. Number of mayors involved in collaboration
	21. Party affiliation homogeneity among local mayors
	22. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayor and group dominant in municipal council
	23. Perceived clientelism level
	24. Perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and the other municipalities
	25. Perceived mayors' charisma and ambition
ITI Office employees	26. Personal networks and friendships among mayors
	27. Perceived legitimacy of metropolitan authority among mayors
	28. Municipality of origin and/or residence of ITI office employees
	29. Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees
ITI Coordinators	30. Scope of tasks delegated to the metropolitan authority
	31. Human capital of civil servants
	32. Level of administrative staff turnover after local elections
	33. Level of trust among civil servants
	34. Number of civil servants involved in collaboration
Higher-level politicians	35. Personal networks and friendships among civil servants
	36. Government's relations with EU institutions
	37. Level of support for metropolitan development of regional and national authorities
	38. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and county authority
	39. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and national authority
Community	40. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and regional authority
	41. Perceived personal conflicts or likings between mayors and higher-level politicians
	42. Cultural-historical divisions
	43. Homogeneity of municipal size
	44. Level of administrative and financial capacity
	45. Proximity
	46. Regional identity
	47. Social capital

\*Legend: in orange non-political factors

Table 31 Political and non-political factors identified within existing institutions

Category	Factor
Higher level rules	1. Perceived attractiveness of the amount of available joint resources
	2. Perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration
	3. perceived easiness to get joint resources
	4. Perceived equal application of higher-level rules to all partners
	5. Frequency of changes in the rules
	6. Project form
	7. Project selection mode
	8. Relevance of the thematic scope for metropolitan development challenges
	9. Time pressure on joint projects realisation
Political structure	10. Scope of financial and legal autonomy of mayors
	11. Time after local elections
	12. Time after national/regional elections
	13. Time before local elections
	14. Time before national/regional elections
	15. Turnover among key political parties in power at higher levels
Existing ICA mechanisms	16. Turnover among mayors after elections
	17. Level of political leader's active involvement in existing ICA mechanisms
	18. Percentage of mayors involved in previous collaboration
	19. Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration
	20. Percentage of civil servants involved in previous collaboration
	21. Civil servants' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration
22. The number of ICA mechanisms	

\*Legend: in orange non-political factors

## **7. The impact of political factors on collective benefit and collaboration risks**

This chapter contributes to the second main research question: ‘What is the impact of the identified political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?’. It comparatively analyses the empirical data gathered in relation to two elements of the ICA Framework: perception of collective benefit and collaboration risks. Each section explores how the political factors discovered in the previous chapter affected the analysed aspects of collaboration.

The important discovery for both sections was the **dynamic aspect** of collaboration. Both benefits and risks were perceived differently in the beginning and during ongoing collaboration. For this reason the collective benefit was also included to the analysis of how it was affected by political factors, although usually in the ICA Framework it is considered as an initial incentive, encouraging local actors to engage in collaboration. This chapter shows how the perception of benefits and risks changed over time.

The first part of the chapter identifies the perceived collective benefit from ITI implementation. The structure follows the main patterns identified during thematic analysis. The second part is dedicated to collaboration risks, and follows the types of risks mentioned in the ICA Framework: incoordination, division and defection. Additionally, it analyses the new type of risks identified during the coding exercise, related to non-strategic joint projects.

The chapter finishes with a discussion on the main political factors influencing collaboration within ITI implementation in both metropolitan areas, and the assessment of their influence.

### **7.1. Collective benefit of ITI implementation**

ICA literature specifies that potential collective benefit is the key incentive for local actors to participate in inter-municipal initiatives. This section identifies not only the benefits expected before the start of joint ITI implementation, but also those that research participants acknowledged during the collaboration process itself. In this way, the analysis introduces an innovative, dynamic dimension to the ICA Framework. The analysis explains what shaped the identified collective benefits, and which political factors were involved.



Although all research participants acknowledged at least some positive outcomes from ITI collaboration, there were broad differences between the two cases in terms of their assessment of collective benefit during the collaboration process. In CS, the majority of local actors involved in the study observed positive aspects of collaboration within ITI, and highlighted various benefits related to it. In LFA, opinions on the collective benefit from collaboration within ITI were more varied. Some actors were enthusiastic and positive about collaboration and noted concrete advantages, while others assessed that ITI does not bring major benefits. Within the latter, there were actors who stated that inter-municipal collaboration in the Lublin agglomeration was not a priority [L\_MA\_3; L\_IO\_M5], while others noted that ITI had not brought the expected benefits, e.g. enough scope of coordination among joint projects [L\_IB\_3] or their too slow realisation [L\_Coor\_M9].

In general, research participants in both metropolitan areas noted that the collective benefits were limited due to individualistic tendencies of mayors. For example, they noted competition over inhabitants, investors [S\_IB\_2; S\_Expert\_1, L\_IO\_M5], and in CS lack of coordination among municipalities owning multiple parts of a bigger post-mining area requiring revitalisation [S\_IB\_2]. However, it was always noted that despite these natural tendencies, collaboration is possible.

*Individual interests are still important, but the fight is not so intense as in the past. We have stopped playing over small needs, as they are regularly fulfilled. Now we are building partnership for joint aims. In the past it was impossible to imagine, as there was strong competition. Now there is consciousness of joint image outside. [S\_IB\_1]*

*Collaboration between cities is on a quite high level, as the mayors meet at various meetings and conferences, they have their interests. Obviously, in reality everybody protects their interests, but there is a thread of agreement, in order to act as a metropolis, as a whole. [S\_Coor\_M7]*

Thematic analysis of the collected data identified four kinds of collective benefits, which are described in detail below: 1. financial incentive, 2. joint development due to interdependencies, 3. stronger collective position and image, 4. mutual learning and building professional networks.

### **The financial incentive**

In both analysed cases, the most important incentive to start collaboration was financial [S\_IB\_2, S\_DMayer\_M4, 16 interviewees in LFA]. ITI brought an additional source of funding, dedicated to a specific metropolitan area under the conditions of establishing a collaborative arrangement and a strategy for using the funds for joint development. Some local

actors viewed this funding opportunity as both a motivating and unifying factor [L\_DMayor\_M1; L\_IB\_1], and that without it the collaboration would not happen [L\_Mayor\_M2). This was especially important at the beginning, as trust among actors was low and there was a need for a strong incentive to start discussing mutual plans, problems and potential collaboration [L\_IB\_4; L\_IB\_6; L\_Coor\_M6; L\_Fieldnotes].

*We managed to take this step once we got over from these different sides of the barricade. In fact, in the beginning, we were on 16 fronts, just like there are 16 communes. And then suddenly we managed to break these barricades and stand in one line. Not against anyone. Not against the managing authority. Only in the march for these ITI funds. [L\_DMayor\_M1]*

*Obviously, it always is about money. The possibility to acquire funds encourages local governments to come to terms with each other. There always needs to be an incentive so that it works. [S\_IB\_2]*

*The Central Subregion Association was launched in order to manage ITI, for a concrete task, for the [EU] funds. For the subregional strategy, obviously, but mostly for the money at the regional and national level. [S\_DMayor\_M4]*

Within this, there was some variation related to the role of mayors in the two regions in terms of the perception of funding as an incentive for collaboration. Two factors played a role in this respect: the amount of resources available, and the perceived ease of accessing these resources. The **amount of resources** available through ITI was perceived in CS by all research participants as very substantial, while in LFA their attractiveness varied among municipalities. As described Section 6.3.1, the regional authorities in CS increased the amount defined by the government with funds from the ROP, while in LFA this was not the case and the resources available per municipality and per inhabitant remained relatively low (see Tables 16, 17). Consequently, scale of funding in CS was acknowledged by research participants as particularly attractive, **increasing political interest** in joint ITI implementation.

Some mayors, including those of big cities, observed that ITI resources provided a unique investment and development opportunity for the whole subregion [S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_DMayor\_M8]. In LFA the scale of funding available from ITI was attractive for the small municipalities, as normally they do not possess large investment budgets. A number of mayors of these municipalities stressed that they treated ITI investments as an absolute priority [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Mayor\_M7]. On the other hand, the capital city had access to many other funding sources, and disposed enough own resources to be able to contribute with the required 15% and apply for various projects. Consequently, ITI investment was not considered as a priority by Lublin's representatives [L\_IB\_3]. This variation in perception of

the financial incentive as a collective benefit affected the level of commitment to the collaborative process and consequent relations among partners.

*I would say that the ITI is a kind of a pearl, as really for the first time in history we were given the opportunity of realizing our tasks in such a scale, with such high resources. [S\_DMayer\_M4]*

*The availability of these funds is not so great. How much do we have there? Over 400 million, right? This is not enough for this functional area and it will create barriers to the implementation of all the tasks that could serve this integration, these socio-economic organisms, one might say. [L\_DMayer\_M5]*

Moreover, since the ITI resources were dedicated to a specific territory, in both regions they were perceived as **easier to acquire than other EU funds**. Some research participants even used the word ‘guaranteed’ in this context, although all projects had to go through thorough quality assessment by the Managing Authorities. In LFA, this aspect was strengthened by the non-competitive mode of project selection<sup>42</sup> [L\_DMayer\_M1; L\_DMayer\_M6; L\_IB\_1], which meant that funds were dedicated exclusively to ITI members, who additionally could have decided beforehand how the money would be invested. In this way, the non-competitive mode for ITI project selection **reduced internal** rivalry among the LFA municipalities and **external competition** with other potential beneficiaries for funds [L\_Coor\_M8].

Some actors, however, highlighted that this benefit was limited by the difficulty faced in establishing project partnerships among multiple municipalities [L\_Coor\_M9, L\_MA\_1], as individual units had to halt their preparation and implementation of joint projects if other partners were delayed. These operational interdependencies between localities sometimes complicated and lengthened the implementation of ITI projects. This was not the case for Lublin, which did not enter formal project partnerships.

*ITI makes it easier for us to apply for EU funds. There would need to be incomplete documentation and wrongly written application, for the project to be dismissed. [L\_DMayer\_M1]*

In CS, the non-competitive mode limited the benefits from dedicated funding, as all kinds of organisations and companies located in CS could submit their projects to be funded from ITI. Although this external rivalry among potential beneficiaries was the same as that for other EU funds, the municipalities **limited internal competition** among themselves by coordinating their project applications (see Section 6.1.1), and in this way increased the potential benefits to be gained from a more secure source of funding. This was observed mainly by ITI local coordinators, and not by mayors, which can be explained by the fact that civil servants prepare the project applications, and are the most concerned by the amount of work required in order to

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<sup>42</sup> This is valid for ERDF (90% of ITI resources), projects funded from ESF were selected in the competitive mode.

prepare a project that can be funded. Mayors, on the other hand, care for the final effect, often not acknowledging the amount of work involved.

*If there is an open project call, everybody can start here, and there is a limited amount, so the competition is higher [S\_Coor\_M1]*

*There are more pluses than minuses. At first we complained that again somebody is forcing us top-down to merge projects and we were angry about it, but it has passed and we acknowledged benefits of this all. First, thanks to ITI we have a dedicated allocation, because if we were to start in open project calls, there is competition between municipalities, and here the allocation is dedicated and we have divided it on our own (...). It is a bit easier, and summa summarum we are happy about it. [S\_Coor\_M2]*

In both regions, the security of having almost guaranteed EU funding was a particularly important incentive for **small municipalities**, which had limited capacity and resources to commit to funding applications and for whom the risk of unsuccessful bids had, therefore, more serious implications. Concerning the larger cities, the availability of a dedicated amount of ITI funding had advantages and disadvantages in Lublin, an ambivalence not observed among big cities in CS. On the one hand, the perceived guarantee of ITI funds encouraged the city to plan important, complicated projects to be funded from this source. On the other hand, however, due to limited amount of own resources to contribute to particular projects, the city had to decide on the order of investments in particular years. The priority was given to the preparation of projects to be selected in a competitive procedure from other EU funds, e.g. national programmes, as the outcome of applications was uncertain. ITI investment was perceived as guaranteed and therefore possible to conduct later. This logic had political consequences described in Section 7.2.4.

Although according to a number of actors money has stayed the only advantage acknowledged in relation to ITI [L\_IB\_2, L\_Fieldnotes), others noted growing awareness of other benefits from collaboration, described below.

### **Joint development due to interdependencies**

At the initial stage of forming ITI collaboration, the recognition of interdependencies and joint development benefits was limited among municipal representatives in both regions. During the ITI implementation process, the perception of this collective benefit grew, although to a greater extent in CS than in LFA. In CS, research participants discussed joint development more often than in LFA and started spill-over projects on in addition to spending EU funds together. A crucial difference between the cases, that became increasingly evident over time, in this respect was the vision and activity of the political leaders, joint project leaders and the proactive

approach of metropolitan administration. In both CS and LFA, the interdependence of the municipalities was noted by **political leaders**, but their perception of the benefits ITI offered through this was different. In both cases, political leaders acknowledged that students and workers commute among municipalities, and that investors located in the appropriate part of the metropolitan area can be beneficial for joint development.

However, there was a clear difference in the strategic vision of political leaders in CS and LFA and in their approach to the development of neighbouring municipalities. While the leader in LFA limited the ITI-related collaboration to joint spending of EU funds and highlighted Lublin's interest in inter-municipal collaboration, the CS leader highlighted mutual benefits in raising the overall **quality of life in the subregion**. He provided examples of how more developed cities influence the neighbouring municipalities and vice versa. His understanding of interdependence can be illustrated by the following quote:

*We can be an oasis of prosperity here, but you cannot be happy if there is poverty around you. It is like 'connected vessels': we will not have a great time here, if the other municipalities plummet.*

The joint development benefits were also noted by **ITI Office employees**, formally positioned to represent the metropolitan perspective by the Ministry, MA and partnering municipalities. In CS, the ITI Office employees noted the need for joint development approaches and their mission, over time, to raise awareness among municipalities of the mutual gains. In LFA, their efforts in this regard were restricted due to limitations in the political leader's drive to expand collaboration beyond basic ITI implementation, and also their impression of a lack of enthusiasm for taking up the metropolitan development mission among mayors. In this context, limitations in the mayors' strategic vision played a role in decreasing potential collective benefits. The contrast in this perception of the benefits of joint development in the two metropolitan areas is clear.

*In the beginning it was a time of strong tensions. We had to drive and explain, propose, find solutions, develop some exchanges. It was about spreading consciousness, learning (...). We were saying that the subregion is a singular organism, that there is a need to take care of its different parts, so we cannot only take for ourselves, but also to give to others. We showed that it will be better for one city if its neighbours will be better-off, and used a language of joint interest [S\_AC2\_M6].*

*How can I persuade mayors to be part of an association, if they do not care about partnership, only about money for roads and pavements. [L\_IB\_2]*

Cross-municipal interdependence was observed also by mayors and ITI Coordinators, but in relation to particular projects or policies. The initiative, expertise and activity of **joint project leaders** was crucial, as they spread awareness about benefits from coordination on particular

topics (see Section 5.2). In both regions, it was most often mentioned in association with **transport systems** [S\_Coor\_M3, S\_Mayor\_M7, S\_IB\_2, S\_Coor\_M8, S\_IB\_1]. Transport was one of the most important investment areas in ITI, both in terms of identified needs and allocated funds. Lublin's representatives highlighted the need to invest in coherent public transport and road systems in order to encourage labour forces to come and work in Lublin.

*There are high hopes associated public transport, as it should be promoted. This is important not only for our mayor, but globally in the Subregion everybody aims at limiting car movement in the cities. So that people leave their cars in the outskirts and change to public transport. In order to eliminate the problem of emission, smog. This is for sure a big priority for us and not only for us. [S\_Coor\_M8]*

*We cannot speak in our agglomeration about low-emission transport in the context of one city (...). Our air, which will be cleaner due to less cars, it will also go to Katowice. [S\_Coor\_M3]*

The significance of transport projects for Lublin's authorities was visible in the strategic project realised by the city of Lublin – Integrated Transport Centre – which was perceived as a key metropolitan project, important for the whole agglomeration [L\_Mayor\_M5]. In this context, smaller municipalities observed the value of collaboration in the context of growing suburbanisation [L\_DMayor\_M1], and the benefit in providing inhabitants with a smooth everyday commute to the city [L\_Mayor\_M7; L\_Coor\_M6]. This encouraged more people to move to their municipality, bringing revenue to municipal budget in taxes. The majority of opinions highlighted a one-way direction of interdependences: that the development of the smaller municipalities depended on Lublin [L\_IB\_4; L\_Mayor\_M5; L\_Coor\_M3; L\_IB\_1]. However, a small number of research participants acknowledged that these links were mutual, or even that *'there would not be Lublin without its suburbs'* [L\_TA\_M5].

*There is a traffic jam to and from Lublin at the same time, so it is not that people only go to Lublin to work [L\_Coor\_M3].*

Other thematic areas included revitalisation, vocational schools and kindergartens in CS, while in LFA tourism and education priorities were also included. In particular, local actors observed an intense mobility of students and employees, mostly from the suburbs to the city. Lublin's representatives observed benefits in students coming to Lublin's schools and kindergartens, as in this way the city would receive additional government funding, and the benefits of vocational schools was perceived in terms of the education of the future labour force [L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_IO\_M5]. Regarding tourism, municipal representatives mentioned the benefits of inhabitants of smaller municipalities using Lublin's and Nałęczów's cultural and green facilities [L\_DMayor\_M1; L\_Mayor\_M2]. Some of them suggested that there should be a joint touristic offer of the agglomeration, to promote attractions across the whole area.

*ITI opened our eyes not only for municipal needs, but it also allows to look broader at the subregion. We don't think about solving a single problem in our city, but a broader problem, and by collaboration with other municipalities we will solve a global problem. What we do is not only for the inhabitants of our city, but we look more broadly and we identify ourselves with other municipalities of the subregion. [S\_Coor\_M8]*

*Inhabitants of suburban municipalities, they are our students, our employees, but also our clients, as they do their business and shopping here. Thanks to them, the city grows and is alive, and the city builds its prestige. [L\_TA\_M5]*

### **Stronger collective position and image**

Several issues related to collective benefit from ITI collaboration concerned forms of **collective identity** of research participants in CS and LFA, as a part of a broader territory and community. This type of collective benefit was recognised by research participants in two ways: in the scope ITI offered to strengthen negotiation power when speaking collectively, and in increased appreciation of the success of other municipalities in the metropolitan area.

In both regions, many local actors, including mayors, appreciated the benefits of collaboration in terms of strengthening critical mass, especially in relations with other administrative or external organisations [L\_Mayor\_M7; L\_IB\_2; L\_Mayor\_M2, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMAYOR\_M4, S\_Coor\_M7, S\_IB\_3]. Interviewees provided examples where they benefited from using the ITI mechanism in negotiations with regional, national and European authorities, as well as other organisations involved in ITI investments in various ways.

This benefit was apparent, for instance, in providing a stronger collective voice through the association of municipalities, increasing the self-confidence and negotiating power of partners vis-a-vis other actors and groups. Achieving this critical mass also meant that municipalities could access support that would not have been possible on an individual bases due to limitations in capacity or resources or inability to meet regulatory conditions [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M7]. In this respect, it is instructive that, this type of benefit was identified in negotiations between small municipalities and Lublin.

*All of our problems, we put them forward through the ITI office and ITI board, so we have a stronger position, a truly stronger voice. Because on one's own, there is little one can do. By being in the association, in the group of municipalities, we can have a possibility to work out better, negotiate better conditions. [S\_Coor\_M7]*

*Sometimes there are projects that require a bigger voice. Often a municipality doesn't fulfil conditions, doesn't have resources or capacity. And then only collective action, with the coordination of this kind of association (...), it makes the voice of the associated municipalities much bigger than individual units, which often are uncoordinated, speak too quietly. And when there is a common statement, sent through an organisation, there is a completely different reaction. [S\_Mayor\_M1]*

Another observation was related to the research participants' recognition of the benefits of **other municipalities' success** in ITI investments, and the part this played in creating a positive **collective image** for the broader metropolitan area. This was observed much more strongly in the CS case, potentially due to the fact that metropolitan identity was developed to a higher extent in CS than in LFA (see Section 6.2.2).

*We are doing something that will change the image of this region. We are aware that we are modernising it a lot, and that we have a massive chance. And we have to be ready, and able to accommodate the funds. [S\_DMayor\_M7]*

Another general observation among research participants in both cases was the tendency to positively distinguish their own ITI projects from 'external' projects. The first category concerned any project by an ITI Association member, while the latter were projects by any other organisation. There was a clear differentiation among Association members between 'our projects' and 'external projects' and satisfaction when the former were selected over the latter for support.

*There were cases where companies or foundations entered our ITI project calls. Their projects were well written and took over our municipalities, taking their allocation. There was a panic in the subregion, that the firms, which should not do it, apply for funds, destroying our division and all the agreements. [S\_Coor\_M2]*

*There are some very important topics, which wouldn't be realised if the funds were consumed by 'external' beneficiaries. This is how we call them, 'external'. Nevertheless, it happens that the 'external' projects are better than 'ours'. [S\_IB\_1]*

The atmosphere observed during field research was that *'The victory in CS had a team character, with all the subregion's members being team players. Of course, everybody wants to be the best in their team, but prefers any team member to win rather than any competitor'* [S\_Fieldnotes]. This strengthened collective position was also visible in the overall consensus among research participants that it was better to use the funds in the subregion than outside it: *'We have to be quick or the money will be taken away from us'* [S\_Fieldnotes]. This demonstrates clear identification of Association members with the Central Subregion, a significant change from traditional perspectives where municipal representatives would identify mainly, if not completely, with their own municipality and consider other local authorities as rivals. In this context, the collective benefit was acknowledged in the sense of contributing to a joint vision, building prosperity of the metropolitan area, and taking advantage over municipalities in other regions.

In LFA, some actors explicitly stated that they did not see any benefits from investments in other municipalities [L\_IB\_5; L\_Coor\_M9]. Nevertheless, a number of actors expressed signs



of solidarity with other municipalities, and were happy for their success [L\_Coor\_M8; L\_Mayor\_M2], for some local actors except for the success for Lublin: *We are happy for the success of other municipalities, but not Lublin. It will always be our biggest competitor* [L\_Coor\_M8]. This approach can be seen as an effect of the lack of metropolitan perspective of the city. According to some actors, *the city did not take responsibility of the whole area, it stands apart* [L\_MA\_3], *is closed and needs a change of mentality* [L\_IB\_2]. Although Lublin's representatives expressed that they were open to collaboration, its approach tended to be based on bilateral contacts rather than a broader metropolitan development vision.

### **Mutual learning and building professional networks**

The last type of benefits acknowledged by research participants in both regions was learning from each other's experiences, in order to improve quality of investments. This included mutual inspiration (e.g. starting similar projects, recommending subcontractors). It also involved exchanges on how to deal with similar problems and avoiding duplication by deciding not to pursue similar investments close to the border between two municipalities. Some research participants in LFA said that thanks to ITI, they recognised similar problems and challenges with other municipalities, such as alcoholism, old train stations requiring renovation. This awareness was prompted by joint strategy preparation and regular contact at the operational and strategic level which, according to research participants, helped to overcome the competitive attitudes of municipalities towards each other over time.

*The first local governance phase was exclusively about competition. There was fighting over investors, economic development. Now it is a fight over inhabitants, in the current demographic situation. This is a huge problem, there are dying municipalities. However, currently I see it as a phase, in which everybody realises that neither competition excludes collaboration, nor collaboration excludes competition (...). When municipalities cope with similar problems, there is collaboration and exchange of information on the methods, solutions (...). In my opinion there is already consciousness that none of the municipalities is able to solve their horizontal problems individually. [S\_IB\_3]*

This regular contact also built an open professional network among mayors and civil servants in both metropolitan areas. Many local actors in LFA highlighted that the crucial benefit of ITI is that they got to know each other, and that they could now exchange information and experiences, including how to deal with similar problems [L\_Coor\_M6; L\_Coor\_M7], and how to solve conflicts and achieve consensus [L\_Coor\_M3]. In LFA, this was especially visible among civil servants, but also among the majority of mayors. Although some said that they had known a number of other mayors before the ITI was developed [L\_Mayor\_M7; L\_Mayor\_M2], it was clear that their networks used to be closed, and only some of the municipalities belonged

to them. Crucially, only the ITI leader claimed that among mayors ‘*everybody knows everybody*’. This shows the specificity of the network, where Lublin is the central actor that has contacts with all the others, while the relations in-between the other actors are limited. The benefit of ITI was that it created bonds between all of the actors in the area, creating potential for long-term reciprocal relations that are beneficial for all partners.

*I have been a mayor for a long time and I know that the benefit comes in contacts, in various issues. Collaboration not always needs to have an advantage for a municipality, but later in time another issue emerges, which is more beneficial for this municipality, and less for another. Also, if collaboration has already started in favour of all the sides, then de facto with time it turns out beneficial for everybody. [L\_Mayor\_M7]*

The clearest benefits in this context were observed in CS by the managing authority representatives and the political leader. MA representatives, in the position of evaluating ITI implementation, recognised the ITI benefit in intensifying inter-municipal collaboration. They observed that regular contacts among municipalities within ITI implementation stimulated spill-over into other collaborative initiatives, and improved joint planning of projects beyond the administrative borders of municipalities. The ITI leader noted two similar benefits of collaboration within ITI: trust-building and stimulation of regular inter-organisational relations.

*The added value of the ITI is that within or next to it, many initiatives and ideas for collaboration and planning joint solutions appear. They would have never happened if we were not so strongly and so often engaged in ITI. So for sure collaboration animating and planning of joint investments happens now to a larger extent than before ITI. [S\_MA\_1]*

*The Central Subregion Association established one more thing: ongoing contact of all of the 81 offices, not everybody with everybody, mostly within the 5 sub-regions. But not only this - some bilateral relations appear, experience is exchanged, resources distributed, joint projects prepared and consulted on. (...) In my opinion the most valuable thing is building social capital, trust. [S\_Mayor\_M5]*

## **7.2. Collaboration risks in ITI implementation**

Alongside the collective benefits of collaboration, research participants in CS and LFA faced risks during ITI implementation. The first three parts of this section discuss the risks classified under three established categories in the ICA literature: incoordination, division and defection. Importantly, a fourth risk is introduced as a new category which emerged during the coding exercise and which has not been considered in the ICA literature before. This type of risks is associated with non-strategic joint projects, which may occur during planning and implementing collective actions.

The quantitative summary in Table 32 shows the general patterns among the segments coded under these four categories of risk. The regions varied significantly in their focus on different

risk categories. In CS, over half of the segments was related to division risks, followed by around 20% of both defection and non-strategic project risks. In LFA the latter category was one of the two most often commented risks, together with division. Information risks were the least frequent topic in CS, while in LFA it was defection. The new category of risks introduced as a descriptive code (non-strategic joint projects) was the second most often described by research participants. These observations are followed by in-depth thematic analysis.

**Table 32 Quantitative summary of the segments coded in relation to collaboration risks**

<b>Coding category: Type of risks</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>LFA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>CS %</b>	<b>LFA %</b>	<b>TOTAL %</b>
<b>Incoordination</b>	19	49	68	8%	19%	<b>14%</b>
<b>Division</b>	122	96	218	51%	36%	<b>44%</b>
<b>Defection</b>	46	23	69	19%	9%	<b>14%</b>
<b>Non-strategic joint projects</b>	50	96	146	21%	36%	<b>29%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **7.2.1. Incoordination risks**

The first category of risks typically discussed in the ICA literature are associated with the need to coordinate individual actors' actions. The underlying assumption is that if actors do not coordinate, the potential collective benefit may not be achieved. Moreover, literature indicates that if the risks of incoordination are high, actors might decide not to get involved in collaboration at all, or opt for a less advanced integration mechanism. In the analysed cases, these risks were assessed as medium by research participants.

The thematic analysis showed that in both LFA and CS there were three issues where the risk of incoordination was prominent: insufficient information on higher-level rules, challenges in the preparation of joint projects and challenges in coordinating ITI with external initiatives. The analysis below assesses these issues, identifying the political factors involved in shaping incoordination risks.

#### **Insufficient information on higher-level rules**

Many research participants in both regions described the beginning of collaboration as a very uncertain period due to insufficient information regarding the scope of ITI implementation and

potential joint investments [L\_DMayer\_M1, L\_IB\_6, L\_Coor\_M9, L\_Mayer\_M7, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_1, L\_Mayer\_M2, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMayer\_M4, S\_IB\_1]. This was related to the **often changing higher-level rules**, created at the regional, national or even EU level [L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M2]. The changing rules increased uncertainty, creating doubts about collective benefit and forcing partners to renegotiate the consensus multiple times [L\_DMayer\_M2]. In this way, changing and unclear rules delayed the preparation of joint ITI projects and made their coordination more difficult.

*There were a lot of unknowns, a lot of aspects were not fully explained: what we can apply for, what costs are eligible, what is the group of beneficiaries. It is important, to have all of this information at the beginning. These uncertainties were extremely important, they completely changed the approach. [S\_IB\_1]*

*We are often like children in the fog, everyone gets a different interpretation of what is eligible, what documents are required - we communicated with each other and received two contradictory interpretations of the same institution. It's hard to take a risk for 5-7 million [PLN] because if something doesn't work out, we lie down and squeal. [L\_DMayer\_M1]*

*We were all afraid of this [ITI], the Marshal's Office, the Ministry and us, because we did not know exactly what it would all be, what it would look like. These functional areas have not yet been determined, what they will look like for each voivodeship city, how many of these communes will be included, how far it will be developed, what these strategies should include, what investment priorities there should be [L\_Coor\_M5]*

In LFA, this was amplified by **unequal access to information**. Representatives of smaller municipalities stated that the MA talked mostly with Lublin, which then transferred information on to them. However, some municipalities received information also directly from the MA, which according to them sometimes contradicted Lublin's version. This undermined already low levels of trust among partners [L\_Coor\_M9, L\_Coor\_M3], preventing them from sharing strategic information and increasing the risk of incoordination of investments.

*It was also a new situation for the Voivodeship Board. They cooperated with the leader of our partnership, i.e. Lublin. On the one hand, we, as persons co-creating the agreement, have already received information provided to us by the city of Lublin. On the other hand, we also had information directly from the managing authority, and sometimes there were discrepancies between these two sources of information. It distracted us a bit. So this information, even despite the best will of the employees of the city of Lublin, could be falsified. At the time when such a distortion of the message took place, our communication was very bad. There was a loss of trust and suspicion that it was an attempt to use smaller partner communes. [L\_Coor\_M3]*

In CS, this risk was minimised by the activity of the metropolitan administration. In the view of research participants there, employees of the ITI office took responsibility for the process of spreading information equally among all partners [S\_IB\_3, S\_Mayer\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2].

## Preparation of joint projects

Research participants observed risks connected to the functional coordination of particular investments (see Section 6.1). This was mostly the case in LFA, where local actors discussed the need for stronger transport investments coordination [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_TA\_M5, L\_MA\_1, L\_Fieldnotes], and the necessity to coordinate the projects related to transport in a formal partnership. Decisions on the location of transport hubs were to some extent coordinated by Lublin's Transport Authority based on data. However, other decisions were made at the initiative of individual municipalities and the following is an example of efficient coordination. Two hubs were originally planned in close proximity on either side of the border between Lublin and Głusk. The municipalities communicated and agreed that the hub would be located and funded by Lublin, but Głusk would build a road leading to the hub from the centre of the municipality. In this way, the ITI mechanism removed the risk of duplicating similar investments in neighbouring municipalities.

*So we were negotiating at that time, because we were planning [a transport hub] here, and through these meetings, and presentations of the projects, it emerged that nearby they were planning their own [hub], so everyone was looking at each other, who would do it (laugh). Is it our hub, or their hub? [L\_Coor\_M5]*

This provides a clear example of a risk of incoordination and how this was eventually avoided during negotiations (see Section 6.4.1). The risks were increased in both regions by **national elections** in 2015. It slowed down the process of joint strategy acceptance by the Ministry, which paused preparation of many municipal projects. Due to uncertainty about whether projects chosen for preselection would be accepted, mayors did not want to take the risk of investing resources in them.

This was especially the case for small municipalities in LFA, which had low financial capacity and smaller investment possibilities [L\_IB\_1, L\_Mayor\_M7]. With uncertainty in the scope of projects, strategic project coordination was difficult at the beginning, and subsequently limited due to time pressures to absorb the funding (see Section 5.1.1). The influence of local elections was also observed in ongoing collaboration in terms of adjusting the calendar of meetings of mayors and timing of particular investments (see Sections 8.1).

*In the meantime there were parliamentary elections, the change of ministers. It prolonged the approval of certain documents, and some municipalities did not start preparing the projects. They stated that the strategy has not been approved yet, and it is unsure what will happen. It delayed our work a lot. [L\_IB\_2]*

In CS, research participants did not speak directly about incoordination risks in joint project preparation. This can be explained by the fact that ITI projects here had less formal

interdependence, as they were submitted individually (see Section 6.1.1). On the one hand, incoordination risks were potentially higher as there was no formal coordination mechanism. On the other hand, this can be also the reason why the risk was not acknowledged by many research participants, as the risk did not materialise itself in any formal, concrete consequences. However, participatory observation showed that for the ITI Office employees it was important to help coordinate projects in particular thematic areas (e.g. kindergartens and vocational schools) as otherwise the distribution of resources would lead to non-strategic local investments [S\_Fieldnotes]. This shows the role of the metropolitan administration and its leader in minimizing incoordination risks.

*In various municipalities, there are different levels of available pre-school places in relation to the demand. In large cities, it is usually over 100%, because children from outside the city commute. In small communes it is about 50%. So we insisted on agreement that these small communes should invest in kindergartens. [S\_Fieldnotes]*

### **External interdependence**

Research participants in both cases observed the risk of incoordination of joint ITI projects with external investments and decisions by other institutions in the metropolitan areas. In LFA, this mostly concerned the involvement of national train authorities in projects [L\_MA\_1, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Mayor\_M6]. The risks were assessed as high and leading to delays in the preparation and realization of ITI investments, mainly caused by the hierarchical organizational structure of these external authorities and their slow decision-making processes.

In the case of partnership projects, this risk was spread across municipalities as none of the individual, municipal parts of projects could be funded before completing documentation of all parts, including parts involving the national train authorities. This risk also discouraged municipalities from engaging in strategic investments that would be good for metropolitan development, but required coordination with external institutions [L\_MA\_1]. Participatory observation additionally showed a case in which lack of communication with train authorities led to a non-strategic location of two EU-funded projects, which potentially could have been linked to each other [L\_Fieldnotes].

*These were the original plans, but they were quickly abandoned due to the fact that PKP [national train authority] as a beneficiary, project partner, etc., is a difficult partner and it is very difficult to communicate with them, get along with them, therefore we quickly gave up these plans. [L\_MA\_1]*

In CS, the incoordination risks with the train authority was acknowledged by one research participant [S\_Coor\_M2], who recalled that one of their partner municipalities divided their

project into two parts – one requiring collaboration with the train authority and one possible to implement immediately. Other institutions acknowledged in this context included a national energy authority [S\_Coor\_M7], and forest authority [L\_Mayor\_M5].

### 7.2.2. Division risks

The second category of risks in the ICA literature is concerns the distribution of **power and resources** involved in collaboration. The literature concludes that the higher the level of heterogeneity among actors, the harder it becomes to achieve consensus, and the greater the risk of not finding a common solution to collaboration challenges. Crucially, it is emphasised in the literature that in order to form collaboration, all actors must accept a method of division, and that the perception of its fairness is a *sine-qua-non* condition for success. This aspect is particularly important in the interpretation of empirical data. Both resource and power division risks will be discussed in detail below.

The data revealed that in the both case studies, before launching the integration mechanisms the method of resources division was most significant issue in shaping collaboration. Supporting arguments in the ICA literature, the majority of segments coded under collaboration risks were related to this issue, showing that it played a very important role for many research participants, with numerous associated concerns involved. Data analysis identified two dimensions of the resource division issue: a **nominal** dimension, in which the actors decide on the amount of funds distributed to each partner; and, a **thematic** dimension, in which the actors decide on the kinds of investments to be undertaken in each municipality.

This section includes a comparative analysis of risks related to power distribution, followed by both nominal and thematic resources division in the two metropolitan areas. The analysis identifies the political factors that played a role in shaping these risks.

#### **Power division**

Power division risks were shaped differently in each analysed region: high in CS and low in LFA. CS is characterised by a large number of collaborating units in general, including 14 municipalities of **comparable sizes**, capacities and ambitions. Due to this **large number** of partnering municipalities and the large territory covered, there were substantial internal divisions among municipalities, which according to some research participants initially put at risk collaboration in the CS as a whole. These divisions were strengthened by **historic**

**differences** [S\_Expert\_2, S\_DMayer\_M7] and the **partisan affiliations** of certain mayors [S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_3]. However, the role of partisan affiliations in this was disputed by other research participants. When research participants described the beginning of collaboration, they talked about the **capital city** expecting to have a dominant position, other big cities disagreeing with it and expecting a share in power division, and small municipalities fearing that their interests would be ignored [S\_IB\_1, S\_Mayer\_M5, S\_Fieldnotes].

With so many different interests involved, the power division risks were relatively high, especially at the beginning of collaboration. They were, however, minimised by **already existing ICA mechanisms**, as ITI partners had dealt with power division in the past, and research participants mentioned that they built on former experiences [S\_DMayer\_M7, S\_Mayer\_M5]. Power division risks in CS were also minimised by levels of **trust** built over time and the strength of **regional identity**. These levels of experience, trust and common identity bonded mayors together and decreased division risks during the collaboration process. During the implementation stage, the agreed power division remained relatively acceptable to the ITI partners (see Section 8.1.3), both in their directly expressed opinions, and during participatory observation.

*It was in 2013 or even at 2012, (...) it was such a stage with lot of politics, it was mainly about such political scuffles, the PO [Civic Platform] was strong, there were a few against the PO... Now we are in a comfortable situation that the 'main players' here in our subregion, they cut themselves off from politics, and that's what serves us [S\_IB\_1]*

In the Lublin Functional Area, local actors rarely commented on the power division. The risks were low due to Lublin's **unquestionable leader position** [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_3, L\_IO\_M5]. The city representatives highlighted its advantage in terms of size, capacity and role in the development of the area. These differences in capacity and role were also noted by other municipalities, which expected Lublin's initiative and leadership in collaboration [L\_Mayer\_M2, L\_Mayer\_M6, L\_Mayer\_M7]. Consequently, the power division in favour of the capital was perceived as **natural and fair** by all actors, and the associated division risks were relatively low. This perception was valid both before the official launch of the LFA Agreement, and during the joint projects implementation stage.

*It was obvious that Lublin, the voivodeship capital city, was to be the leader. Well, a neighbouring commune could not be a leader. We all know that everything begins and ends in the city, that it is the service provider, (...) the entire LFA uses what is in the city, so it is justified that the voivodeship city should be the leader. [L\_Coor\_M5]*



## Nominal resource division risks

Division risks were mostly associated with the division of resources. ITI represented a substantial amount of funding for these metropolitan areas from an outside source but it was dedicated to the metropolitan areas as a whole, without specifying which parts of these territories should be invested in. One research participant called the division of resources the most difficult aspect of collaboration [L\_Mayor\_M5].

Before the launch of the ITIs in both regions the risks were high due to conflicting **individual municipality interests** represented by mayors [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M8, L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_2, S\_DMayor\_M7]. Research participants recalled a **low level of trust** in this period [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_2, S\_IB\_3, S\_Mayor\_M5]. In particular, there was a clear difference in the ideas of how to divide the ITI funds between the **capital city and the other municipalities**. In CS small municipalities were afraid that their interests would be disregarded, and that the capital city wanted to dominate the ITI resources [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Fieldnotes]. In LFA, research participants recalled Lublin's intention to reserve the great majority [L\_MA\_1, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M6, L\_Coor\_M8, L\_Coor\_M9], or even all ITI resources for the city's own projects [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Mayor\_M6]. This intention was denied by other research participants [L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M5] who highlighted the benefits for other municipalities of projects conducted in Lublin, e.g. a transport hub on the municipal border. Nevertheless, Lublin's proposals of division met with strong opposition of all other municipalities, and at some point even endangered establishing an agreement [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Fieldnotes].

*There was a great mistrust of smaller communes and a considerable distrust of the large ones towards each other. This was based on previous experiences. The smaller ones immediately assumed that they would have none of it and only had to contribute to it. [S\_IB\_3]*

*I must admit that at the beginning of our meetings there were many points of contention or conflict, because everyone wanted to cut as much as possible from this cake for themselves. At the same time, we also had a huge player, which is the city, which also wanted to cut as much as possible for itself. And in such circumstances it was necessary to communicate. Those were not easy conversations. Sometimes ultimatums were given 'If not, then we don't do it at all because you want to fool us'. [L\_DMayor\_M1]*

Another factor shaping the division risks concerned the **amount of joint resources**. On one hand, the higher the resources, the more political interest in acquiring them, and the higher division risks. On the other, in CS the large amount available minimised resource division risks as it created a perception that *'there is enough [funds] for everybody'* [S\_IB\_1, S\_Coor\_M8].

*There are so many resources that each of them can submit several of these projects, but if there are less funds, then the fragmentation of these allocations will make them pointless. Some small projects will be created, e.g. replacing windows at school which does not make much sense, it should have a specific effect. [S\_IB\_1]*

In LFA, the resources, per municipality and per capita, were not as high as in CS (see Section 3.3). Consequently, competition over ITI funds was higher, as municipalities had much more investment needs than it was possible to fund from ITI. As already noted, in both regions, these funds were particularly important for the smaller municipalities, as they usually do not dispose of a sufficient investment budget. Paradoxically, this limited their ambitions to negotiate a high share of ITI funds, as they could not afford to contribute the required own resources to multiple investments at the same time [L\_Mayor\_M2, S\_Mayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M6]. In this way, limited **financial capacity** limited division risks.

*It is a question of how much money is allocated to a given commune. And then, in turn, we tried to adjust these projects to the amount of funds that we have, which is again a compromise between what we would like to do and what we can afford. [L\_Mayor\_M6]*

Moreover, the analysed metropolitan areas differed in terms of experience of using **existing ICA mechanisms**, on the basis of which municipalities could build on a tested, commonly accepted resources division method. From this perspective, division risks were higher in LFA, as they did not have previous experiences in dividing joint resources among so many partners, while in CS they did (see Section 6.3.3).

In CS, the division risk was heightened by external organisations, which were also inclined to apply for the ITI funds due to the **competitive procedure** used for project selection. This higher-level rule created a situation in which although the collaborating partners agreed on a division method, it could be disrupted by an external organisation taking over a part of the allocation which was meant to be allocated to a particular municipality. This added an unpredictable element that was independent of the partners, that potentially influenced the division of resources. Although the risk was potentially high, according to research participants no critical situation emerged through this to endanger the collaboration. This can be explained by the pre-existing ICA mechanisms, which allowed the ITI partners to test various methods of dividing EU and other funds among each other in the past.

### **Thematic resources division risks**

Another potential cause of resource division risks in the case studies related to the thematic aspect. This concerned the imposition of higher-level rules, notably on thematic concentration, defining how the EU funds could be spent by collaborating partners. Not only were thematic

areas defined, but also the limits of funds in each category. Consequently, apart from agreeing on the nominal distribution of funding amounts, collaborating partners had to distribute the kinds of investments among each other, which created additional division risks. Some limits set by thematic concentration rules were so small that they were only sufficient for a few investments.

*Each municipality made its own demand, in which thematic area it wants to implement a project. It turned out that unfortunately, some priorities are hardly used by anyone and money is left, while other priorities are oversubscribed. For example, there were 100 million for the construction of kindergartens, many municipalities applied and the demand was 350 million. The problem arose how to adjust our needs, who is to give up, who is not. It took one and a half years, because there was a problem, how to convince and agree between municipalities, because each has its own needs and if one has a need to build a kindergarten and a school, hardly anyone wants to give way. [S\_Coor\_M2]*

For example in LFA, there was only 4mln EUR available for building local roads, which was only enough for a single investment, despite being very attractive for all mayors [L\_IB\_1]. In this way, **thematic limits** increased the risk of not achieving consensus over resource distribution. Here the political factor of regional Marshals' influence should be mentioned (see Sections 5.1.1, 6.3.1). Some research participants assessed that this type of risks was the most important, as there was not a simple way of how to divide these resources [S\_AC1\_M6, S\_Coor\_M2, L\_Mayor\_M2].

The data analysis clearly revealed that some thematic areas were perceived as more attractive by local actors. The thematic aspect was particularly important for mayors, as they saw the investments as having a significant **influence on their future electoral support**. Short-term, tangible investments were attractive for inhabitants and media, while others were softer, longer-term or less visible [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_IB\_2, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_Mayor\_M6]. In LFA, both the capital city and other municipalities were most interested in roads and transport infrastructure [L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_1, L\_Mayor\_M6, L\_Mayor\_M7], while other available thematic areas were perceived as **not attractive by many mayors** (see Section 5.4.1). This could limit the division risks as actors were not very motivated to acquire particular types of resources.

*Each of us wanted, in short, to patch the holes that had accumulated over the years. And these large funds were unattractive for most local governments, because the program provisions made it impossible to meet the basic needs that a given municipality or city had, but forced some non-priority investments at a given moment. [L\_Mayor\_M7]*

In CS, there were some thematic areas that were attractive for all partners (roads, bicycle paths, thermo-modernisation of buildings), but there were also a difference in the other preferred

investment areas between **small municipalities and cities** [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_DMAYor\_M4]. Small municipalities often did not have basic infrastructure and they were interested in investing in sewage systems, kindergartens, solar panels and other renewable energy sources. Cities preferred to invest in more advanced themes, building their attractiveness and competitiveness, e.g. biodiversity, transport hubs, low-emission public transport, revitalisation. This **heterogeneity of preferences** produced diverse interests among mayors in CS, limiting division risks.

### 7.2.3. Defection risks

In the ICA literature, defection risks are related to the possibility of opportunistic behaviour among actors, breaking the agreed division rules and hampering collective benefit. They typically occur in collaboration characterised by more advanced nature of the ICA dilemma than coordination, which was dominant in both metropolitan areas. The risks are higher when opportunistic behaviour might be beneficial to one of the partners, and disadvantageous to others. This is potentially relevant to collaboration within ITI, as particular municipalities could attempt to acquire more external joint funds at the cost of others.

These risks were higher in CS than in LFA due to a higher-level rule imposing the **competitive mode of project selection**, resulting in the lack of formal resources division. Thus, partnering municipalities were able to apply for more resources than resulted from an informal division mechanism. This was impossible in LFA, as the resources were formally divided between Lublin's projects and formal project partnerships among other municipalities. The project preselection procedure demanded an early and binding budget planned for particular investments. The only possible action in case of disagreement with the division was to resign from the partnership, which would however not bring any benefits for the deviant municipality, as they would lose all allocated ITI funds. Consequently, defection risks were more often acknowledged by research participants in CS than in LFA. Nevertheless, data analysis shows some opportunistic behaviour took place in both cases. These tendencies were determined by several factors.

First, both in CS and LFA, the **level of approval of the division mechanisms** in general was high and this limited the potential for defection [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Mayor\_M6, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_DMAYor\_M7, S\_DMAYor\_M4, S\_Coor\_M5], which set the defection risk at a low level.

*There must be consent, and currently it is respected in our ITI Board. I think it's very fair. For example, it happens that a commune will not use the funds, it can transfer it to another commune, which has the possibility to use the funds. And such tasks and such situations also occur, but this is of course with the consent of the Board, with the consent of all communes. [S\_Mayor\_M1]*

However, in both metropolitan areas there were voices raised regarding some of the consequence of resource division mechanisms. In both cases, there was a clear **time pressure in absorbing the funds** and this increased opportunistic behaviour. This is strongly connected to the rules governing the use of EU funds, which stipulate the realisation of investments within a strict timeframe. Municipalities were pressed for quick absorption of EU funds by ITI Offices and formally evaluated on this basis by managing authorities, who are in turn pressed by the Ministry to meet specific targets by the European Commission [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_MA\_1, L\_MA\_2, L\_Mayor\_M7, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_MA\_1]. The Ministry could use particular sanctions, including cuts in joint resources for projects and for funding the functioning of ITI Offices [S\_MA\_1, L\_MA\_1]. In this way, the consequences of insufficient speed of absorption was spread equally among municipalities.

Consequently, those municipalities most critical of the ITI resource division mechanisms in both metropolitan areas were those that were the most **efficient in EU funds absorption**. In CS these municipalities argued that they were ready with investment plans for more funds than they had been allocated, while there were municipalities that had not been able to use their allocation [S\_DMayer\_M4, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M8]. Following the informal division rule, if municipalities did not use their allocation, it would have been lost. Here, a factor encouraging mayors to share their allocated funds with others was the aforementioned **regional identity**, awareness of interdependence and the vision of strategic metropolitan development [S\_DMayer\_M7, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_IB\_1], (also see Section 7.1), which limited the risk of defection. Participatory observation showed that even if mayors did not fully agree with this division rule, in general they respected it while trying to modify it in negotiations.

*If someone undermines these rules, there will be no trust. Because I'm talking about developing.. Politically, those who are aware know that it is extremely important. If you would take resources from someone 'I have a project and I don't care about the rest'... You have to care, because we have to act together. If we do not fulfil indicators in a priority, everyone will get a system correction. [S\_DMayer\_M7]*

In LFA actors were initially open to project partnerships, but as time passed, they realised that some municipalities were not fulfilling their obligations, which created negative externalities due to **formal interdependence**, endangering investments of the whole partnership. Apart from the delay in acquiring the EU funds, the partnership projects also prompted an increase in service prices as it led to an accumulation of public procurement procedures for similar services

at the same time. The delays, price increases and the risk of losing the EU funds were key reasons for frustration with the joint projects, observed within participatory observation. During a number of attended meetings, three mayors stated that they would rather realise their investments individually, as they are ready and due to the partnership format they have to wait for other municipalities [L\_Fieldnotes]. This increased the risk of opportunistic behaviour, although this was prevented by the higher-level rule related to the preselection of projects.

*Mayor of Commune X clearly dissatisfied with partner projects: 'Why did the tenders go up? A year ago, it was half the price for the same services. We're ready, why should we wait? We've been meeting for 4 years, had fun and done nothing. Can this partnership not be separated?' [L\_Fieldnotes]*

In both metropolitan areas research participants highlighted that amendments to the division mechanism were more likely to occur towards the end of the financing period of ITI (2020-23), as the danger of unused funds being lost increases. In CS, negotiations were expected to become more difficult at that time, which may also suggest upcoming higher defection risk [S\_IB\_1, S\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M3].

A surprising political factor limiting defection risks was national politics in terms of government's relations with the EU and in consequence, decrease of the value of the Polish currency towards the EUR. As the funds were transferred in EUR, the favourable exchange rate resulted in **more resources for municipalities** [S\_Coor\_M3, S\_IB\_1] than initially planned. Proportionally more funds for all municipalities meant that they were less likely to try to take other's allocation.

#### **7.2.4. Non-strategic joint projects risks**

The last category of collaboration risks has not been considered before in the ICA literature. It concerns the implementation stage of collaboration, when joint projects are formed and realised. The analysis of empirical data revealed risks of opportunistic behaviour but, in contrast to defection risks, these were not associated with breaking the agreed division method. Data analysis showed that while partners could follow the division rules, their actual **investments in joint projects could work against the collective benefit**. Using the appropriate amount of joint resources, and spending them within the decided thematic area, they could build or organise an initiative that only fulfilled their individual interest.

Non-strategic joint project risks are important as they can strongly **decrease the collective benefit** and **diminish the level of trust** among partners. If a mayor uses joint resources for realising individual interests, partners could potentially decide not to engage in collaboration

with the municipality in the future. In this study employees of ITI Offices and Managing Authorities acknowledged these potential negative consequences [S\_MA\_1, L\_MA\_1, L\_MA\_2]. In LFA, some employees directly criticised particular projects for their insufficient strategic planning and limited influence on metropolitan development, while in CS they did not criticise but noted the effort needed to link municipal projects into a more strategic whole [S\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_3, S\_Fieldnotes]. One employee in CS assessed that most ITI projects are strategic, as they result from thematic strategic documents [S\_IB\_1]. However, some of these documents had a municipal scope and therefore did not necessarily need to have a strategic meaning for metropolitan development. In general, the analysis shows a **limited role of ITI Offices** in clarifying the strategic value of ITI projects [L\_IB\_3, S\_IB\_1, L\_Fieldnotes, S\_Fieldnotes], as it was not among the tasks delegated to them, was not required by any of their principles (see Section 6.2.1), and depended on their personal initiative and competences.

Mayors and local civil servants provided examples of non-strategic projects, but treated them as a natural consequence of political and other circumstances. However, they praised the examples of strategic projects and ideas and highlighted the importance of **mayors and their characteristics**, who have the biggest decision-making power regarding investments conducted by their municipality (see Sections 5.1 and 6.2.1). Some of them specifically highlighted that the strategic vision of mayors prevented non-strategic projects [L\_DMAYOR\_M1, L\_MAYOR\_M2, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_IB\_5]. This highlights the importance of social and human capital and particularly the strategic, metropolitan vision of individual mayors in limiting this risk.

While there was limited initial reflection on these risks of non-strategic projects and their consequences for collaboration in interviews with research participants, participatory observation and in particular **study visits** clearly identified this type of risk. Many ITI project descriptions presented a strategic dimension but did not deliver this in reality. On the basis of research visits to the physical places of investments, specific questions were formulated for research participants to explore the strategic or non-strategic character of projects and the reasons for this. In this way, the field research revealed an additional influence of political factors in joint ITI implementation.

Data analysis showed a number of reasons for limiting the strategic dimension of joint ITI projects, shaped by various factors described below: 1. Serving mayors' electoral interests, 2. Blocking mayors' electoral interests, 3. Serving personal interests, 4. Stemming from limited time, financial resources and data, and 5. Projects prepared by external organisations (in CS).

## Investments serving mayors' electoral interests

Most examples of non-strategic projects discovered during field research were related to costly, non-sustainable investments, typically planned by mayors in order to gain electoral support. The great majority of them were identified in LFA [L\_AC1\_M6, S\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_3, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IO\_M5, L\_TA\_M5, L\_IB\_5, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Fieldnotes, L\_Fieldnotes]. Such investments were characterised by high visibility with the political purpose hidden behind the official description.

Study visits in LFA revealed a range of non-strategic elements in projects: the non-strategic location of transport hubs or roads (e.g. nearby tourist attractions instead of main commute paths), revitalised city squares with lack of investment connecting this with the marginalised communities leaving nearby, a municipal storage unit that was labelled under as cultural infrastructure for the citizens, and a disproportionately large outdoor arena for cultural events in a park, despite a relatively limited number of potential visitors. This can be explained by a perceived **low attractiveness of thematic areas** of possible investments within ITI in LFA, and mayors' reaction by modifying the official project scope to serve their original intentions and interests. These investments also revealed the limited strategic development vision of the metropolitan area among mayors investing in such projects.

*After the interview we were guided by the ITI coordinator around the city and the main ITI investment areas – transport infrastructure and the park. During the commentary on these projects' scope, the influence of political factors emerged. The coordinator explained that a smaller stage in the park would make more sense, because there are not many such large events in the city, and maintaining these investments greatly increases the costs. The coordinator had tried to explain this to the mayor, but the mayor insisted. [L\_Fieldnotes]*

The research also revealed an example of collaboration **limiting non-strategic projects**. Personal relations built between ITI coordinators and mayors [L\_Coor\_M8] led to sharing information about the costs of politically-attractive but non-strategic investment into an aquapark. Representatives of municipalities located in close proximity exchanged the results of their analysis, showing that such a project in close proximity to Lublin would not be economically sustainable as there would not be enough customers to cover the costs. This collaboration potentially prevented municipal debt and the use of joint resources for a non-strategic investment.

*There was a fashion for swimming pools, so mayors were interested in how feasible such investment would be. Then one municipality did an analysis in terms of residents and interest, and the others also stated that it is a fantasy to make it work in such a short distance from Lublin and Łęczno. So, thanks to such communication we know that if we do not have external funds, i.e. no private investor appears, then it is an investment that cannot be financially sustainable. [L\_Coor\_M8]*



## **Blocking mayors' electoral interests**

As described in Sections 5.1. and 6.2.1, research participants in both regions noted the role of local or higher-level politicians on collaboration. One of the most negative influences highlighted related to blocking strategic metropolitan investments because of conflicting partisan interests or personal conflicts. The key motivation was that local councillors, county, regional or national politicians did not want a specific mayor to succeed and gain electoral support. This risk was reported more often in relation to the regional capital and other big cities, as are they are ruled by highly-recognised political players, which higher-level politicians might want to block or support, depending on the party affiliation homogeneity. In both regions, research participants provided examples of specific, strategic projects being at risk due to these factors, e.g. a transport hub on a crucial commuting route, a local road linking a national road with an airport [S\_AC1\_M6, S\_IB\_1, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Mayor\_M7].

The most prominent example was in LFA, where the city had ITI funds reserved for the Integrated Communication Centre, a transport hub with metropolitan or potentially regional importance, linking the main bus and train routes with suburban and further locations. This project and its timeline was agreed with the MA and the Ministry under the previous government, but was questioned after elections. The new government introduced an audit of the project, justified in terms of a concerns about timely ITI funds absorption. However, according to ITI Office employees and city representatives, there was also a political dimension in this move as it could block a politically-attractive investment by Lublin's mayor who was affiliated with the main opposition party. One of the ITI office staff described the risks associated with this situation:

*Unfortunately, we will have an audit commissioned by the Ministry. It is ordered to show whether it is possible to implement the Integrated Communication Centre within this financial perspective. We will see what this audit will bring, but currently the investment is under question.*

*Now the ministry wants to do an extended audit on this project and it will check with us, in the ITI office and in the marshal's office, to see how it works, whether all procedures are here, whether everything is consistent and whether it works to support preparation of this project. We will see what this audit will bring.*  
[L\_Coor\_M5]

## **Investments serving personal interests**

Field research revealed that some ITI investments may be motivated or affected by the personal interests of mayors, or individuals and organisations in their network. For example, during one study visits in LFA, it emerged that one ITI project financed the building of a road leading to

mayor's house, although it was disconnected from the municipal commuting system, and could not be perceived as strategic for metropolitan development. Own observations were confirmed by research participants' reactions [L\_Fieldnotes].

*At some point we turn into a side lane and the engineer tells that there will also be a road investment here. I'm asking where it is leading. The engineer and coordinator exchange glances and the engineer points his finger at one of the houses not far from the road. It turns out to be the house of the mayor. [L\_Fieldnotes]*

Other examples found in both regions were related to **clientelism**. In CS, the managing authority representative expressed fears that some projects by external organisations and companies may be preferred by mayors for non-strategic reasons [L\_MA\_1]. Opposite opinions were expressed by mayors, ITI Office employees and ITI coordinators, who argued that in order to ensure the strategic distribution of funds, the projects of external organisations should be coordinated with municipal ones. Following this logic, mayors minimised the risk of non-strategic external projects through a specific mechanism described in Section 6.4.4.

In LFA, the provided example was not directly related to an ITI project, but bilateral collaboration on inter-municipal public transport. According to one of the mayors, the deal that would be beneficial for citizens was not done because of other mayor protecting interests of private companies. One interviewee observed that **establishing this kind of collaboration is influenced by politics** [L\_Mayor\_M5].

*This kind of service happens on the basis of the good will of individual commune heads, mayors. Or where the inhabitants stomp their feet and want the city buses to reach them [L\_Mayor\_M5].*

He also provided an example of the collaboration blocked due to the **lobby of private bus drivers on the mayor**. Establishing a joint transport operator for the whole area was assessed as technically possible, but currently not taken under serious consideration due to financial and legal limitations. Nevertheless, this kind of collaboration was not the subject of ITI activities, and therefore will not be further analysed in the thesis.

*The problem is something else. There are private lines from of the municipal entrepreneurs who live by transporting citizens to Lublin. So, even though they are doing it more expensive, the authorities were not enthusiastic about launching these connections through Lublin's public transport. It can be said that this is such a pathological dimension of these decisions. [L\_Mayor\_M5]*

### **Non-political factors: limited time, financial resources and data**

Research participants also mentioned other, non-political factors leading to non-strategic projects. First, they observed how limited resources decreased the strategic scale of a project or dictated an imperfect location for investments [L\_Mayor\_M6, S\_IB\_2]. The latter was

connected with the land ownership of the city and insufficient time and money to buy a more strategic place for investment.

Concerning resources, higher-level rules defined the maximum percentage of EU contribution if an investment brings commercial profit (60%), set lower than non-profit projects (85%). Some municipalities could not afford a higher own contribution, and consequently went for a non-profit option for investment in typically commercial places, e.g. train stations. This led to a less-strategic scope of the investment, as it did not bring profits for the municipality and did not fulfil key functions for the passengers due to the impossibility of installing shops and services. An expert assessed that this is also related to **political logic**, as mayors can feel the pressure of showing to the voters the maximum EU funding acquired, while 60% could be perceived as a lost opportunity, even if in the long term it would bring profits [S\_Expert\_1].

The strategic dimension was additionally limited by lack of comparable data about the metropolitan areas, observed by ITI Offices employees in both regions [L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_1]. An exception was the joint transport study prepared by the CS Association to analyse transport flows and needs in the whole area. Research participants assessed that some of transport investments realised within ITI could turn out to be located in the wrong places, as the analysis would be ready too late. It would, however, become a basis for future transport investments by the metropolis.

Finally, the ITI Office director in CS expected a decrease in the quality and strategic value of projects at the end of the period due to time pressures to absorb funding limiting the possibilities of detailed analyses and strategic coordination with other municipalities. It is important to note that he saw the role of ITI Office in ensuring a more strategic character of ITI projects, revealing the voluntary function of the metropolitan administration in limiting the risks of non-strategic projects. However, it is not possible to determine on the basis of collected data whether their activities brought the expected result.

*We have to manage this ITI in such a way that these funds are fully used, but used wisely, so that there is no such situation at the end where we have a pool of funds and let's choose whatever. We cannot allow such a situation, because then these are the least effective, most costly investments in terms of maintenance. Now projects are fairly well reviewed, calculated and analysed, but I am afraid that later we will start implementing less effective projects, and we just need to monitor it all the time. On the one hand, I want to use these funds, but on the other, I am against doing something forced. Maybe it will be better to lose this allocation than to invest in stupid things [L\_IB\_1]*

## Projects by external organisations

In CS, due to the competitive mode of project selection external organisations were allowed to apply for projects to be funded from ITI, competing with the municipal projects. Research participants argued that such projects may be located in a non-strategic place or have non-strategic scope if not coordinated with other ITI projects and municipalities' investments (see more in Section 8.1.4). This aspect was also related to the collective metropolitan identity among partners of the CS Association (see Section 6.2.2). The reference point were not only municipalities outside the CS and regions other than Śląskie, but also private and non-profit organisations applying for ITI funds.

### 7.3. Summary

The aim of the chapter was to explore the impact of the political factors identified in the previous chapter on two aspects of collaboration from the ICA Framework: collective benefit and collaboration risks involved in joint ITI implementation. This section illustrates the key results of the analysis. Overall, it showed major differences in terms of the extent of benefits and risks in the two metropolitan areas, and of how particular factors shaped them. It also revealed differences in how both elements of collaboration changed over time.

The perceived **collective benefits in both metropolitan areas grew over time**, although they started from a different initial scope. In LFA, the perceived collective benefit was low in the beginning, as it was limited to the financial incentive of the possibility to acquire a significant amount of EU funds in an easier than usual way when compared to other EU funds.

In CS, on top of the financial incentive some research participants also acknowledged the interdependencies and joint development opportunity in the joint ITI implementation. The political leader and ITI Office activity played an important role in promoting broader collective benefits and shaping the collaboration accordingly. Awareness of this aspect grew over time also in LFA, but to a lesser extent.

Ongoing ITI implementation allowed collaborating partners in both regions to acknowledge benefits of mutual learning and building professional networks, as well as a stronger collective position useful in negotiations with external institutions. In CS, this aspect was strengthened by the conscious building of a collective image. The results of the qualitative assessment of the perceived collective benefit are illustrated in Table 33.

Table 33 Qualitative assessment of the scope of collective benefits changing over time

Stage	Collective benefit	
	LFA	CS
Initially	Low	Medium
During ITI implementation	Medium	High

These differences can be explained by the factors identified to have played a role in shaping the perception of collective benefits in both metropolitan areas. The analysis revealed the varying impact of 19 factors in this context, both related to the actors characteristics, and existing institutions. Table 35 illustrates the results of the assessment, following the approach described in Chapter 4. Besides the extent of impact with scores on the 0-3 scale, the table also visualises the overall positive (green) and negative character of the impact.

The assessment shows that in both regions the biggest impact had the factors related to **leaders** and higher-level institutions. The main difference between cases is related to the role of the political leader (Chair of the ITI Association/Agreement). In CS, he had a high positive impact considering his commitment to collective action in this ICA mechanism, care for joint and other municipalities’ interests, and personal qualities. The analysis showed that these factors played a major role in promoting the broader benefits from ITI implementation among other mayors both in the initial and later stages of collaboration. On the contrary, in LFA the political leader had a negative impact, as his lack of a broader vision for ITI implementation and focus on Lublin’s interests limited the collective benefits also among other mayors. Administrative leaders (ITI directors) in both regions had a positive impact on collective benefits, to a higher extent in CS.

Regarding **higher-level rules**, the highest positive impact in both metropolitan areas had factors related to the financial incentive. The difference influencing the perceived benefit was related to the project selection mode, as it influenced mayors’ power and in this way also the attractiveness of ITI (high in LFA, low in CS). However, in LFA the attractiveness was limited by the rules defining the thematic scope of possible joint investments and obligatory project partnerships for smaller municipalities.

**Mayors** had a mixed impact in both metropolitan areas: their focus on electoral interests limited the collective benefit, while their personal networks improved it. In CS, in addition their support for metropolitan development strengthened the benefits, while in LFA their lack of a metropolitan vision weakened them.

**Other groups of factors** played a smaller role in the context of collective benefits. ITI Office and ITI coordinators had a low positive impact in both metropolitan areas. Regarding the community characteristics, the main difference was regional identity identified in CS, which explains the acknowledgment of the benefits related to joint development already at the initial stage, and conscious creation of a collective image. Positive experiences of mayors from earlier collaboration had a positive impact in both metropolitan areas, to a slightly higher extent in CS. Data analysis did not reveal any impact of factors related to higher-level politicians and political structure on collective benefit.

### **Findings regarding the collaboration risks**

The analysis in this chapter has also brought evidence regarding **collaboration risks**. Overall, they **decreased over time** in both metropolitan areas and were slightly higher in CS. However, the scope of differences varied across the types of risks (see Table 34).

**Incoordination** risks dropped from medium to low in both metropolitan areas, as partnering municipalities in the beginning struggled with insufficient information, higher-level rules and lack of communication channels, and had to start preparing the joint projects in consequent uncertainty. Over time, the rules were clarified, and the risks concerned mostly the interdependence with external organisations and among municipalities finalising the projects.

**Division** was initially a medium risk in LFA and high in CS. The main difference stemmed from power division, as in LFA the capital city's dominant position was unquestioned, while in CS there were more conflicting interests. Resources division brought the highest risks in both metropolitan areas. The analysis revealed two layers of this process: nominal (dividing the amount of joint funds) and thematic (distributing the types of investments that the funds can be used for). In LFA, division risks were eliminated as the agreed power and resources were formally settled and could not be renegotiated due to higher-level rules. In CS, the risks remained at a low level, as the resources division had an informal character.

**Defection** was the lowest out of all risk types, and the only one that increased over time. In LFA, the risks were minimised through formalisation of the division of joint resources, while

in CS its informal character opened the possibility of opportunistic behaviour. Initially, opportunistic tendencies in both areas were low due to high approval of the division mechanism, but grew over time, mostly due to the limited time available to spend the joint resources.

The risks related to **non-strategic joint projects**, not considered before in the ICA literature, were initially high in LFA and medium in CS. They included the possibility of using joint resources against the collective interest, and instead serving or blocking mayors’ electoral interests, serving personal interests. In CS additional risks stemmed from the formal possibility of using ITI funds for external organisations’ projects, which might have had limited strategic value for the metropolitan area. This category of risks dropped over time as the projects were officially (LFA) or unofficially (CS) verified and coordinated among partnering municipalities.

**Table 34 Assessment of the scope of collaboration risks changing over time**

Stage	Incoordination		Division		Defection		Non-strategic joint projects	
	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS
Initially	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	None	Low	High	Medium
During ITI implementation	Low	Low	None	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low

The analysis identified the impact on the risks of **50 factors in all categories**: 34 related to actors characteristics (see Table 36), and 16 associated with existing institutions (see Table 37). This broad variety of factors shows the complexity of the processes shaping the risks involved in collaboration. Similarly to the illustration of results on collective benefit, the tables indicate the extent of particular factors’ impact with numbers, and its positive or negative character with colours.

Among the actors characteristics, in both cases the most impact was exerted by **mayors**. The biggest difference was related to factors regarding to what extent they focused on their electoral interests and consequent single-municipality perspective, and how much they supported a broader, metropolitan development. These aspects increased the risks of division and non-strategic joint projects to a higher extent in LFA, as in CS mayors had a more developed shared vision of development. However, in CS the individual municipality interests affected also the defection risks. The low level of trust among mayors in the beginning and its increase over time partially explains the decrease of risks, especially in terms of division. In both regions the

tensions between capital city and other municipalities increased the risks, to a higher extent in LFA. Defection risks were mostly influenced by the efficiency in EU funds absorption, and already mentioned level of approval of the division mechanism. The number of collaborating mayors increased the division risks in CS. Factors typically used in literature, e.g. connected to clientelism and political affiliation homogeneity did not play a major role in the analysed studies, and the only evidence found in this regard had an anecdotal character.

**Leaders** made an impact on all kinds of risks except defection. The attitude of political leaders made a huge difference between cases, in particular on division risks. Contrary to LFA, in CS the leader's support of joint development built trust and limited the initial fears of smaller municipalities whether their interests would be secured. Leaders of joint projects – both mayors and civil servants contributed to limiting non-strategic risks. Administrative leaders had a low but positive impact on limiting incoordination and in CS, also the non-strategic projects risks.

The analysis of data in both regions shows that the **higher-level politicians** had a low impact on increasing the risks of non-strategic projects due to party affiliation heterogeneity with mayors. In addition, regional politicians affected also the differences between cases in terms of division risks: their decisions regarding the amount of available resources and thematic scope of investments increased the risks in LFA as there were less attractive funds, and decreased them in CS as there was a perception that there is enough attractive investments for every municipality. Interestingly, bad government relations with the EU led to a more favourable currency exchange rate, which slightly decreased defection risks in CS, as there was more available resources for everyone.

As for other actors, **ITI Office** employees had the biggest impact of all actors in decreasing incoordination risks in both regions, and to a lower extent also non-strategic projects. This was mostly due to the scope of delegated tasks but also their motivation and expertise, which appeared as slightly higher in CS. **ITI Coordinators** in LFA had an anecdotal impact on limiting the risks of non-strategic projects using their personal networks to avoid a potentially harmful investment.

Among **community characteristics**, administrative and financial capacity had the biggest impact on shaping the risks. In both regions, the risks were higher for small municipalities which did not have much resources to prepare many projects at the same time so the attractiveness of ITI funds was relatively higher. At the same time, the municipalities did not have negotiation power so the risks of losing the funds was higher for them. In this way, size



of municipalities mattered the most for the division risks. In LFA, the higher homogeneity among municipalities apart from the capital city decreased the risks of power division due to similar aspirations, while in CS the polycentric character made the situation more complex. Low social capital increased the risks, especially in LFA as it consequently limited trust among partners and determined more control and formality of the agreements. In CS, regional identity had a small impact on decreasing the division and defection risks as it created a sense of common interest, but cultural-historical division initially limited this effect. These aspects were not identified in LFA.

As for factors related to existing institutions (see Table 37), **higher-level rules** had the biggest impact on risks. In particular, project selection mode differentiated the scope of mayors' power. Competitive mode in CS increased the division and defection risks, as they consequently had only informal character, while in LFA all agreements were officially settled. Time pressure imposed by higher-level institutions had particular consequences on increasing opportunistic tendencies both regions, especially in CS. At the initial stage, higher-level rules had negative impact on incoordination risks in both regions, especially due to the frequency of changes which created uncertainty among partners and limited the possibility to plan and coordinate their projects. Additionally, access to information was unequal and channels of communication were not yet built, which additionally increased the incoordination risks.

**Political structure** had a low, negative impact on all types of collaboration risks in both regions, and there were no major differences identified in this regard. National elections increased incoordination risks, as they occurred during the programming stage of ITI, and the possibility of changes in higher-level rules created uncertainty among partners. Local elections had a small impact on division and non-strategic projects, due to uncertainty of the direction of municipal development, and changes of mayors affecting the established networks and collaboration rules.

The analysis found evidence for **existing ICA mechanisms** in CS having overall medium impact on division risks. This was related to the methods of power and nominal resources division, which were inspired by earlier positive experiences of mayors. In particular the personal experience of the political leader played a high role, as he proposed solutions that were perceived as fair and acceptable, which significantly limited the division risks. Such impact was not identified in LFA, and there is not any evidence in the collected data proving that lack of such experiences increased the division risks.

Table 35 Assessment of the impact of identified factors on collective benefit

ICA element	Category	Factor	Impact on collective benefit		
			LFA	CS	TOTAL
Actors characteristics	Leaders	Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	2	3	5
		Perceived political leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests	1	3	4
		Personal qualities of the political leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc.	1	3	4
		Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	1	2	3
		Personal qualities of the administrative leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc.	1	2	3
	Mayors	Mayor's focus on electoral interests	2	2	4
		Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development	1	2	3
		Personal networks and friendships among mayors	1	1	2
	ITI Office	Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees	1	1	2
	ITI Coordinators	Personal networks and friendships among civil servants	1	1	2
	Community	Level of administrative and financial capacity	1	1	2
		Regional identity	0	2	2
Existing institutions	Higher level rules	Perceived attractiveness of the amount of available joint resources	2	3	5
		Perceived easiness to get joint resources	3	2	5
		Project selection mode	3	1	4
		Perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration	2	1	3
		Perceived relevance of the thematic scope for metropolitan development challenges	1	1	2
		Project form	1	0	1
	Existing ICA mechanisms	Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration	1	2	3

Legend: Non-political factors were marked in orange.

Score	Impact
3	High positive
2	Medium positive
1	Low positive
1	Low negative
2	Medium negative
3	High negative

Table 36 Assessment of the impact of factors related to actors characteristics on collaboration risks

Category	Factor	Incoordination		Division		Defection		Non-strategic joint projects		Impact on collaboration risks		
		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	TOTAL
Leaders	Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism			2	2			2	2	4	4	8
	Perceived political leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests	1	1	3	3					4	4	8
	A number of leaders' initiatives for particular joint projects							2	3	2	3	5
	Level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration,			3	1					3	1	4
	Perceived administrative leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests	1	2							1	2	3
	Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism								2	0	2	2
Mayors	Mayor's focus on electoral interests			3	2		2	3	1	6	5	11
	Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development	1	1	1	1		1	2	2	4	5	9
	Mayors' vision on priorities homogeneity			2	2			1	3	3	5	8
	Level of trust among mayors	1		2	1		1	1	1	4	3	7
	Perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and the other municipalities			3	2			1		4	2	6
	Homogeneity in the efficiency in EU funds absorption and project preparation					2	3			2	3	5
	Level of approval of the division mechanism					3	2			3	2	5
	Number of mayors involved in collaboration			2	2					2	2	4
	Perceived clientelism level							2	1	2	1	3
	Human capital of mayors							1	1	1	1	2
	Perceived mayors' charisma and ambition				1					0	1	1
	Party affiliation homogeneity among local mayors				1					0	1	1
	Party affiliation homogeneity between mayor and group dominant in municipal council								1	0	1	1
Mayors' age homogeneity							1		1	0	1	
ITI Office	Scope of tasks delegated to the metropolitan authority	3	3					1	1	4	4	8
	Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees	1	2						1	1	3	4
ITI Coordinators	Personal networks and friendships among civil servants							1		1	0	1
Higher-level politicians	Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and regional authority			2	2			1	1	3	3	6
	Level of support for metropolitan development of regional and national authorities			2	2					2	2	4
	Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and national authority							2	1	2	1	3
	Perceived personal conflicts or likings between mayors and higher-level politicians							1	1	1	1	2
	Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and county authority							1		1	0	1
	Government's relations with EU institutions						1			0	1	1
Community	Level of administrative and financial capacity	1		1	1	2	2	1	1	5	4	9
	Homogeneity of municipal size			3	2					3	2	5
	Social capital			2	1			1		3	1	4
	Regional identity				1		1			0	2	2
	Cultural-historical divisions				1					0	1	1

Legend: Non-political factors were marked in orange.

Score	Impact
3	High positive
2	Medium positive
1	Low positive
1	Low negative
2	Medium negative
3	High negative

Table 37 Assessment of the impact of factors related to existing institutions on collaboration risks

Category	Factor	Incoordination		Division		Defection		Non-strategic joint projects		Impact on collaboration risks		
		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	TOTAL
Higher level rules	Project selection mode			2	2	3	3		2	5	7	12
	Time pressure on joint projects realisation	1	1			2	3		1	3	5	8
	Frequency of changes in the rules	3	3							3	3	6
	Perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration			2	1	1		1		4	1	5
	Project form	1	1			1	1			2	2	4
	Perceived equal application of higher-level rules to all partners	2	1							2	1	3
	Perceived attractiveness of the amount of available joint resources			1	1					1	1	2
Political structure	Time after national/regional elections	2	2							2	2	4
	Time after local elections	1	1	1	1					2	2	4
	Turnover among mayors after elections			1	1			1	1	2	2	4
	Time before local elections						1	1	1	1	2	3
	Time before national/regional elections	1	1							1	1	2
Existing ICA mechanisms	Level of political leader's active involvement in existing ICA mechanisms				3					0	3	3
	Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration				2					0	2	2
	The number of ICA mechanisms				2					0	2	2
	Percentage of mayors involved in previous collaboration				1					0	1	1

Legend: Non-political factors were marked in orange.

## 8. The impact of political factors on transition costs and integration mechanisms

This chapter contributes to the second main research question: ‘What is the impact of the identified political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?’. It takes the political factors discovered in the previous chapter, and analyses how in both regions they affected the collaborative process and its elements captured in the third part of data collected during field research.

The chapter broadens the analysis following the ICA Framework. The first section focuses on transaction costs involved in ITI implementation: the three types typically analysed in the ICA Framework, and one that emerged during data analysis and had not been studied before. The second section compares the research participants’ perception of integration mechanisms adopted in both metropolitan areas.

Each section assesses the role of various factors in a particular element of the ICA Framework. The chapter finishes with a discussion on the main political and non-political factors influencing collaboration within ITI implementation, and their type of impact.

### 8.1. Transaction costs in ITI implementation

This subchapter analyses the transaction costs involved in collective action in both metropolitan areas. The literature highlights that the costs have a crucial role in determining the choice of integration mechanism, as they envisage various degrees of costs that collaborating actors are ready to face. It is doubtful that in the studied metropolitan areas, the choice of integration mechanism was done based on such a linear analysis of involved costs, and many of them occurred already after the choice. Nevertheless, analysing them within the categories introduced by the ICA Framework helps in identifying the key processes involved, associating them with particular risks described in the previous section, and explaining the role of political factors in shaping the scope of transaction costs.

The first three sections discuss the costs that can be classified under the typical categories in the ICA literature: information cost occurring as a response to incoordination risks, negotiation and bargaining following the division risks, and enforcement costs aiming at minimising the defection risks. The fourth subchapter introduces a **new category of transaction costs**, which

was identified during the coding exercise, and has not been analysed so far within any of the ICA Framework. It is related to the joint project assessment and aims at minimising the new category of risks introduced in the previous section.

The quantitative summary (see Table 38) shows that the proportions of segments coded in relation to transaction costs correspond to a large extent with the proportions of respective risks as described above, however slightly more balanced across categories. There were comparable differences between regions, with the exception of the new category of costs which was more often commented on in CS, although the respective type of risks were reflected in lower percentage of segments than in LFA.

Negotiation and bargaining was the most frequently commented in total and in CS, while in LFA a slightly higher percentage of segments was related to joint project assessment. The new type of costs was, similarly to non-strategic project risks, the second most commented category in total. Information costs were by 9 percentage points more frequently mentioned than incoordination risks, but still to a significantly higher extent in LFA than CS. This higher frequency of mentioning information costs in LFA can be explained by the continuous low level of trust in this metropolitan area, both in the beginning and throughout ongoing collaboration. It increased the number of meetings and documents to be exchanged, which was additionally multiplied by the project partnership mode used to a larger extent in LFA (see Section 6.3.1). Interestingly, enforcement was commented on with similar frequency in both regions despite varying defection risks, different project selection modes and consequent formal and informal resource division methods. This observations are followed by thematic analysis in the next sections.

**Table 38 Quantitative summary of segments coded under the transaction costs category**

<b>Coding category: Type of transaction cost</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>LFA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>CS %</b>	<b>LFA %</b>	<b>TOTAL %</b>
<b>Information</b>	89	119	208	17%	31%	<b>23%</b>
<b>Negotiation, Bargaining</b>	189	96	285	35%	25%	<b>31%</b>
<b>Enforcement</b>	94	67	161	18%	17%	<b>18%</b>
<b>Joint project assessment</b>	161	103	264	30%	27%	<b>29%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 8.1.1. Information costs

According to the ICA framework, the first category of transaction costs is directly related to the incoordination risks. The assumption is that in order to achieve collective benefit they need to coordinate their actions involving exchange of information. This process consumes time and other resources of collaborators. In the Polish case studies, actors got intensively involved in information acquiring and sharing, which this subsection describes in detail.

In general, field research showed that the important role of collecting data and managing various communication channels was held by **ITI Offices**: between managing authority and municipalities, among mayors and among municipal ITI coordinators.

Research participants' opinions and participatory observation gathered in both regions provide a strong evidence that created communication channels are in fact working [L\_Coor\_3, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Mayor\_M5]. First, as meetings happened regularly, they became an opportunity for all municipal representatives to meet each other, breaking the pre-existing closed circuits and building trust among them that facilitated information exchange at operational and strategic level. The **initial cost** of creating these channels was perceived by research participants as high, as they attended multiple meetings without certain benefits [S\_Mayor\_M1].

However, **over time** participants assessed mutual contacts as natural, informal and useful. One of the ITI Coordinators highlighted the improved contacts among municipalities by saying that *'It is already a lot that we are not anonymous to each other'* [S\_IB\_M5]. Apart from formal meetings described below, in both metropolitan areas there were annual events in a hotel for all actors most involved in joint ITI implementation: ITI Office employees, mayors (in LFA all, in CS the ITI Board Members), ITI Coordinators and representatives of managing authority. These meetings had a formal part of information exchange, negotiation, training and decision-making, and an informal part in the evening.

Participatory observation during these meetings in both regions allows to formulate that **relations among ITI actors** were mostly friendly and informal. In LFA, a visible division was between **younger and older** mayors and ITI Coordinators interacting mostly among themselves. In CS no specific pattern was observed, apart from Managing Authorities being separated from the others. Most importantly, ITI implementation stimulated establishing

channels and networks built within joint ITI implementation, **limited costs** of information sharing among involved actors.

*Since the ITI Office was established in the city hall, we have had no communication problems. Some minor glitches sometimes occur. But there are no communication problems, everything is clear and transparent. The key people appeared, who were able to cement this understanding and cooperation among partners. In fact, it seems to me that our agreement is in particular based on persons. [L\_Coor\_M3]*

*I think that the ITI Office works really well and if you see the reports from the ITI Boards, everything is really voted unanimously. It's as if a matter of working out such a consensus. Everything is so transparent, so no one is surprised that something suddenly is on the Board. Before, you get the materials. So I say, these methods developed by the CS Association, by its members, are so valuable that I think that in many other matters, e.g. the anti-smog act and various other aspects of life, I think that it should be used. [S\_Coor\_M5]*

Moreover, thematic analysis allowed to identify four groups of activities associated with information costs, detailed below: 1. Delivering information on higher-level rules, 2. Strategic information exchange, 3. Operational information exchange, and 4. Acquiring data on the metropolitan area.

### **Delivering information on higher-level rules**

This cost was mainly covered by the metropolitan administration's employees, who then distributed the gathered information to all collaborating partners. In the situation of constantly changing rules of ITI implementation, including a possible scope of collaboration, there was a high risk of not unequal access to information, as some actors were better connected with regional and national actors. In LFA, initially it was Lublin's Mayor attending meetings at the national and regional level before the conversations with other municipalities started, which showed the unequal access to information. This initially limited trust among partners, and so it was important to ensure that the information is always updated and spread evenly.

These costs were **particularly high in both regions in the beginning** of collaboration, both due to more frequently changing and unclear information flow from higher-level institutions resulting in frequent meetings and intense communication through other media, and because of the newly created communication channels between ITI Offices, managing authorities and municipalities, which required more time to pass the information effectively and build trust regarding its accuracy and transparency. In both cases ITI Offices, on behalf of all municipalities, collected information from regional and national administration, and transmitted it to all members via e-mail or during meetings and trainings dedicated to particular issues [S\_IB\_1, S\_Mayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_2].



*The [ITI] director played a very important role, because she transported our applications, requests, treatments to the ministerial level and only then it was negotiated. [L\_Mayor\_M2]*

In both metropolitan areas, ITI directors highlighted that they put special effort to transfer this information immediately to all partnering municipalities. In CS the metropolitan administration organised **quarterly** meetings where they presented all updated information [S\_IB\_1]. Participatory observation additionally showed that the ITI Office in CS often organised trainings for all municipalities on particular topics useful in project preparation, which were also present but less frequent in LFA [S\_Fieldnotes, L\_Fieldnotes]. In summary, in both regions the ITI Offices played an important role in limiting particular municipalities' costs of collecting information on higher-level rules on joint ITI implementation.

*We created notes, which we sent to everyone, especially members of the board, so that there was no doubt, no suspicion that some group of our members had better access to information than the rest [S\_IB\_1]*

*Their most important role is outside conversations, collecting information, guidelines and passing hem on, an intermediary between the marshal's office and us. They were our first lawyer, defender, but also a constructor who said: no, this machine cannot look like this [L\_Mayor\_M2]*

### **Strategic information exchange**

As the individual projects were often functionally interdependent, there was a risk of incoordination and consequently it was important to exchange strategic information on mutual investment plans. These costs mostly required time investment on the **mayors'** side, which seemed to be similar in both regions at the initial stage, as all mayors participated in preparing joint **development strategies**, in which they agreed on a broader development directions of the whole metropolitan areas and coordinated planned investments. This was a crucial moment, as mayors saw strategic plans of other municipalities and could adjust theirs to maximise a collective benefit.

In LFA, research participants provided an example of how this process and the following negotiations allowed to **avoid the duplication of investments**. During joint planning of transport hubs to be funded from ITI around the LFA, they spotted that two of them are planned right next to each other, on two sides of the border between Lublin and another municipality. This was addressed by bilateral negotiations, which led to agreeing on a single investment, beneficial for both sides [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M7, L\_IB\_1]. This shows the role of **relations between mayors** in minimising incoordination risks.

*On one occasion, two hubs were overlapping. It was then decided that Glusk would resign from their scope of the junction there, because the Lublin's project will be implemented. The mayor has obtained an assurance*

*that the hub will certainly be built in this place and, therefore, he may give up his part in return for a different range. This was one of the cases where the scope was actually exchanged and complemented. [L\_IB\_1]*

In LFA, firstly the meetings were organised by the city of Lublin, while later the ITI Office took initiative. In the beginning, the costs were high for all mayors, as a lot of time was spent on ineffective exchanges due to **limited information and low trust** among them [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_4]. In LFA research participants recalled that at the peak moment, these meetings were organised on **weekly** basis. In CS, the frequency was not expressed explicitly, but was assessed as ‘very often’ and more intense than during the ongoing collaboration [S\_Mayor\_M1]. Additionally, the ITI Office employees and Lublin representatives went to specific municipalities for bilateral exchanges with mayors [L\_IB\_4, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M6]. Such frequent meetings were assessed as high costs especially for small municipalities with limited administrative capacity, for whom delegating one person to work on ITI meant proportionally more resources than for a city with hundreds of employees [L\_DMayor\_M1].

*We had to spend a lot of time and energy on working on some strategic document, the value of which later would not necessarily have some effect. We were sometimes upset that in fact these works were so intense. [L\_DMayor\_M1]*

*I think that informing in this first stage what the planned investments were, projects in a given sub-region led to such a situation that representatives of communes and counties began to observe the neighbours' projects. And many aspects of these projects have changed as a result of confronting with the environment, with what will be implemented next to this municipality. They would stop thinking about individual projects, but about the implementation of mutually complementary projects [S\_IB\_1]*

During ongoing collaboration, in both region mayors regularly participated in meetings dedicated to ITI implementation at strategic level, usually organised by the ITI Offices. The costs were higher in CS when comparing all 16 mayors in LFA and the 15 mayors represented in the CS ITI Board, and lower for the remaining CS mayors.

In CS, the ITI Board meets **once a month** to discuss and decide on most important current issues, while all 78 mayors meet during an **annual** ITI Assembly. Moreover, mayors of municipalities located in each of the five ‘under-regions’ meet **every quarter** to discuss plans and projects located in the closest proximity. In CS, ITI office employees highlighted that contacts among mayors in ‘under-regions’ evolved to the extent that they met informally for festive occasions, e.g. Christmas.

In LFA, all mayors meet **twice a year** during the ITI Council to discuss all ITI-related issues. Additionally, once **every quarter** there are thematic meetings for mayors involved in particular

partnership projects. Here also the role of metropolitan administration is major, as it often facilitates contacts among mayors, and suggests issues to be discussed by them. In LFA, Lublin's mayor highlighted that more frequent meetings are not necessary as 'among mayors they know that they are just a phone call away'. Such informal contacts were, however, not mentioned by other mayors.

In both regions, mayors did not express the need for more frequent meetings or complaints regarding meeting too often, which can show that their frequency was adjusted well to the issues to be discussed at strategic level.

*We know who has done something similar, what is it being prepared, so we either ask them or associate them with each other, so they can talk to each other and ask for details, so that there is a better effect. Even those mayors from smaller communes were also eager to come to ITI Assembly meetings, because this is the moment when they can meet mayors from other cities and communes. [S\_IB\_2]*

*Here this contact is mainly with the ITI coordinators, the most important things, you know, and all decisions are made by the ITI council, but it is much less often than in an association. Because all this responsibility is actually taken by the leader, i.e. the city of Lublin, all kinds of settlements or supervision over the entire strategy, over implementation, over indicators, over everything, is only in the hands of this leader [L\_IB\_4]*

### **Operational information exchange**

ITI Offices in both metropolitan areas collect operational data within monitoring of progress in absorbing ITI funds. This was a **relatively small cost in LFA** due to the small number of preselected projects and consequent rare changes. On the contrary, in CS monitoring was a major time and resource investment due to ongoing project selection and gradual changes. The ITI Office prepared analyses of data trying to motivate municipalities to speed up project preparation, e.g. by publishing rankings and showing correlation between attended trainings and acquired funds. ITI Office created an elaborated ITI tool for monitoring, in which all municipalities inserted data on planned projects, their scope, budget and stage of preparation [S\_DMAYOR\_M4, S\_Coor\_M8, S\_Mayor\_M1].

This system multiplied costs on the side of **ITI coordinators**, who had to invest time in updating the data, and on the ITI Office side to mobilise them to do this. However, the system improved transparency, supported trust building and created a solid basis for the negotiation and bargaining described in the next section.

*As a leader of the 'under-region' X, we monitor all the undertakings that are to be implemented in our sub-region as part of ITIs. (...) There is an IT system commissioned by the CS Association, in which we enter all our ideas and undertakings planned under the ITI. Each coordinator has access to this. This is not classified information. Anyone can consult at any time. Such conversations are conducted in a working mode, sometimes more official, but the cooperation is certainly ongoing [S\_Coor\_M8]*

Other costs of operational information exchange were mostly a time investment of municipal civil servants, in particular ITI coordinators with support of the metropolitan administration. The latter facilitates the exchange by gathering updated data on ITI projects, monitoring the progress in their implementation, and distributing the information among civil servants. The majority of ITI coordinators involved in this research claimed that ever since the ITI implementation started, they have been in regular, even daily contact with each other over the phone and e-mail. Their contacts are mostly related to the specifics of preparing ITI projects, which are often interdependent and have numerous similarities.

The ITI Office organises operational ITI-related meetings, which in LFA happen **every month**, and in CS in the beginning also **every month**, and during ongoing collaboration **every quarter**. However, many research participants highlighted that contacts among ITI coordinators are ongoing informally, sometimes even **a few times per week** [L\_DMayor\_M1], regarding ITI-related issues and beyond [S\_Coor\_M2, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_3, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_Coor\_M8, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Coor\_M4, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_Coor\_M8].

This could suggest that costs of operational information exchange are higher in LFA. However, the ITI coordinators talking about the informal contacts did not perceive those as a cost, but as part of the benefit from collaboration, due to knowledge exchange that help in their own ITI projects. In LFA, all municipal ITI Coordinators perceived operational meetings within the ITI as helpful and valuable except Lublin's representative. In CS, both big and small cities assessed the collaboration positively, including the capital city representatives.

*As for the coordinators, strong cooperation relations have been established, in some places even friendships, which facilitate direct contact both in such cooperation within the ITI. As far as I know, they also, within the partnership projects or for investments outside ITI, call each other, exchange experiences, help each other. [L\_IB\_3]*

*It is very common to call other communes, I frequently contact other municipalities' heads of departments. These departments generally know each other, it's a flow of quick information. We also have official meetings, within subregions, (...) and it is an exchange of some experiences, and information primarily about who is planning what. Here, the Association performs a very good function, because they have a database of all projects. Good practices can be seen. They really exchange information. And they also slightly stimulate the exchange of good practices. So I think it is very highly developed. [S\_Coor\_M3]*

### **Acquiring data on the metropolitan area**

This type of information answers to some extent the risks related to non-strategic joint projects. It was mainly managed by the metropolitan administration. Local actors in both regions emphasised that they did not have sufficient, comparable data at the metropolitan level, in order

to prepare a solid joint development strategy (see Section 7.2.4). The ITI offices collected the data available from municipalities and external sources, noticing its limitations and gaps as they were often not comparable [L\_IB\_2, L\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_2]. The majority of available data was related to transport, which corresponded with the key thematic area in both regions.

However, some research participants observed that the data used for wiring the ITI strategy decasualised, as the socio-economic situation changed substantially in the past few years and consequently, the scope of a few projects was not reflecting key current problems [S\_IB\_3, L\_IB\_4]. A number of municipal representatives expressed the need to collect more data at the metropolitan level in order to be able to prepare more strategic joint projects [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IO\_M5].

Much more attention to **ongoing data collection** was given in CS. In LFA, before the ITI some data was collected as a part of a previous EU project, in which the majority of ITI members were involved. However, the project was criticised by many actors for focusing on the transport in Lublin, lacking a broader metropolitan overview [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IO\_M5].

In CS, the ‘Transport study’, started from a **mayor’s initiative** and vision (see Sections 5.1. and 6.2.1), and it became one of the most advanced and important collective projects [S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_2, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_DMayor\_M7]. It included collecting solid data on inhabitants’ commuting routes in the whole Subregion, and preparing a basis for future joint public transport planning. All ITI members contributed to the project **financially** despite the initial opposition among mayors, and participated in planning the content of the project [S\_IB\_2]. Still, the most costs related to the time invested in this information collection covered the metropolitan authority with a support of professional researchers. The scope of the study had to be limited due to a cut of national resources. Research participants assessed that this was motivated with opposing political interests of national government [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_IB\_1].

*However, later, as it turned out that these costs are high and that it requires additional contributions, there were doubts as to whether such a study was really needed, so we again held such meetings in subregions. We met with individual communes, explaining what it looks like, why it is done and what their financial contribution is, we also explained what they would get for really little money, if they had to do it themselves. And we also explain to them all the time that we do not want to collect these contributions from them yet, that we are trying to look for other sources of support (...). Not all, but most of them, were convinced by the majority, which agreed to adopt this resolution [S\_IB\_2]*

The costs answering to the risks related to the coordination with external institutions (see Section 7.2.4) are mostly related to preventing non-strategic joint projects and therefore described in Section 8.1.4.

### 8.1.2. Negotiation and bargaining costs

The second category of transaction costs in the ICA Framework is a consequence of the need to achieve an agreement on power and resource division among all partners. ICA literature assumes that negotiation and bargaining is necessary to achieve a consensus on division, which take time and resources that actors need to invest when they intend to enter a collaborative arrangement. This is valid for the analysed case studies, as research participants often talked about the past and ongoing negotiations among municipalities. Importantly, **mayors** played a key role in these negotiations.

This section identifies the influence of particular political factors on various aspects of the bargaining processes. The thematic analysis showed that negotiations among partners in both regions concerned the issues directly related to the division risks: power distribution, nominal resources, and thematic resources.

#### **Power division**

Empirical research related to power distribution among metropolitan partnerships shows various models used apart from the ‘one-member, one-vote’ system (Rickabaugh, 2018). In both Polish cases, research participants put less attention to negotiations on power division than resource division. This might be associated to the sensitive, informal character of the negotiations, and the moment of conducting the research. It took place during the implementation stage, when the power division was already agreed. The lack of attention to this issue among local actors shows an approval of the power distribution. Autonomy costs were mentioned only in relation to hypothetical speculations about further development of collaboration in the area of transport [S\_IB\_2, L\_IO\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M5, L\_TA\_M5].

The main difference between regions in the power division costs resulted from the **political leader’s selection complexity**: low in LFA and high in CS. In LFA Lublin had an unquestionable **position as a leader**, while in CS, a number of research participants mentioned the uncertainty of which municipality would take the lead [S\_IB\_1, S\_Mayor\_M5], see also Section 7.2.1.

In LFA, the main power body is the **ITI Council** formed by all ITI members. This gave smaller municipalities an equal share in executive power on ITI implementation. The **decision-making mechanism** of the Council included a simple majority, with the condition that Lublin has to belong to this majority. In this way the dominant position of the city was guaranteed, as no

decision could be made without its approval. Despite this special formal role, in reality Lublin did not show a major interest in actively leading the collaboration after the joint projects were formally accepted. The participatory observation revealed that ITI Council meetings are usually not attended by Lublin's mayor (see Section 6.2.1). The **little importance of the Council meetings** confirmed a mostly formal, administrative character of issues in the agenda, and a tense atmosphere visible in clashes and unsuccessful negotiations among participants [L\_Fieldnotes].

In CS, the power negotiation process was more complicated than in LFA, and a more complex power structure was created. The main two power bodies were the ITI Board and ITI Assembly of the CS Association, and their chairs were most important political figures. Initially, Katowice aspired to the position of ITI Board chair role due to its capital status. However, this was contested by the mayor of Gliwice, who showed a clear vision of how collaboration in CS should be shaped, and after negotiations he got successfully elected to chair the ITI Board and became the **political leader** of the association [S\_Mayor\_5, S\_IB\_1, S\_Coor\_M8]. He played an active role during the meetings attended during fieldwork, encouraging consensus-building and promoting joint interests [S\_Fieldnotes]. Katowice became a permanent chair of the **ITI Assembly**, consisting of all 81 members.

The **number of municipalities** involved matters, as it would be highly difficult to delegate a body with such a high number of members to exercise an executive authority. Therefore, its role was minor due to rare, annual meetings and limited power – mostly approval of activity summaries prepared by the metropolitan administration [S\_Fieldnotes]. This is how the ITI political leader described negotiations with Katowice regarding leadership in CS Association.

*I said [to the Katowice representative]: if you want, you will become the chairman of the board of this association, but you have to win the elections, because I will take part in them. He did not dare, he left it. He only asked me to write in the statute that Katowice would always be the chairman of the ITI Assembly. I gladly gave it to him, because I did not want Katowice to disappear from it, the capital should be represented, and it was the best possible form. [Interview with the political leader in CS]*

There is also a difference between regions in the costs of power division between smaller municipalities. In LFA, this happened within the four joint project partnerships. Each partnership chose a **project leader** – a municipality coordinating collaboration in joint project preparation and realisation. When asked how project leaders were selected, local actors usually referred to personal initiative of mayors or civil servants involved, or capacity and experience in EU projects preparation (see Section 6.2.1). Research participants did not mention particularly lengthy negotiation or disagreements on choosing the project leaders, probably

because it was perceived as a mainly administrative rather than a strategic function. Also the partnership meetings attended during the field research showed a friendly, consensual atmosphere without any power-related tensions [L\_Fieldnotes].

In CS, the power division between other cities and smaller municipalities was visible in the formation of other **ITI Board** members, consisting of 15 municipalities' representatives, where each of the 5 under-regions nominates 3 mayors. This mechanism shows the importance of the **territorial aspect** in power division, although under-regions differ substantially in terms of number of municipalities that they consist of (from 5 to over 20). The Board employed a **decision-making mechanism** requiring the majority of 13 out of 15 votes, which was created in a way not to allow any under-region to block the others, but also not to pass any decision without the disapproval of any of them. This model of Board formation and its decision-making model was taken from a successful **previous ICA mechanism** in another subregion in Śląskie [S\_DMayor\_M7], and was accepted without major contestation [S\_Mayor\_M5].

The under-regions were represented in the ITI Board mostly by bigger cities of CS, showing the importance of the **municipal size** in power division. The only exception is the membership of the Ciasna municipality, whose mayor did not trust the cities and demanded a direct involvement in the ITI Board [S\_IB\_3]. Research participants emphasised that the ITI Board was intentionally not elected following a partisan logic, but one called it a '**political jigsaw**' (see Section 5.1). This, however is difficult to be fully verified due to formal impartiality, and informal connections of mayors.

*We took an example from the Rybnik subregion, where it worked very well. They had an association. And the majority of thirteen fifteenths. Which comes from the fact that no sub-region should block something by itself. This is a highly qualified majority. There was 1 vote, where 13 were in favour, 1 against, 1 abstaining [S\_DMayor\_M7]*

*There was not even little contesting of this idea, rather everyone bought it as something obvious, which is not so obvious. And there is peace, as each sub-region has indicated its own representatives, and cannot complain. So in my opinion it took off quite well. [S\_Mayor\_M5]*

Research participants recalled that in the beginning of collaboration, the meetings of the ITI Board tended to be emotional, long, full of mutual accusations and expressions of **mistrust**, which often made it difficult to achieve the required majority. However, they also observed that recent Board meetings proceed in a calm, friendly atmosphere, with a typically unanimous decision-making process. Some of them even called the meeting a formality, as all issues to be decided are earlier discussed and informally approved, before including them in the agenda [S\_Coor\_M5]. The Board plays a crucial role in collaboration, as it meets every month to take



the most important decisions regarding ITI implementation. The **importance of the ITI Board** for local actors showed the fact, that the Board meetings were usually attended by the mayors themselves, instead of sending substitutes from among civil servants.

In addition, in CS the **ITI Consultancy Council** was created, consisting of non-governmental organisations located in all under-regions. However, only one research participant mentioned it in an interview [S\_AC2\_M6], and an ITI Office employee acknowledged its active role in ESF project identification [S\_Fieldnotes]. Overall, data analysis did not show any influence of the ITI Consultancy Council on collaboration among partners.

Overall, the case study analysis showed that the power division costs were much higher in CS. The CS Association member invested substantial time and resources to create relatively complicated structures and decision-making mechanisms, and committed to regular meetings to execute them. This can be explained by a large number of municipalities involved, in particular multiple cities with similar capacity and ambitions, while not everybody could be directly involved in decision-making processes.

On the contrary, in LFA partners limited this type of costs to minimum. The city was given a dominant position, and after ensuring that municipalities will not decide on anything without its approval, lost interest in leading the collaboration. However, it should be highlighted that also due to a less-advanced integration mechanism, and a preselected project selection mode, in LFA there were not many ongoing issues to be decided on, and therefore the importance of the ITI Council was naturally lower. This also shows that collaboration was solely limited to ITI issues, as no other matters regarding collaboration among partners were discussed during the Council meetings.

### **Nominal resources division**

According to the author's knowledge, ICA literature has not specified a single dominant method of resource division used by inter-municipal metropolitan partnerships. The data collected during field research showed that in both regions the initial negotiations over distribution of the ITI funds among particular municipalities were long (around 1.5 years) and intense [S\_Coor\_M2, S\_Mayor\_M1, L\_IB\_2, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M3]. This can be explained by similar initial division risks focusing on conflicting interests of capital/big cities and smaller municipalities (see Section 6.3.2). The latter group did not perceive a division of ITI resources favouring the first group as a fair and legitimate method.

In LFA the negotiations went to the point of **ultimatum** threatened by small municipalities, which stated that with such an unfair division they would not enter collaboration. This would have resulted in not implementing the ITI instrument in the LFA. Consequently, none of the municipalities would have gained access to this source of EU funds and Lublin had to adjust [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_IB\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_3, L\_IB\_M6]. In CS, research participants did not report such dramatic negotiations as in LFA, but the initial negotiations were also assessed as lengthy and with nervous atmosphere as ‘everybody wanted to cut as big piece of this cake as possible’ [S\_Mayor\_M1].

Municipal representatives considered **multiple methods of division**, e.g. proportional to the municipal territory or budget, GDP, unemployment rate, or length of roads [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M5, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_IB\_3]. Some research participants mentioned that there was **no partisan logic** in resource division. [L\_IB\_2]. Instead, thematic analysis shows a number of factors that helped achieve a consensus on the resource division. One of them was **time pressure** imposed by higher-level rules: regional authorities demanded closing negotiations within a concrete timeline, pressed by the Ministry and EU institutions, under the sanction of losing the ITI resources [S\_Coor\_M2, L\_Mayor\_M7]. Another one was the **proposal of resources division perceived as fair** by other collaborators, as described below.

*It started to have such a bad political dimension. These speeches were so strongly political, aimed at some kind of rehearsed success, and nothing really happened, in my opinion it did not have any hallmarks of partnership at the time. Everyone wanted to get some money, it was a tasty morsel, 105 million euros, but no one had an idea how to divide it. But everyone wanted to share, having these 100 different projects ideas. (...) When they met, it was more of a quarrel, scuffle, how much I can get out of it, quickly, because I'm in a hurry. It had been going on for a year, and that Lublin's mayor noticed that he would either take it into his own hands and make some decisions, or they would lose a chance to get this money. [L\_IB\_2]*

*We engaged in these long talks, because we knew that if we did not come to terms with each other and balance these amounts, the marshal would decide it on a top-down basis, and certainly no one would be happy with it. It was such a scare for us that we had to get along and talk it over for a long time, until the last day of the deadline, to agree on it, because if not, there would be consequences for us [S\_Coor\_M2]*

*The compromise was possible through discussion, discussion, and presenting our points of view. Lublin could not have ITI alone, it had to be in partnership with municipalities from the LFA, and none of the municipalities would decide to participate here without any financial benefits. [L\_Mayor\_M6]*

Interestingly, in both regions the agreed method of nominal joint resources division was based on the same method: **proportional to the number of inhabitants** of each municipality. At the initial stage, this was **perceived as fair and the best possible solution** by all municipal representatives in both regions. In LFA, this solution was proposed by a deputy mayor of a small municipality [L\_Fieldnotes]. In CS, the **political leader** suggested it after having

observed that every other method created additional conflicts [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Mayor\_M5]. He acknowledged its flaws, but achieving consensus and building trust was the most important aspect for him and was perceived as the fairest.

*In such a structure, an area like this, this was the best solution, because otherwise a sense of injustice would arise. It would not be possible to build trust and security of municipalities, it is too big. If we were given the freedom to organise ourselves, I think that some key metropolitan projects should be adopted, not much 2-5 located in any under-region, as long as they have a metropolitan function. [S\_Mayor\_M5]*

*I think we were not able to agree and to distribute the money otherwise. We went for the division used in the distribution of European funds at the national level. It was the most objective way. This division is not the case anymore, it has changed completely, and we do indeed adjust the amounts sometimes to needs [S\_Coor\_3].*

The thematic analysis provided a number of reasons why this solution is perceived in this way by research participants in both metropolitan areas:

- **Previous experiences.** This method was used in the past by the Polish government to distribute EU funds to regional operational programmes, so in a way this was a standard applied on a lower-level scale [S\_Coor\_3, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_IB\_3]. In CS, this solution was additionally used in a previous collaborative project including EU funds [S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_Mayor\_M5].
- **Ensured balance.** Cities with the most inhabitants kept the majority of resources, while each of the smaller municipalities had a share in the ITI funds. There was a general agreement that only if there are direct investments in each municipality, collaboration leads to the development of the whole area [S\_Mayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M3]. This opinion was not shared by capital cities' representatives, who argued that inhabitants of suburban municipalities use the infrastructure in the city and benefit from its development [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_IB\_Coor\_M5, L\_IO\_M5, S\_IB\_1, S\_Mayor\_5]. On the other hand, ITI Office representatives in CS stated that without safeguarding funds for smaller municipalities '*the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer*', as cities have higher capacity and are more efficient in EU fund absorption, which stimulates their development even more [S\_IB1, S\_IB\_3].
- **Expected equal treatment.** This is associated with the term 'sustainable development', which in Polish is translated as 'zrównoważony', which literally means 'equalised' and happens to be wrongly used in this way, also by research participants in this study [S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_3, L\_Fieldnotes, S\_Fieldnotes]. Consequently, as ITI had the aim of promoting sustainable urban development, it was argued that the funds should be distributed 'equally' among each and every municipality in the functional areas. This

was strongly promoted by the **political leader** in CS, who highlighted that ‘*we do not approve unequal treatment*’ and highlighted the role and support for smaller municipalities.

- **Financial capacity.** This logic of proportional allocation can be supported by an argument of the financial capacity of municipalities, which is often strongly correlated to the number of inhabitants<sup>43</sup>. Following the argument, even if the smaller municipalities wanted to have a higher share of joint resources, they would not be able to use it due to limited own investment budgets (see Sections 6.2.2, 7.2.4). This aspect is important in the context of EU funds, which require at least 15% of own contribution to each project supported by an EU grant. Naturally, bigger municipalities with higher budgets can afford to contribute to more projects, and gain more EU funds. The relation between municipal budget and acquired EU funds was shown by multiple studies (e.g. Medve-Balint, 2016). In this way, the division per capita is likely to reflect the capacity of municipal investments, and associated ambition of the mayors.

Interestingly, despite the common approval and all the logical reasons explaining the **division method, in both regions it was very informal and even hidden**. The division method was not visible in any official documents, and it was often discussed in a secretive way. It was only discovered thanks to the intensive and long field research, including participation in ITI-related unofficial meetings. In CS, the division was agreed when the higher-level project selection rules had allowed a non-competitive mode, in which the municipalities can preselect the projects to be funded within the ITI instrument [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_IB\_1, S\_IB3, S\_DMayer\_M7]. Although the rule was changed and the project selection required a formal, competitive procedure, municipalities decided to keep the agreed division, and apply for funds only until the limit, not to compete against each other. Consequently, although officially there is an open, competitive procedure, in fact municipalities follow an informal rule of funds distribution.

*There are no lists, because the division is a gentleman agreement. Each municipality knows how much funds it has, knows what it is applying for and does not suddenly pop up with a project, without allocation or reporting anything to others. Everyone tries to keep an eye on their funds. [S\_Coor\_M2]*

Due to the non-competitive mode of project selection in LFA, municipalities could have distributed the funds as they wished. And yet, the proportional rule was treated by many actors as a sensitive issue [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Fieldnotes], and not everybody wanted to discuss it. It was

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<sup>43</sup> Municipal budgets in Poland consist mainly of PIT.

only uncovered after the author's own calculation and observation that Lublin has 64% of LFA inhabitants, and all Lublin's ITI projects sum up to a total of 63% of ITI funds dedicated to LFA. Only when asked directly about this relation, research participants admitted that indeed it was a rule of resources distribution among all municipalities. The actors expressed a suspicion that perhaps national government expected a different, more strategic funds distribution, based on other indicators or the analysis of investment needs of the area [L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_2]. MA representatives claimed that they were not aware of this method of resources division [L\_MA\_1]. For this reason, **there were no tables available in official documents that summarise how much money each municipality will acquire** – this information was hidden in the tables summing up the funds planned for each partnership project.

*It was probably like that in the whole Poland, that they also took into account the size of the commune, the number of inhabitants. But it could never be said officially, because it was frowned upon by the Ministry. And rightly so, because it was supposed to be more related to the fulfilment of needs and the response to problems than with such parity conversion. [L\_IB\_2]*

The thesis does not assess if the proportional method of resource distribution is the most appropriate for bursting metropolitan development. However, it shows that this solution was separately elaborated and approved in the two cases, perceived as fair by all involved actors, and is supported by a rational explanation of financial capacity. It **helped to achieve consensus** despite various conflicting interests, and in this way it was a successful method to facilitate collaboration in the metropolitan areas. The analysis indicates that the proportional method was crucial in establishing integration mechanisms required for ITI implementation.

During ongoing ITI implementation, the agreed division of resources was fixed in LFA due to the official preselection of projects. In CS, the division was gradually **renegotiated** among municipalities, mostly following the **efficiency in EU funds absorption** by particular municipalities, which expressed critical voices of the stiff allocation limits (see Section 5.3.3). These exchanges are described in the next section.

### **Thematic resources division**

The data analysis shows that thematic division was the most frequent subject of negotiations. In the beginning of the collaboration the thematic division created substantial costs in both regions. In CS they continued to be high as the bargaining was ongoing during the stage of implementation, contrary to power and, to some extent, to nominal resource division that, in principle, were not renegotiated. In LFA the thematic division agreed in the beginning was formally locked due to the official preselection of projects.

The data analysis has **not identified a unified method** of thematic division of available resources and suggested that the thematic distribution was subject to more individual negotiation and bargaining process. However, research participants referred to this initial process as confusing due to unclear higher-level rules and full of conflicts resulting from individual election interests of **mayors**. A strong pattern identified in both metropolitan areas was **the order of stages** in the process of thematic resources division, conducted in the beginning of the collaboration [L\_IB\_1, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Coor\_M3, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M8, L\_IB\_4, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_DMayor\_M4]:

1. **Definition of municipal investment priorities** and project ideas without any restrictions,
2. **Start of joint strategy preparation** (continued until the final agreement), discussing common development priorities,
3. **Eligibility check** of the preferred investments with higher-level rules, as some thematic areas were excluded from ITI funding (see Section 6.3.1),
4. **Creating a list of eligible priority projects** within the amount allocated through nominal division, and adjusted to financial capacity of a municipality,
5. **Taking stock:** putting together municipalities' eligible priority projects, comparison of the demands with limits of resources available in each thematic area, to some extent also strategic documents,
6. **Negotiations and bargaining** among mayors, sometimes redefining the scope of projects and adjusting to ongoing changes in higher-level rules on eligibility,
7. **Agreement** on the combination of projects to be funded from ITI, acceptable for all municipalities.

The thematic analysis shows that in both regions, **mayors** were personally involved in all stages of the thematic division and played a crucial role in achieving a consensus in thematic resources division. [S\_AC1\_M6, S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_4, L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M2]. Managing authorities were playing an active role at the eligibility check stage and set a timeline to finish the negotiations that limited the costs of continuing the negotiations [L\_Mayor\_M7]. Municipal ITI Coordinators helped in operational project preparation and collecting data for the joint strategy. The process started before the creation of ITI Offices, which then took over coordination and operational support for all stages starting from strategy preparation (see Section 7.2.1).

In LFA, municipalities initially proposed ideas for over 100 projects, significantly exceeding the available pool [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_1, L\_Mayor\_M2]. Lublin used its strong position to reserve their investments in the most preferred thematic areas, while other municipalities had to adjust and divide the remaining resources among themselves [L\_Coor\_M3, L\_IB\_2]. This substantially limited the manoeuvre for mayors, who often perceived the available funds scope as unattractive (see Sections 5.4.1 and 6.3.2).

An interesting compromise was achieved regarding the most attractive thematic area (local roads), in which resources allowed only for a single meaningful investment. Mayors agreed to devote these resources to a strategically-important link between a national road with the regional airport [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_IB\_1, L\_DMayor\_M1]. This shows an example of strategic thinking of mayors.

*Everyone already knew that they could not exceed their pool. Additionally, there were situations in which one municipality was additionally subsidised. Mayors recognised that the road was not only for Świdnik, but it is a connection of the expressway with the airport, so it will serve everyone. [L\_IB\_1]*

*The city had money framed for itself, and there was no major discussion about their projects. When I joined [the ITI Office], the discussion only concerned how the municipalities would use their part of money. [L\_IB\_2]*

In CS, the discussions first happened within under-regions, and then among their representatives [S\_Coor\_M3, S\_Mayor\_M1]. Research participants recalled particularly intense negotiations regarding the most attractive thematic areas (see Section 6.3.2). Contrary to LFA, they did not observe any particular clashes or privileged negotiation position of particular actors. Perhaps the atmosphere became less tense when the decision about competitive project selection was taken, as the agreed division was not formally binding and therefore was easier to be changed.

This informal character of the thematic division opened the possibility for an interesting phenomenon, discovered during field research. It was an ongoing renegotiation of the thematic scope of projects, which particular municipalities can formally apply for. This process of renegotiation had its own informal rules and by local actors was called a ‘**resources trade**’, which was commented on by all interviewees in CS except the experts assessing projects.

It appeared as the most important subject of negotiations between municipalities at both political and operational level. The ‘trade’ happened when one municipality (buyer) realised that it needs more ITI funds for the realisation of a project in a different thematic area than originally planned, and was searching for a municipality which would not use its limit in this

area (provider). In turn, the buyer offered the same amount of resources from their limit in a different kind of investments, which was fitted in the provider's needs.

The main rule was that there can be a flexible exchange of thematic resources among municipalities from the same under-region. If the exchange involved municipalities from two different parts of the CS, it would need to be approved by the ITI Board [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_IB\_1, S\_IB\_3, S\_Coor\_M2, DMayor\_M3, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_Fieldnotes]. The exchanges were either organised directly, or facilitated by the ITI Office, which helped in matching buyers with potential providers.

*If a commune has reserved resources in a particular thematic area and it does not use them, it must either return these funds, or in the first instance it may exchange it with another commune that needs it. With the consent of the ITI Board, of course, and with the consent of the ITI Office that watches over it. If it is not possible, then unfortunately it has to give up these funds. And then there is a possibility that they remain unused and that other communes, if they have opportunities, can take advantage of it. [S\_Mayor\_M1]*

*I often participate in the meetings of the ITI Board meetings. Then if we meet in person, we also exchange our needs before or after the meeting. For example, we need some additional funds and then we establish some exchange, so we could leave this priority in such amount. Only the question of transferring 1 to 1 of these funds from another priority. [S\_Coor\_M7]*

Resources trade was one of the most time-consuming activities during ITI implementation, and so it constituted one of the bigger costs of municipalities involved in collaboration. Three political factors can be identified to have played a role in shaping these costs. First, a number of research participants highlighted **mayors' entrepreneurship and negotiation skills** [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_3].

Second, some municipalities started fully using their limits, the resources trade started also facilitating the verification of the ability to use municipality's share. If the monitoring conducted by the ITI Office (see Section 6.4.1) showed that a municipality is not progressing fast enough, the **more efficient municipalities** started pressing on increasing their allocation with the unused funds (see Section 5.3.3).

Third, a number of research participants highlighted the role of the **political and administrative leaders** in terms of facilitating exchanges and building consensus despite conflicting interests [S\_Coor\_M5, S\_DMayor\_M7, S\_IB\_3]. This was confirmed during the meetings attended within participatory observation: the ITI Board and a meeting of mayors and ITI coordinators of one of the under-regions. Both to a large extent were focusing on the 'resources trade', and were attended by mayors or deputy mayors of the majority of municipalities, including the capital city. This shows the importance and high level of these



negotiations. In both meetings, the leaders proactively facilitated discussions and sometimes suggested solutions to occurring questions, requests and conflicting interests. An example is presented below.

*Notes taken during an ITI Board meeting. Chairman: 'The municipality of Ogrodzieniec called to ask if there would be more funds for his commune for asbestos removal, because he has an exceptionally large amount and the allocated allocation will not suffice. Do we want to help the Ogrodzieniec?' Discussion starts, particular municipality representatives form suggestions: 'let everybody contribute with some % of their allocation', 'We are able to give away 1 million'. 'Our mayor talked with Ogrodzieniec, because it is not known how much we will have left. Chairman: 'Better to discuss it now, so that there is no 'guerrilla warfare', someone may have some left-over money.' Someone suggests: 'Let them apply for a 50% co-financing, and then we find out how much is left, we will increase it to 85% '. The discussion finishes with a agreement that the ITI office will channel this: indicate with whom they can match, calculate the euro exchange rate and how much is left is whose allocation. [S\_Fieldnotes]*

*Sometimes it is also a matter of some people, a leader, some great charisma, maybe the chairman of the Board, who influences others in a way that there is no such quarrels. There has never been any real argument on the Board. And there are also difficult matters. [S\_Coor\_M5]*

'Resources trade' had also interesting **consequences** showed in the thematic analysis. In a traditional, individual process of applying for EU funds, municipalities do not need to consult on how much they will apply for. They compete with other municipalities, and the best project wins. From this perspective, collaboration **limited competition** among municipalities, but at the same time limited their authority in deciding on their own investment plans. However, the indirect effect of the informal rule of exchanging thematic resources was also the learning process about mutual investment plans. The metropolitan authority monitored the progress of preparation of particular projects, and could facilitate potential partnerships among municipalities. Finally, the informal procedure of renegotiation in a way prevented opportunistic behaviour, as more efficient municipalities had an opportunity to raise their share in resources without breaking a collaborative rule.

### 8.1.3. Enforcement costs

The ICA literature directly associates the enforcement costs with defection risks. The assumption is that partners seek a way to exclude the potential opportunistic behaviour of individuals, in order to guarantee the fair resources division and materialise the expected collective benefit. The literature suggests that the costs are higher in collaboration regarding more advanced ICA dilemmas. This is supported by this research, as analysed case studies focused on coordination, and did not create high enforcement costs. Nevertheless, in both regions mechanisms of sanctions were created in order to execute the agreed resources division.

The thematic analysis revealed that metropolitan areas differed in terms of the character of created sanctions. In LFA they had a solely formal character and were imposed by the higher-level institutions, while in CS they were mostly informal mechanisms among partnering municipalities. This difference was determined by the project selection mode imposed by **higher-level institutions** (see Section 5.4.1). Consequently, enforcement costs were higher in LFA in the beginning of the process, as municipalities had to come up with a division and prepare projects that would not be changed afterwards, while CS municipalities did not have to prepare this level of details. However, during implementation LFA partners did not have any enforcement costs as they excluded the possibility of opportunistic behaviour, while in CS the defection risks were gradually growing (see Section 6.3.3), which produced enforcement costs.

### **Formal sanctions**

In LFA, the two most important mechanisms ensuring the agreed division and preventing opportunistic behaviour were:

- 1) **The project preselection procedure**, which stated that all ITI projects had to have a predefined scope and budget. Consequently, it guaranteed that none of the municipalities could exceed the limit of allocated EU funds;
- 2) **The project partnership form**, which cemented the funds division among smaller municipalities, and additionally required coordinating their investments, at least in terms of thematic scope, formal preparations and the time of realisation.

In CS, the first mechanism was excluded by the European Commission, which did not agree for a non-competitive mode of project selection. As for partnership projects, they were also not imposed by the regional authority, and not chosen by municipalities themselves. As explained in Sections 5.2 and 5.4.1, a number of partnerships were initially planned, but considering the risk of delays and different stage of preparation of particular parts, mayors of involved municipalities decided to apply for their share of funds separately. This limited the formal binding character of joint resource division, as there was no guarantee that other municipalities will apply only for the agreed funds. However, research participants did not acknowledge this as an issue.

*There was a male conversation between mayors: as the deadline is approaching, and we had not yet fully agreed on [formal details] and there are more and more problems. We decided that everyone applies separately, and then we will see, because if we continue like this, we will not agree on anything and in the end we will not put together the project at all. It was an economic conversation between mayors, presenting the*

*situation, "for" and "against", the problems ahead. It was not that there were conflicts, but a question of presenting the real situation of this project and the real threats. [S\_Coor\_M2]*

### **Informal sanctions**

Informal mechanisms employed to protect the approved resources division appeared only in the CS, as LFA members were already sanctioned formally. They had a form of mutual pressures among mayors, up to a threat of excluding from the CS Association, which however did not happen [S\_Fieldnotes]. Research participants described two actual cases of opportunistic behaviour among municipalities and an immediate reaction of the other partners. First, a number of local actors recalled a few cases of two municipalities applying for more EU funds than the agreed limit [S\_Mayor\_M5, S\_IB\_3, S\_Fieldnotes]. Informal pressure resulted in the mayors apologising to the whole ITI Board, and giving away the exceeded amount in a different thematic area [S\_Fieldnotes], which was marked in the IT monitoring system (see Section 7.2.1). According to research participants, such a situation never happened again.

*There were such cases, but very isolated. It was balanced through negotiation and diplomacy. They realised that this was not the right way, that disturbing this level of trust would benefit them once, but they would get a revenge 10 times. Because another time somebody could take their share, and such a fratricidal fight always brings losses. So most of the time it ended with the proposition that they would give way resources in another field to compensate. Either it happened at the expense of other plans in the same project or by giving up further projects. [S\_IB\_3]*

*Two or three times Katowice made an attempt to fund their projects using the funds that someone else should get, i.e. poorer cities, etc., without agreement. But I liked it too, because normally ITI Board is such a quiet community, and they woke up without any interference from me, I did not have to inform anyone, warn anyone, everyone noticed. Almost everyone spoke, most of them were critical and said that these are unacceptable practices. And it was over, maybe one more smaller attempt, and now there is peace. [S\_Mayor\_M5]*

However, during participatory observation ITI Office employees mentioned a different kind of opportunistic behaviour: a number of municipalities gave their recommendation for an external organisation's project to be funded by the ITI, exceeding their allocation (see the next Section). Although they did not apply for more money directly, they broke the rule of allocated funds. It is however unknown what the sanction was in these cases. Nevertheless, imposing informal sanctions following opportunistic behaviour created moderate enforcement costs in CS, in particular for the mayors.

*So far, we follow the rules very strictly, nobody takes anything from anyone. We are talking. First in under-regions, then in a the whole Subregion. Exchanges are possible. Someone needs this, someone else needs that. We get along, this is the pillar. If someone undermines these rules, there will be no trust. [S\_DMAYor\_M7]*

The observation during fieldwork confirms that although many actors wanted to exceed their limits, they first engaged in the '**resource trade**', offering an exchange or asking for a favour.

Another way was exercising an informal pressure on the municipalities that were not efficient in funds absorption, in order to persuade them from their share in resources. This was supported by the **time pressure** of EU financial perspective, and the Silesian **regional identity**. The two combined factors encouraged actors to resign from their share if it was likely that they would not use it.

On one hand, this was not easy for mayors as it was likely to cause criticism by their political opponents and media as a missed opportunity, especially before local elections (see Section 5.1 and 6.3.2). On the other, many research participants highlighted that it is worthwhile to invest the ITI funds in the CS rather than anywhere else, and therefore it was better to give away their share to a partner municipality rather than risk that the money will go to another region (see Section 6.2.2).

*There are times when someone would be willing to submit a larger project, but they do not have enough allocation, and they see that someone else has no idea for it yet and is blocking the funds. These issues are raised on the ITI Board and discussed. (...) It would be foolish if this money was simply not used. Here it is also the role of the ITI Office, it is true that up to a certain point you can agree on resources allocation, but there cannot be situations that we return EU funds, especially if someone else could implement a good project.*  
[S\_Coor\_M5]

#### **8.1.4. Joint project assessment costs**

This category of costs is directly related to the risks of non-strategic joint projects (see Section 7.4.1). Field research showed a number of mechanisms introduced by higher-level institutions as well as initiated by the partnering municipalities, in order to ensure the maximum quality of the projects and their strategic coordination. There were more diverse mechanisms created in CS due to additional risks related to non-strategic projects by external organisations. This research does not assess if the created mechanisms successfully ensured the strategic character of ITI projects, but for sure they created costs for many involved actors: managing authorities, ITI Office employees and independent experts assessing the projects, ITI coordinators preparing the projects following the additional criteria, and in CS also mayors discussing external project recommendation, as described below.

The key identified elements of ITI projects assessment included quality assessment, assessment of compliance with ITI strategy, and control, evaluation and monitoring. All three elements will be analysed in detail below.

## Quality assessment

The main burden of ITI project assessment was on managing authority, which conducted the formal check of basic requirements of projects to be financed from EU funds. As for quality assessment, there are two aspects that in particular address the risks described in Section 6.3.4: assessment by external experts and additional ‘complementarity criterion, both described below. Regardless of how successful these procedures were in ensuring a strategic character of ITI projects, it produced **significant costs associated to this procedure**. Among others, research participants complained about the significant number of attachments required to prove the scope and preparedness of the projects (in LFA some the partnership projects had over 500 attachments), and the time needed to prepare them [L\_Coor\_M4, S\_Fieldnotes].

First, the quality assessment of each project was performed by two (in CS) or three (in LFA) **external experts**, in order to ensure thematic expertise and objectivity. Each expert needs to sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality before being selected for assessing a particular project call. In both regions there were trainings for experts, so that they meet and understand all criteria and rules of assessment similarly and avoid differing interpretations of ambiguous criteria [L\_Expert\_1, S\_Expert\_1, S\_Expert\_2, S\_Fieldnotes]. They had to justify in writing every point that they cut from the maximum amount in case of protests by applicants. Moreover, if their draft assessments were too different, they were encouraged to communicate, understand each other’s justification for particular grades, and agree on a more matching assessment. If this was not possible, or in case of formal complaints by unsatisfied applicants, a third expert was asked for an assessment from scratch [S\_MA\_2, S\_MA\_3, L\_MA\_3].

The number of formal appeals regarding project assessment was an indicator of politicisation of EU funds distribution in some studies (e.g. Surubaru, 2017b). However, in this case field research did not include this source of information, as it was irrelevant for the non-competitive procedure in LFA (no excluded beneficiaries), while in CS the early stage of implementation also limited the number of appeals. Nevertheless, involvement of experts in the quality assessment shows the intention to ensure an objective assessment, but also a manoeuvre of influence of the institutions organising the assessment and employing experts.

The perception of experts’ independence differed between the metropolitan areas. In CS research participants did not express doubts about it, both regarding experts employed by the managing authority and the ITI Office, or expressed a positive opinion regarding their expertise and objectivity [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_IB\_3]. One research participant had a doubt regarding

impartiality of experts appointed by the Marshal's Office, but at the same time observed that ITI takes at least some power from the Marshal to the CS Association responsible for half of the assessment, and in this way the assessment is less affected by higher-level politics [S\_AC1\_M6]. Also participatory observation delivered evidence in this regard by witnessing the process of **random selection** of experts from a list of available experts.

*Projects for funding are selected according to this ranking list, so it is the Voivodeship Board that decides that these projects are selected for funding. However, it is indeed a rigid material that the Board has absolutely no influence on and nothing will change here once the ranking list is closed. [S\_MA\_2]*

In LFA, experts assessing ERDF projects were employed by the managing authority, and a number of research participants suggested that their **choice depends on the Marshal** and is politically-driven [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_IB\_2]. This was confirmed by the ITI Office and managing authority representatives, who denied random selection and admitted that the experts are chosen by the Voivodeship Board from the list of available persons [L\_MA\_2, L\_IB\_4]. Moreover, during participatory observation a number of ITI Office employees provided an example of one - in their opinion - non-strategic ITI project, which was initially assessed negatively, but following the pressures on fast absorption it was accepted [L\_IB\_3, L\_IB\_1, L\_Fieldnotes]. This may suggest that the assessment of this ITI project was not objective.

*These experts followed instructions, I think so. No matter if they were randomly selected or not, they certainly did not follow the knowledge and principle of evaluating applications, We have evaluation cards and we can see how the experts acted. [L\_Mayor\_M2]*

In both regions, **additional quality criteria** were created for ITI projects. The most important from the perspective of assessing the strategic value of ITI projects was a criterion promoting '**complementary**' projects. This was the effect of national and regional guidelines for ITI implementation, which aimed to create an operational requirement to prove the 'integrated character' of projects funded through ITI. During the assessment process, municipality applications for ITI project funding were awarded extra points if they proved that their projects were complementary with others in the subregion.

Initially, it was unclear to municipalities what the national and regional authorities introducing these guidelines meant by 'complementarity' [S\_Coor\_M8]. During the implementation process, regional managing authorities in both regions specified operational definitions of 'complementarity'. The aim was to motivate coordination, in order to achieve coherence of the investments within ITI, create added value and synergy effects: a greater impact of coordinated projects, than a simple sum of the effects of individual projects. In LFA, the MA used a

definition based on thematic coordination, as described above, and was assessed by the experts. In CS, the MA specified the following categories of complementarity:

- **Functional.** When the actions/projects aim at solving the same problem. This includes both the territorial and functional coordination as described above.
- **Inter-fund.** Complementarity of types of interventions supported by different EU funds: European Social Fund investment in social and labour market issues and European Regional Development Fund investment in economic change, infrastructure development, research and innovation etc.
- **Inter-level.** Complementarity between national- and regional-level projects
- **Intra-Programme.** ITI complementarity with other investments from the ROP
- **External.** Complementarity of ITI with investments carried out from other external sources (e.g. EIB, Norwegian mechanism)

These operational definitions led to a superficial application of complementarity by research participants when preparing their projects. The dominant understanding of complementarity by local actors was related to the location of multiple projects in the same metropolitan area (in CS) and thematic coherence (LFA). This was criticised by one of the experts assessing ITI projects, who claimed that municipalities often abused the term ‘complementarity’.

*In practice, these are simply distant projects. It is difficult to look for synergy between them, because they certainly have the same subject, substantively concern the same (...), and it's great, maybe on the scale of the entire subregion they will improve the situation, but impact in terms of local complementarity is completely invisible. [S\_Expert\_2]*

This shallow understanding of complementarity was used in formal situations, as it was easy to provide evidence. However, it is important to note that when there was no need to use the word complementarity, local actors provided concrete examples of deeper coordination gains through collaboration (see Section 6.1).

### **Assessment of compliance with ITI strategy**

In both metropolitan areas the managing authority introduced a separate level of assessment, performed by the ITI Offices. They suggested criteria related to how closely particular projects contribute to realising objectives of the ITI Strategies. In LFA this assessment was a formality due to the non-competitive project selection mode, as all preselected projects were discussed and accepted by the managing authority during the preparation of the joint ITI Strategy [L\_MA\_1, L\_MA\_2, L\_IB\_1].

*In practice this strategic assessment has no impact on the assessment of the project. Let's be honest, all the projects have already been included in the ITI strategy, and pass the assessment successfully. I think that this assessment of compliance with the [ITI] strategy actually made sense and had a big impact in the first phase of project preselection. But now, in my opinion, it is only a pro-form assessment. [L\_MA\_2]*

In CS, following the risks of external organisations applying for non-strategic projects, the ITI Office successfully lobbied to include additional criteria promoting projects prepared or recommended by the CS Association members. Field research identified three crucial criteria [S\_Coor\_M2, S\_IB\_1, S\_MA\_1, S\_MA\_2, S\_MA\_3, S\_DMayor\_M4, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M7, S\_Fieldnotes]:

1. **Criterion granting extra points to all ITI members**, which was designed to limit the risk of external organisations' project interfering in the approved resources division. This criterion was negotiated with the European Commission, which initially did not want to approve the preference of particular applicants. However, the Association argued that the ITI was meant to provide more power to local actors, who created the CS strategy, and in order to fulfil it, ITI members need to have an opportunity to realise consequent investments;
2. **Criteria related to the 'project recommendation' mechanism**, created to coordinate municipal investments planned to be funded from ITI with external organisations' plans. Recommendations could be granted for a project that is approved by single ITI member, or the whole ITI Board. In this way such ITI members got to know about external projects being prepared in their municipalities, and could decide whether it goes along its strategy. If so, the recommendation given meant that the municipality agrees to resign from its limit in a particular thematic area if the project is selected. CS Association lobbied for including a formal project selection criteria, which granted extra points to recommended projects. An interesting mechanism was that the ITI Board's recommendation was worth more points than a single municipality's. In this way, the Association promoted collective decision-making and sharing information and on investment plans in the area;
3. **Criteria promoting smaller municipalities**, which followed the Association's intention to promote development in the whole CS. It played a role when numerous external organisations applied for a grant, it was more likely that the investments will be realised in a smaller municipality rather than a city. The criteria differed depending on the thematic scope of the project call.



Mayors and ITI Coordinators assessed these mechanisms very positively, as they clearly protected their municipal and joint interests as a CS. They also met a moderate understanding of the managing authority and experts assessing the projects [S\_MA\_1, S\_MA\_3, S\_Expert\_1, S\_Expert\_2]. A number of ITI Office employees argued that in some thematic areas, from the strategic point of view, it is better to support a few smaller municipal projects than one big, especially external, e.g. thermo modernisation of communal buildings in a number of municipalities rather than a single hospital in the capital city [L\_IB\_1, L\_IB\_3]. This showed that they had **a clear vision** on how to approach the metropolitan development, promoted also by the political leader (see Section 6.2.1), and effectively lobbied to adjust the ITI project selection criteria to this vision.

Again, it can be discussed to what extent this supports the strategic value of ITI projects, but surely it **created costs for various involved actors** to collect necessary information and assess projects regarding the agreed additional criteria. As the project recommendation was issued by the member municipality or the ITI Board, the costs were partially taken by mayors. Other criteria involved resources of ITI coordinators preparing the projects, as well as ITI Office, managing authority and experts assessing the projects and managing processes involved.

*This criterion, of course, strongly favours the members of the CS Association and can be perceived as biased. However, taking into account that in principle these funds are dedicated to the CS, I think that this criterion is the most correct and justified. The European Commission also wanted such decision-making on the allocation of funds to happen in a given subregion, so that the entities at the lower level can decide on what they want to allocate their funds. [S\_MA\_1]*

*The European Commission did not agree to this non-competitive procedure, so we came to a situation where these municipal authorities had no influence on the projects that are being implemented. And the projects of beneficiaries other than municipal authorities cannot be leading, because then we will not solve the problems [diagnosed in the ITI Strategy]. Therefore we have written and proposed criteria that reward members of this Association or reward projects that have been recommended by the Association. [S\_IB\_1]*

### **Control, evaluation and monitoring**

In both regions control was conducted by national authorities and had a scope typical for institutions managing EU funds. Evaluation was conducted both by managing authorities in each region and national authorities. As for monitoring, it was a task delegated by managing authority to ITI Offices, but had a different format in each metropolitan area. In CS, this was done through the IT monitoring system and annual reports. Despite the costs needed to feed data into the system, a number of research participants acknowledged that it is helpful to realise what others are doing, and sometimes got inspired or managed to coordinate their projects more strategically (see Sections 6.1, 7.1.1).

In LFA, the ITI Office did study visits regarding to projects in which 30, 60 and 85% of funds were contracted [L\_IB\_4, L\_MA\_2]. Considering the importance of study visits in this research for identifying non-strategic projects this could be a way of their detection, however it is hard to imagine that ITI Office would notify the managing authorities about it, considering the pressure on fast ITI absorption and accountability relations putting the ITI Office depending on mayors. Moreover, ITI Office in LFA demanded monthly reports on the activity of ITI Coordinators, which, however, was not acknowledged by research participants as a useful tool but rather as an unnecessary burden and costing coordinators' time [L\_Fieldnotes, L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M7, L\_Coor\_M9]. It was rather a tool of the Ministry to check what ITI Coordinators do while the absorption is not progressing.

*If we are to have control on the one hand from the ITI office, on the other hand from the marshal's office, it will also be a burden for us. I am not afraid of control, I believe that they always contribute something, because it is better to eliminate something beforehand, a person also learns from mistakes, but each time such control must be handled. This is the time of document preparation. [L\_Coor\_M7]*

## **8.2. Integration mechanisms of ITI implementation**

The ICA literature identifies a variety of the forms of collective action that the municipalities can choose, depending on the scope of collaboration (from narrow to complex) and enforcement method (from bottom-up initiatives or embeddedness to imposed authority). The Framework suggests that transaction costs are the highest in the most complex and imposed mechanisms, following the high decision and autonomy costs that partners have to commit to. The Framework helps to visualise the difference between the integration mechanisms chosen in both metropolitan areas (see Figure 28). This corresponds with the analysis of transaction costs analysis in the previous section, which showed that the decision-making processes were more complex and time-consuming in CS.

Figure 28 Visualisation of the CS and LFA integration mechanisms within the ICA Framework

Enforcement method Scope of collaboration	Embeddedness	Contracts	Delegated Authority	Imposed Authority
	Encompassing Complex Collective			
Intermediate Multilateral		Association of Municipalities and Counties of CS		
Narrow Single Purpose Bilateral		Inter-municipal Agreement of LFA		

---Autonomy Costs+++

Source: Own elaboration adapted from Tavares, Feiock, 2018

The process of choosing integration mechanism differed in the metropolitan areas. In LFA the agreement form was chosen by Lublin and not questioned by the other municipalities [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_IB\_1, L\_Coor\_M5], due to the **dominant position of the capital city** and the shared will for Lublin to take over the majority of responsibilities and tasks (see Sections 7.2.2 and 8.1.2). In CS there were discussions regarding which form would be more suitable, as the opinions varied [S\_MA\_1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_Coor\_M7]. Here also the decisive argument was the power division, as the polycentric character of the area provided incentives for collective decision-making body and shared responsibility model (see Section 7.2.2 and 8.1.2).

*There has never been any discussion on which form would be better. Perhaps because it was the first collaboration like this, and the city immediately took leadership. From the very beginning, as soon as ITI started to be discussed, it was assigned to employees of the city hall. [L\_Coor\_M5]*

*It took a while before we chose the right form, because lawyers in each municipality had their opinions, which form is more favourable. When we agreed on all the amounts and so on, then we established this association, elected the authorities and then started preparing documents.*

### Future prospects

Moreover, the collected data allow to show the research participants' perception of the scope and form of **future collaboration**, based on the experiences from the chosen integration mechanisms so far.

The metropolitan areas differed in terms of future prospects of collaboration. In LFA, according to many actors, including the political leader, this depended on the availability of EU funds for this purpose. A number of smaller municipalities argued that due to their limited financial

capacity, without the EU funding they would not be able to engage in joint investments [L\_DMayor\_M1, L\_Mayor\_M6, S\_IB\_1, S\_Coor\_M3]. On the contrary, in CS the continuation of collaboration among municipalities was perceived as obvious and necessary [S\_Mayor\_M1, S\_Coor\_M2, S\_MA\_1, S\_DMayor\_M3, S\_Coor\_M5, S\_IB\_2, S\_AC1\_M6].

The successful ongoing implementation of the ITI was attributed, in part, to this as well as the recent legal proclamation of a new administrative unit – the Gornoslasko-Zaglebiowska Metropolis (see Section 3.1). It was the only official authority at the metropolitan level in Poland and was created by the majority of municipalities belonging to the Central Subregion. The metropolis was created after a long process of lobbying the national government and demonstrated the will of municipalities to address problems that go beyond their administrative boundaries. The act of law was ready, its Board and Chair were elected, and the new public authority was going to operate the following year [S\_Fieldnotes]. It was unclear whether the two institutions should function in parallel, but the sense of collaboration in the metropolitan area was not questioned.

As for the preferred form of future collaboration, research participants in both metropolitan areas tended to **prefer the current integration mechanism**. In CS nobody claimed that an agreement would be better, but they also had a perspective of future collaboration of the majority of CS municipalities in the officially proclaimed Metropolis. In LFA, only a few ITI Coordinators observed that an association would be more suitable [L\_Coor\_M5, L\_Coor\_M7], while the majority did not see the benefits from the change, and preferred to keep the agreement [L\_Mayor\_M2, L\_Coor\_M4, LMayor\_M7]. ITI Office employees abstained from expressing a direct opinion on this issue. The lack of political support for a more advanced collaboration form was clear.

Additionally, a number of research participants were reluctant towards transferring the agreement into an association, because of **capacity constraints** (membership fee, the need to fund the secretariat and manage HR, legal and procurement issues by the new institution, while now everything is covered by the city) [L\_DMayor\_M1, S\_IB\_1, S\_Coor\_M3]. This fear was expressed after the government suggested that all ITI might need to change their form into an association, a more advanced form of inter-municipal collaboration allowing more independence and activity [L\_Fieldnotes].

*At this point, we try to be neutral about it and treat all partners equally. And here politics has no strength. And in an association .. I don't know how it would work, right? Because there would have to be a board, consisting of mayors, composed of a few people, so there would have to be elections... [L\_IB\_6]*

Another aspect was related to different **accountability relations** resulting from the integration mechanisms, e.g. the conflict of interest of ITI Office employees in LFA, who were directly employed by the city of Lublin but had to stay loyal to all agreement members (see Section 6.2.1). On the other hand, ITI Office employees and managing authority representative observed that the agreement produced **less administrative costs** for all agreement members apart from Lublin, as all legal, budgetary, communication, HR, IT and other services were provided by the city administration, while in the association in CS all had to be delivered by the ITI Office employees or were outsourced [L\_IB\_2, L\_MA\_1, L\_IB\_4, L\_IB\_6]. This however was not treated as a burden by research participants in CS.

This difference can be also explained by **spill-over initiatives** in the form of non-ITI funded joint projects, acknowledging the need for a broader joint development of the metropolitan area. In CS, municipalities already engaged in joint activities not funded from ITI, e.g. the transport study described earlier in this chapter, which is partially financed by municipal fees. They also prepared post-2020 analysis of potential scope of collaboration. These aspects show that municipalities see benefits in collaboration even without ITI funding, although the fiscal instrument definitely boosts the possibilities of joint actions and investments, and provides structure and incentives to meet regularly at both political and operational levels. This, in turn, builds trust and strengthens future prospects of collaboration.

These kind of projects were not developed nor discussed in LFA, where collaboration focused solely on ITI implementation. This has major implications for choosing the integration mechanism – as benefits are limited, there is no need for a deeper collaboration, so a preferred form is the easiest available. This is strengthened by the city/municipalities clash, which perceive the benefits in different terms, but none of the actors sees the possibility of achieving true collective benefit through ITI. They collaborate to achieve individual interests. Issues like a collective image etc. did not appear.

*How can I persuade the mayors to an association, if they do not care about partnership, but only about money for roads and pavements [L\_IB\_2]*

However, beyond the formal partnerships around ERDF-funded projects, a number of municipalities volunteered to partner-up with a few others to jointly apply for ESF funding within ITI. This followed a competitive procedure, and municipalities were not obliged to engage in inter-municipal collaboration in this regard. The partnering process was then based on a successful collaboration, joint interests and acknowledging a real benefit from joining

forces. Municipalities did not engage, however, in any project related to LFA development that would be funded from other sources than ITI or regional operational programmes in general.

Moreover, a number of research participants highlighted that there are areas in which inter-municipal collaboration is very much needed, if not necessary. One of them is transport integration, e.g. in terms of ensuring public transport to the outskirts. Currently this process is managed by the Lublin Transport Authority, based on bilateral agreements with other municipalities asking for the service, usually these sharing a boarder with Lublin. There is not any plan of creating a coherent public transport system for the whole agglomeration. Another area noticed by municipalities as potentially beneficial on top of what is currently done under ITI, is a joint tourism offer. They highlight that single municipalities find it difficult to reach tourists visiting Lublin, and see a potential in sharing information about each other's attractions, to encourage tourists to visit more places and to stay longer in LFA. Other areas include joint planning of localization of investors, spatial planning and further broadband development.

Although the municipalities do not engage in many non-ITI funded joint activities, they recently expressed the will of continuing the collaboration by jointly preparing strategic documents, defining potential future collaboration areas and objectives. The document includes the hope of acquiring EU funds for realizing joint objectives, but it seems that at least some of the agreed investments are important enough to be realised even without the external support. Still, at least keeping a joint administrative body at the agglomeration level seems to be crucial in order to ensure efficient collaboration, either funded by EU or other external or internal funds.

### **8.3. Summary**

This Chapter aimed at exploring the impact of the political factors identified in the previous chapter on two aspects of collaboration from the ICA Framework: transaction costs and integration mechanisms, involved in joint ITI implementation. This section illustrates the key results of the analysis. In general, it showed major differences in terms of the extent of costs in the two metropolitan areas in the beginning and during ongoing collaboration, and how particular factors shaped them. It also revealed differences in choosing the integration mechanisms and approach towards the form and extent of continuing collaboration in the future.

The assessment of the scope of transaction costs (see overall results in Table 39), shows that in the beginning of collaboration (at the programming stage), transaction costs were overall comparably high in both metropolitan areas. During the ITI implementation the costs dropped,

to a higher extent in LFA as the higher-level rules eliminated negotiation and enforcement costs at this stage.

**Information costs** were initially high in both metropolitan areas, corresponding with the high incoordination risks. The costs involved delivering information on higher-level rules of ITI implementation by the ITI Office from the managing authority to all partnering municipalities, exchanging strategic information exchange among mayors during the initial planning of the projects to be funded from the ITI, and operational information exchange among ITI coordinators following up the project preparations. The costs dropped during ongoing ITI collaborations due to the clarification of the higher-level rules, and establishment of communication channels that increased transparency, strengthened personal networks of mayors and civil servants, built trust among them, and consequently limited the time needed for information exchange at all levels. A difference at this stage was related to the cost of acquiring data on the metropolitan area, which applied to a higher extent to CS.

**Negotiation costs** were already initially higher in CS, mostly due to the higher power division risks and consequent longer time needed to achieve consensus in this regard. As for nominal resource division, the costs could have been lower in CS, as there was not a formal requirement to allocate ITI funds, and municipalities could compete for them in an open project call. However, they decided to engage in time-consuming negotiations and coordinate the resources division informally. Interestingly, in both metropolitan areas partners agreed on the same informal method of resource division, which was perceived as fair: proportionally to the number of inhabitants in each municipality. In both cases, this method was a sensitive issue, not announced officially in any documents. Thematic resources division did not have a specific method and was the subject of lengthy bargaining between mayors. Negotiation costs were eliminated in LFA during the ongoing ITI collaboration, as the division was officially settled in a non-competitive project selection mode. In CS, it had an informal character and was subject of ongoing exchanges, called by research participants 'resources trade'. This process is the main reason for keeping negotiation costs in CS at the medium level.

**Enforcement costs** were the lowest among all types, following the lowest defection risks. In LFA, the initial costs were higher due to the need of official establishment of project partnerships and approving all preselected projects. This procedure eliminated enforcement costs during ongoing ITI implementation, despite growing risks of opportunistic behaviour among partners. In CS, enforcement costs stayed at a low level, as the partners expressed

general approval of the division mechanism, and engaged in constant negotiations if they wanted to amend them – without breaking the rules of collaboration. Despite a few single cases of a municipality breaking the rule without agreement of others, the ‘resources trade’ mechanism limited the costs of actual enforcement despite growing risks of opportunistic behaviour under the pressure of time, as described in the previous chapter.

**The costs of joint projects assessment** were similar in both metropolitan areas, but that happened at different stages: in LFA mostly at the initial stage, while in CS gradually during ITI implementation. The difference mostly stage from the project selection mode, as in LFA partners had to agree on the scope of projects already at the programming stage, and the Managing Authority conducted their initial assessment during the official preselection. This process was moved in time in CS due to the competitive procedure and gradual project submission. In both metropolitan areas, the main processes producing costs in this category were quality assessment of projects conducted by external experts and assessment of the compliance with the ITI strategy, conducted by the ITI Office employees (in LFA for ERDF projects) or experts employed by them (in CS and LFA for ESF projects). Moreover, ITI Offices were responsible for monitoring the ITI funds absorption, which was developed to a much bigger extent in CS, producing consequently higher costs during ongoing ITI implementation in this regard. Control and evaluation was conducted by regional and national authorities.

Table 39 Assessment of the scope of transaction costs changing over time

Stage	Information		Negotiation		Enforcement		Joint project assessment	
	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS
Initially	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
During ITI implementation	Low	Medium	None	Medium	None	Low	Low	Medium

The analysis revealed **38 factors** in all categories impacting the transition costs involved in joint ITI implementation. Within this, 27 were related to actors characteristics (see Table 40), and 11 to existing institutions (see Table 41). The tables illustrate the main results of the analysis, including the extent of particular factors’ impact (scores from 0 to 3), and its character (highlighted in green for positive and orange for negative impact).



**In general**, the majority of factors affected negotiation and information costs, which highlights the complexity of aspects shaping the two main activities, consuming substantial resources of collaborating actors. Among the actors, the highest impact was exerted by leaders and mayors, while among existing institutions, the higher-level rules shaped the costs to the highest extent. Interestingly, none of the actors in LFA influenced enforcement costs, as they were eliminated by the project preselection rule, cementing power division. Joint project assessment was also not affected by many of the identified factors, which can be explained with the mostly procedural, administrative character of this process with a limited contribution of collaborating actors. It also suggests their relatively little commitment to ensuring the strategic character of ITI projects to the metropolitan development. This was present to a higher extent in CS, as it was part of the ITI Office's tasks.

The **leaders** mostly contributed to limiting the costs of negotiations, with the exception of the political leader in LFA, whose lack of support for smaller municipalities' interests extended the negotiations of resources division. The ITI directors' attention to joint and other municipalities' interests had the highest overall positive impact limiting the costs of information, and to a lower extent negotiations, as they were actively committed to ensure transparency, equal access of information. An important differing factor was the initial support for the political leader, which significantly limited the time needed to agree on power division in LFA in comparison to CS. The support for administrative leaders was built over time, which created minor extra negotiations costs at the initial stage. Leaders of particular joint projects increased the costs of information as there were more aspects to coordinate at the strategic and operational levels, but it potentially increased the quality and strategic character of these projects.

In both regions, **mayors** were clearly the most involved in negotiations and bargaining, and most factors related to them increased associated costs, e.g. anomalies between the capital city and other municipalities, initial limited level of trust (both slightly higher in LFA), and their individual charisma and ambition (slightly higher in CS). What made a difference is the number of mayors involved in collaboration, which increased the costs in CS, and their support for metropolitan development, the low degree of which increased costs in LFA. In both regions, their personal networks limited the costs of information, negotiation and in CS also enforcement costs. This shows how many processes shaping collaboration and ITI implementation are happening within informal relations of mayors, as they built long-lasting reciprocity relations, discuss strategic coordination of municipal investments, and exercise peer pressure on each other preventing opportunistic behaviour. This mattered especially in CS, as the sanctions for

potential defection had an informal character and were exercised mostly by mayors, and their individual interests, ambitions and capacity of absorbing EU funds increased the will to renegotiate the agreed division of resources and creating both negotiation and enforcement costs for the partners.

A high positive impact on transaction costs was exerted by the **ITI Offices**. In both metropolitan areas they got delegated tasks related to information sharing and managing the main communication channels at both strategic and operational levels. Over time, this significantly limited the time and administrative burden needed to exchange information, increased transparency and led to building trust among partners, which in turn limited the costs involved in negotiations. In CS, the ITI Office had also a medium impact on limiting enforcement costs as they were often facilitating possible exchanges within the ‘resources trade’. They also had a high impact on joint project assessment, as they were formally involved in this process, and occasionally engaged in facilitating strategic coordination of individual projects on informal basis using the monitoring ITI system.

Among the **community characteristics**, administrative capacity had the highest but overall low impact, as its low levels produced proportionally higher transaction costs. Also lower social capital in LFA slightly increased the negotiation costs, as the limited trust and lower collaboration skills determined more difficulties in achieving a consensus. In CS, regional identity slightly limited the enforcement costs due to solidarity and higher awareness of collective development, but existing cultural-historical divisions of the territory required some additional elements to be included when dividing power and resources.

Other factors related to actors characteristics had a low impact on transaction costs. In both regions, **ITI Coordinators’** networks and knowledge had a low impact on limiting the information and coordination risks, as they contributed to the joint projects on operational level. As for **higher-level politicians**, only in LFA there was an anecdotal evidence showing the party affiliation heterogeneity between the national government and the mayor of the capital city leading to delays and blocking one of the most strategically important projects. National authority performed an audit related to this project, which required dedicating additional resources of the municipality to prepare necessary documentation.

The most impactful factors related to existing institutions were within the category of **higher-level rules**. The biggest difference between regions was determined by the project selection mode. The preselection highly limited all kinds of costs in LFA, and increased them in CS. The

frequency of rules' changes increased the information and negotiations costs in both regions, as it created the need to renegotiate the already agreed scope of projects and resources division, and led to delays in the collaborative process. The obligatory partnership projects form limited the enforcement and joint project assessment costs in LFA, as it formally settled the coordination between municipal parts of joint projects. Time pressure imposed by higher level institutions interestingly limited the negotiation costs in both regions, and they provided a timeframe by when a consensus had to be achieved, while otherwise the negotiations could have taken more time.

The other two categories of factors related to existing institutions had a low impact on transactions costs. Within the **political structure**, the analysis provided a limited evidence of the time after national elections and before local elections leading to delays and increasing information costs in LFA. **Existing ICA mechanisms** had a positive impact in CS, as the inspirations from previous collaboration by the political leader and other mayors limited the negotiation costs. Thanks to their experiences, they could send a quicker propose and agree on a method of power and resources division despite the high number of partnering municipalities and variety of conflicting interests.

### **Findings regarding the integration mechanisms**

The second main section of the chapter was related to the impact of factors on the **integration mechanisms** (see the assessment in Table 42). Similarly to the previously analysed elements of the ICA Frameworks, also this analysis showed differences in local actors perception of the integration mechanisms over time. The process of selecting the current integration mechanism was one of them, while research participants commented more often on the future prospects of collaboration when commenting on the possible forms of collaboration.

The analysis shows that the **initial choice** of the integration mechanism was mostly adjusted to power division risks. Here, the most impactful factors were the motivation of political leaders to collective action within ITI, level of support for them among mayors, the number of involved municipalities and homogeneity of their sizes related to the administrative and financial capacity. In LFA, these factors led to the acceptance of Lublin as a leader and the form of agreement which cemented its dominant position. The relatively small number of municipalities allowed an equal position for all of them in a decision making process, which had been very complicated in the CS case. In fact, Lublin's representatives decided on this form of collaboration on a top-down basis and informed other municipalities, and its dominant position

led to nobody contesting this decision. This would not be possible in CS due to the more equal position and aspirations of the multiple cities, and the decision was made after discussions of how to ensure representation of various interests. Additional factor that played a role was the mayors' positive experience from the collaboration in the past in a particular integration mechanism, and mayors in CS observed that the Association worked very well in one of the other subregions of the Voivodeship and could have learned from this experience.

During ongoing collaboration, there were additional factors influencing actors' attitude towards **future collaboration** and their preferences of integration mechanisms. In LFA the continuation of collaboration was mainly seen as dependent on the availability of EU funds for this purpose, while in CS it was perceived as beneficial regardless of this factor. However, the majority of municipalities in CS were also part of the newly established official Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolis, which could have strengthened future of collaboration. It was contested whether the CS Association will still be needed in this context, although it involved over 30 municipalities more than the Metropolis.

As for the preferred **future integration mechanism**, in both metropolitan areas the majority of actors did not voice any reason for changing it. All actors in CS had a much more positive impact on extending the scope of collaboration than in LFA. **Leaders** had a high impact in this context, in particular the political leaders and their approach towards the scope of collaboration in the future and support for other municipalities' interests. In LFA, the perception of the ITI remained limited to EU funds absorption and protecting mainly Lublin's interest, while in CS the political leaders' vision of joint development continued and was supported by the process of preparing collaboration within the Metropolis. Also the motivation of **administrative leaders** differed in this regard, with the ITI Office director in CS being much more motivated to continue and further extend the scope of collaboration, which was also extended to the motivation of other employees of ITI Offices. Importantly, the ongoing joint activities were more advanced in CS, often from the initiative of ITI Office or leaders among mayors or ITI Coordinators.

Also **mayors** in general supported joint development to a higher extent in CS than in LFA, and perceived an association as a way to balance the dominance of the capital city. In LFA, the preference for an agreement was also related to limited **administrative and financial capacity**. For the majority of municipalities in LFA a more advanced integration mechanism would create relatively high costs, while in CS there were more municipalities that could equally contribute

to the joint budget. All the experience from ongoing collaboration created a certain positive or negative experience for the involved actors, which in the future would be having an impact as **existing ICA mechanisms**, boosting mayors' appetite for more ambitious collective action or limiting it. This ultimately shows the dynamic dimension of the ICA Framework showed in the empirical analysis.

Table 40 Assessment of the impact of factors related to actors characteristics on transaction costs

Category	Factor	Information		Negotiation		Enforcement		Joint project assessment		Impact on transaction costs		
		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	TOTAL
Leaders	Perceived administrative leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests	3	3	1	2				2	4	7	11
	Perceived political leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests			3	3				1	3	4	7
	Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism			1	3				1	1	4	5
	Level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration,			3	2					3	2	5
	Personal qualities of the political leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc			1	3					1	3	4
	A number of leaders' initiatives for particular joint projects	1	2							1	2	3
	Personal qualities of the administrative leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc			1	2					1	2	3
	Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism								2	0	2	2
	Level of support for the administrative leader among members of collaboration,			1	1					1	1	2
Mayors	Personal networks and friendships among mayors	2	2	1	2		3			3	7	10
	Level of trust among mayors	2		2	1		2			4	3	7
	Number of mayors involved in collaboration	1	2	1	2					2	4	6
	Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development			1	1		2		1	1	4	5
	Perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and the other municipalities			3	2					3	2	5
	Homogeneity in the efficiency in EU funds absorption and project preparation				2		3			0	5	5
	Perceived mayors' charisma and ambition			2	3					2	3	5
	Mayor's focus on electoral interests						3			0	3	3
	Human capital of mayors			1	2					1	2	3
ITI Office employees	Scope of tasks delegated to the metropolitan authority	3	3				2	1	3	4	8	12
	Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees	1	2		1		1		1	1	5	6
ITI Coordinators	Personal networks and friendships among civil servants	2	2		1					2	3	5
	Human capital of civil servants	1	1	1	1					2	2	4
Higher-level politicians	Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and regional authority							1		1	0	1
Community	Level of administrative and financial capacity	1		1	1		1			2	2	4
	Social capital			2	1					2	1	3
	Regional identity						1			0	1	1
	Cultural-historical divisions				1					0	1	1

Legend: Non-political factors were marked in orange.

Score	Impact
3	High positive
2	Medium positive
1	Low positive
1	Low negative
2	Medium negative
3	High negative

Table 41 Assessment of the impact of factors related to existing institutions on transaction costs

Category	Factor	Information		Negotiation		Enforcement		Joint project assessment		Impact on transaction costs		
		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	TOTAL
Higher level rules	Project selection mode	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	8	10	18
	Frequency of changes in the rules	2	2	2	2					4	4	8
	Time pressure on joint projects realisation			1	1		2			1	3	4
	Project form					1	1	2		3	1	4
	Perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration			2	1					2	1	3
Political structure	Time after national/regional elections	1								1	0	1
	Time before local elections	1								1	0	1
Existing ICA mechanisms	Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration				3					0	3	3
	Level of political leader's active involvement in existing ICA mechanisms				3					0	3	3
	The number of ICA mechanisms				2					0	2	2
	Percentage of mayors involved in previous collaboration				2					0	2	2

Legend: Non-political factors were marked in orange.

Score	Impact
3	High positive
2	Medium positive
1	Low positive
1	Low negative
2	Medium negative
3	High negative

Table 42 Assessment of the impact of factors related to existing institutions on integration mechanisms

ICA element	Category	Factor	Impact on integration mechanism		
			LFA	CS	TOTAL
Actors characteristics	Leaders	Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	2	3	5
		Level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration,	3	1	4
		A number of leaders' initiatives for particular joint projects	1	2	3
		Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	1	2	3
	Mayors	Number of mayors involved in collaboration	2	2	4
		Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development	1	2	3
		Perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and the other municipalities		2	2
	ITI Office	Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees	1	1	2
	Community	Homogeneity of municipal size	2	2	4
		Cultural-historical divisions		1	1
Level of administrative and financial capacity		1		1	
Existing institutions	Existing ICA mechanisms	Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration	1	2	3

Legend: Non-political factors were marked in orange.

Score	Impact
3	High positive
2	Medium positive
1	Low positive
1	Low negative
2	Medium negative
3	High negative

## 9. Findings from the comparative analysis: the politics of institutional collective action

This chapter synthesises the key results of the research in relation to the two main research questions:

1. What are the political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?
2. What is the impact of the identified political factors in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation in the two Polish metropolitan areas?

The next two sections answer the two main research questions and present the main insights from the conducted analysis.

### 9.1. Political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation

In order to answer the first research question, the empirical analysis was conducted in two stages: 1. exploring political factors as understood by research participants; and 2. classifying them through application of the ICA Framework, and identifying additional factors through thematic analysis.

First, Chapter 5 explored the meaning of politics among research participants, analysing the context in which they used this and other associated terms. This identified four ways of **understanding politics**: as mayors' decisions and activity; as relations of mayors with other actors; as elections and their consequences; and as the State's activities and policies. Regarding **political actors**, research participants understood them not only as elected politicians, but also as key administrative staff appointed by politicians (e.g. deputy mayors, ITI Directors), and actors playing a political role and fulfilling political functions (e.g. civil servants involved in strategic planning, negotiations between municipalities, representing the municipality or the whole metropolitan area, etc.). This broad understanding of politics and political actors produced a range of factors that can be classified as political. Analysis identified **28 political factors directly acknowledged by research participants** (see Table 23) in relation to the four



meanings of politics. The analysis showed that factors acknowledged directly by research participants overlap with some of the factors identified in the next empirical chapters, therefore they will not be presented here separately.

Second, Chapter 6 explored the three sources of collaboration risks typically analysed within the ICA Framework: the nature of the ICA dilemma, actors characteristics and existing institutions. The nature of the ICA dilemma provided information about the overall scope of collaboration in both metropolitan areas, while concrete political factors were identified within the two latter ICA elements.

Overall, the analysis revealed 69 factors involved in joint ITI implementation. This included **48 factors of a political character** (see the full list in Table 30) and 21 non-political (see Table 31). All factors were divided into 9 categories, drawn from the ICA Framework and supplemented with various types of main actors involved in collaboration (see Section 6.2.1). This categorisation followed the key themes identified during data collection, and allowed to analyse in more detail findings for the board ICA category of ‘individual actors’. Most factors were related to mayors, followed by leaders and higher-level rules. Some categories by definition included only political factors (e.g. those related to mayors), while other categories consisted of factors of both kinds (see the summary in Table 43). Each category except for community characteristics included at least one political factor (e.g. turnover among ITI Coordinators following local elections). This indicates aspects that belong to the so-called ‘purple zone’ (see Section 1.2.1).

**Table 43 Number of identified factors within particular categories**

Category of factors	Political	Non-political	TOTAL
<b>Mayors</b>	17	0	<b>17</b>
<b>Leaders</b>	9	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Higher-level rules</b>	4	5	<b>9</b>
<b>Political structure</b>	7	0	<b>7</b>
<b>Community characteristics</b>	0	6	<b>6</b>
<b>Existing ICA mechanisms</b>	3	3	<b>6</b>
<b>Higher-level politicians</b>	6	0	<b>6</b>
<b>ITI Coordinators</b>	1	4	<b>5</b>
<b>ITI Office employees</b>	1	3	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>69</b>

## 9.2. The impact of political factors involved in inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation

Providing an answer to the second research question on the impact of these political factors involved two steps: 1. Exploring in which aspects of ITI implementation research participants acknowledged the impact of political factors (Chapter 6), 2. Exploring and assessing the impact of the identified political factors on different aspects of collaboration, following the ICA Framework: collective benefit and collaboration risks (in Chapter 7), transaction costs and integration mechanisms (in Chapter 8).

Chapter 5 provided initial insights to the role of political factors. The main identified aspects of ITI implementation affected by politics according to research participants were: 1. strategic planning and investments, 2. tempo of joint ITI implementation, 3. discussions and negotiations, 4. future prospects of collaboration. The collected data allowed the mapping of how the types of politics as understood by research participants influenced the four aspects of ITI implementation (see Section 5.3). However, there was not sufficient data under this coding category to allow a detailed assessment of the extent of impact of particular factors. The identified aspects of ITI implementation correspond to various elements discussed within the ICA Framework: first with collective benefits and risks of non-strategic joint projects, second mainly with information and negotiation costs, third with division risks and negotiation costs, and last with integration mechanisms. In this way, results based on the direct understanding of politics' impact by research participants were deepened and strengthened by the analysis within the ICA Framework.

The qualitative analysis, set out in Chapters 7 and 8, facilitated the assessment of the impact of identified political factors on particular ICA Framework elements. In order to answer the main research question and assess the impact on joint ITI implementation as a whole, the impact scores for each factor on all ICA elements were summarised. **The method of impact assessment is explained in Chapter 4.** Positive impact was noted when it increased collective benefits, decreased risks and costs involved, and facilitated the selection of integration mechanisms. Negative impact was noted in opposite situations.

The final results of the analysis are set out in Tables 44-50, showing the total impact of political and non-political factors on ITI collaboration. The full database showing the impact of all particular factors on all ICA Framework elements is attached in Annex VIII. The findings can be organised under the following headings:

1. Character of the impact, assessing to what extent the impact of political factors was positive or negative in each metropolitan area,
2. The impact of political factors on particular ICA Framework elements,
3. The categories of factors with the biggest impact on joint ITI implementation,
4. Particular factors that exerted the biggest impact on joint ITI implementation in each metropolitan area, as well as the positive or negative character of this impact.

### Character of the impact

In general, the results show that the **impact of political factors was mainly positive in the Central Subregion, and mainly negative in the Lublin Functional Area**. This is apparent in the total impact calculated by summarising scores of all political factors on all aspects of collaboration (see Table 44). In both metropolitan areas, political factors had both positive and negative impact, but in CS the positive impact was much higher than negative, while in LFA it was the other way around. As for non-political factors, the overall scores show that they had a similar positive impact in both regions, and less negative in LFA than CS.

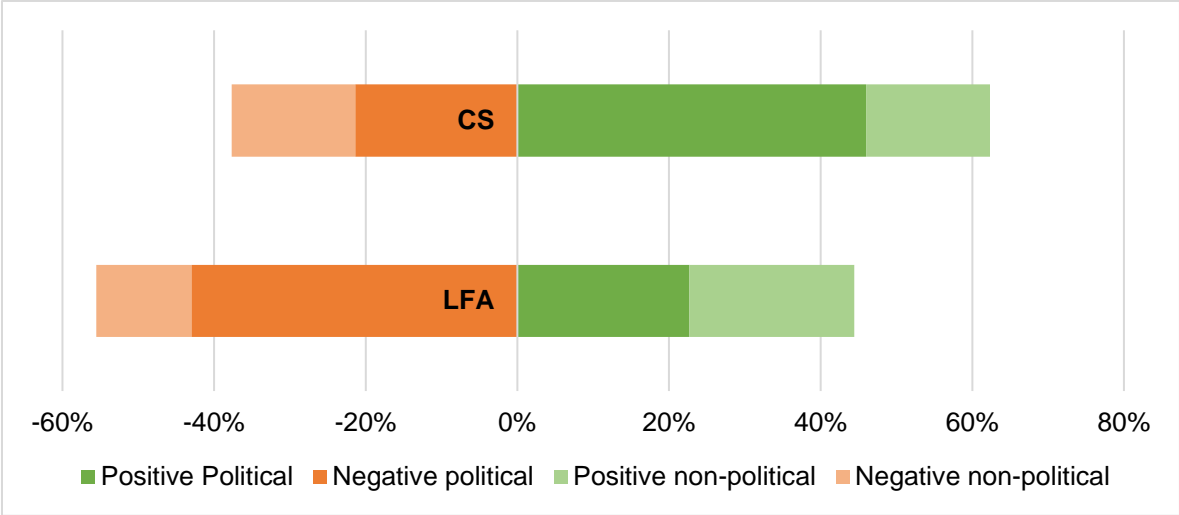
**Table 44 Impact of political and non-political factors as a % of impact score in each metropolitan area**

Impact	Political factors' impact		Non-political factors' impact		TOTAL Impact score		Political factors' impact (%)		Non-political factors' impact (%)	
	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS
Positive	47	127	45	45	92	172	23%	46%	22%	16%
Negative	89	59	26	45	115	104	43%	21%	13%	16%
TOTAL	136	186	71	90	207	276	66%	67%	34%	33%

However, the total scores of impact in CS and LFA were not the same. Therefore, comparing them in absolute terms could be imprecise. In order to compare the regions in relative terms, the percentage of total impact in each metropolitan area was calculated for each type of factor. The results confirm the overall conclusions of a positive impact of political factors in CS and a negative impact in LFA, highlighting that they had a comparable relative significance for collaboration (respectively 46% and 43%). The results also show that both political and non-political factors positively influenced collaboration in LFA to a similar extent. What differed in

LFA, was that the negative influence was much bigger in terms of political factors. In CS, the non-political factors had a comparably low positive and negative impact. These tendencies are visualised in Figure 29.

Figure 29 Impact of political and non-political factors as a % of the total impact score in each metropolitan area



It could be concluded that in general, **political factors made a bigger difference in shaping collaboration in both regions than the non-political factors**. However, this is biased by the lower number of identified non-political factors. An average impact per factor was calculated in order to overcome this bias (see Table 45). The results show a slightly higher average impact of a single non-political factor, both in terms of positive and negative character of the impact. This can suggest that introducing administrative rules and other non-political aspects can have a significant influence on collaboration. Nevertheless, considering that the number of political factors involved in joint ITI implementation was so high, the conclusion that they made a bigger difference in absolute terms remains. This is an important finding and justifies the need for the ICA framework to take account of political factors to a higher extent (see Section 10.1.1).

Table 45 Average impact of a single political and non-political factor

Factors	Number of factors	Total impact score			Total impact score/ number of factors		
		Positive	Negative	TOTAL	Positive	Negative	TOTAL
<b>Political</b>	48	174	148	<b>322</b>	3,6	3,1	<b>6,7</b>
<b>Non-political</b>	21	90	71	<b>161</b>	4,3	3,4	<b>7,7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	69	264	219	<b>483</b>	3,8	3,2	<b>7,0</b>

## **Impact on particular ICA Framework elements**

This analysis also made possible the aggregation of the scores for political and non-political factors and their total impact on particular ICA Framework elements. These were explored in detail in Chapters 7 and 8. Table 46 presents a comparison of how political and non-political factors' impacted in absolute and relative terms, on specific elements of the ICA framework. In both relative and absolute terms, the highest impact of political factors in both regions was in division risks and negotiation costs. This can be explained by the key role of mayors in the processes of power and resources division within ITI implementation, as well as leaders' activity in facilitating this process.

The impact of political factors on negotiation and bargaining costs was significantly higher in CS than in LFA. This difference can be in general explained by the continuation of the bargaining process during ITI implementation in CS, while in LFA the main negotiations finished at the initial stage due to preselection of joint projects. Political factors also had a relatively high impact on shaping non-strategic project risks in both metropolitan areas, as they mostly stemmed from individual electoral interests contradicting the collective interest. However, they did not significantly influence the respective costs of project assessment, which was mainly an administrative process.

Political factors had a medium impact on collective benefit. The impact was higher in CS, which can be explained by conscious efforts of political and administrative leaders to spread their vision of metropolitan development and broader benefits from ITI implementation than absorption of EU funds. The acknowledged collective benefits grew over time in both metropolitan areas, but to a larger extent in CS which can be explained mostly by political factors (see Sections 7.1. and 7.3).

In both metropolitan areas, political factors had a low impact on incoordination risks and respective information costs, although political actors participated in strategic information exchange. They also had a limited impact on defection risks and associated enforcement costs, especially in LFA where they were completely eliminated by higher-level rules. In CS, enforcement costs were mainly executed by mayors, but since the costs were low also the engagement of mayors was minimal.

The findings above are based on absolute numbers, which might underestimate the role of non-political factors due to their lower number compared to political factors. Hence, the analysis of

results in relative terms (calculated per number of factors in each category) shows the impact of non-political factors. They had an impact on all aspects of collaboration following the ICA Framework, but with smaller amplitude in the extent of the impact compared to political factors. The highest relative impact per single factor can be observed in CS in relation to information costs and incoordination risks, followed by a slightly lower score in LFA on the latter, incoordination risks in both metropolitan areas, division and defection risks in CS. The analysis in relative terms shows a similar, low impact of political and non-political factors on integration mechanisms in both metropolitan areas. In general, non-political factors had a higher score of the impact of a single factor of this kind. This shows that a single rule can affect collaboration to a large extent, which is further elaborated below when discussing impact of particular factors.

**Table 46 Impact of political and non-political factors on various ICA Framework elements**

ICA element	Metro-politan area	IMPACT SCORE			IMPACT SCORE/NUMBER OF FACTORS			
		Political	Non-political	TOTAL	Political	Non-political	TOTAL	
Collective benefit	LFA	18	8	<b>26</b>	0,4	0,4	<b>0,4</b>	
	CS	26	7	<b>33</b>	0,5	0,3	<b>0,5</b>	
Collaboration risks	Incoordination	LFA	10	10	<b>20</b>	0,2	0,5	<b>0,3</b>
		CS	9	10	<b>19</b>	0,2	0,5	<b>0,3</b>
	Division	LFA	31	8	<b>39</b>	0,6	0,4	<b>0,6</b>
		CS	33	10	<b>43</b>	0,7	0,5	<b>0,6</b>
	Defection	LFA	6	8	<b>14</b>	0,1	0,4	<b>0,2</b>
		CS	11	10	<b>21</b>	0,2	0,5	<b>0,3</b>
	Non-strategic joint projects	LFA	24	4	<b>28</b>	0,5	0,2	<b>0,4</b>
		CS	22	6	<b>28</b>	0,5	0,3	<b>0,4</b>
Transaction costs	Information	LFA	11	11	<b>22</b>	0,2	0,5	<b>0,3</b>
		CS	9	12	<b>21</b>	0,2	0,6	<b>0,3</b>
	Negotiation	LFA	24	8	<b>32</b>	0,5	0,4	<b>0,5</b>
		CS	40	13	<b>53</b>	0,8	0,6	<b>0,8</b>
	Enforcement	LFA	0	4	<b>4</b>	0,0	0,2	<b>0,1</b>
		CS	13	11	<b>24</b>	0,3	0,5	<b>0,3</b>
	Joint projects assessment	LFA	1	6	<b>7</b>	0,0	0,3	<b>0,1</b>
		CS	7	7	<b>14</b>	0,1	0,3	<b>0,2</b>
Integration mechanisms	LFA	11	4	<b>15</b>	0,2	0,2	<b>0,2</b>	
	CS	16	4	<b>20</b>	0,3	0,2	<b>0,3</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>LFA</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>3,4</b>	<b>3,0</b>	
	<b>CS</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>3,9</b>	<b>4,3</b>	<b>4,0</b>	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>6,7</b>	<b>7,7</b>	<b>7,0</b>	

## Impact of factors by categories

The results can also be aggregated within particular categories of factors (see Table 47). In absolute terms, **mayors** exerted the most impact in both metropolitan areas. The second most impactful category in CS was leaders, while in LFA it was higher-level rules. These three categories had the most influence on joint ITI implementation in both case studies, although the character of their impact differed (see more detailed analysis later in this section).

A notable difference between the cases was a significantly higher impact of existing ICA mechanisms and ITI Office employees in CS, which can be explained by a higher scope of delegated tasks to the latter, and broader previous experiences of inter-municipal collaboration among actors in this metropolitan area, some of which were directly used in shaping ITI collaboration. Also, community characteristics had a slightly higher impact in CS, mostly due to regional identity and cultural-historical influences which were not identified in LFA. In LFA, the impact of higher-level politicians had a slightly higher impact on collaboration, which can be explained by the heterogeneity of party affiliation between Lublin's mayor and regional Marshal. This affected ITI implementation to a higher extent than in CS which was characterised by homogeneity at this level. The political structure and role of ITI coordinators had a similar, minor impact in both regions.

Table 47 Impact of factors within particular categories

Category of factors	Impact score		
	LFA	CS	TOTAL
<b>Mayors</b>	55	76	<b>131</b>
<b>Leaders</b>	43	65	<b>108</b>
<b>Higher-level rules</b>	50	47	<b>97</b>
<b>Community</b>	19	21	<b>40</b>
<b>ITI Office employees</b>	12	22	<b>34</b>
<b>Existing ICA mechanisms</b>	2	22	<b>24</b>
<b>Political structure</b>	10	9	<b>19</b>
<b>Higher-level politicians</b>	10	8	<b>18</b>
<b>ITI Coordinators</b>	6	6	<b>12</b>

This comparison could also be affected by the different overall sum of impact in both regions. In order to limit the potential bias, the scores were recalculated to achieve an average impact per single factor in each category (see Table 48). This exercise shows that in relative terms, the

impact of particular categories of factors differed even more between metropolitan areas. In CS the most impactful factors on collaboration concerned the role of leaders, followed by ITI Office employees and higher-level rules. In LFA, the most impactful were factors related to higher-level rules, followed by leaders. Interestingly, factors related to mayors had a similar impact as community characteristics. In CS, mayors were more impactful than community characteristics, but still less than would suggest the high overall impact. This can be explained by the high number of factors related to them, and consequent fragmentation of different aspects of their impact in the detailed analysis. It can be concluded that their impact was very diverse, and exerted in various ways depending on their characteristics and relations (see further explanation on this aspect below). Higher-level politicians, political structure and ITI coordinators had a low impact in relative as well as absolute terms in both metropolitan areas.

**Table 48 Impact of factors per single factor within particular categories**

Category of factors	Number of factors	Impact score/Factor		
		LFA	CS	TOTAL
<b>Leaders</b>	9	4,8	7,2	<b>12,0</b>
<b>Higher-level rules</b>	9	5,6	5,2	<b>10,8</b>
<b>ITI Office employees</b>	4	3,0	5,5	<b>8,5</b>
<b>Mayors</b>	17	3,2	4,5	<b>7,7</b>
<b>Community</b>	6	3,2	3,5	<b>6,7</b>
<b>Existing ICA mechanisms</b>	6	0,3	3,7	<b>4,0</b>
<b>Higher-level politicians</b>	6	1,7	1,3	<b>3,0</b>
<b>Political structure</b>	7	1,4	1,1	<b>2,6</b>
<b>ITI Coordinators</b>	5	1,2	1,2	<b>2,4</b>

### **Assessment of factors with the most impact**

General results presented above can be further explained and deepened by analysing the **total impact of particular factors** (see Tables 49 and 50). The **top 10 political factors with most impact** are related to leaders and mayors. The impact of the first three (1. ‘Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism’, 2. ‘Mayors’ support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development’ and 3. ‘Perceived political leader’s care for joint and other municipalities’ interests’) was clearly differentiated in the two case studies. In CS they had a strong, positive impact, while in LFA the impact was strongly negative. This demonstrates the crucial role of political leaders in inter-municipal collaboration.



This is especially visible when taking into account that the qualitative analysis presented factors related not only to their direct influence on processes (e.g. by consensus building during negotiations), but also indirectly through their influence on the behaviour of other involved actors (e.g. motivation by ITI Office employees), and other factors (e.g. building mayors' support for the metropolitan development by promoting their vision for the whole area).

Some factors had a strong impact in the same direction in both metropolitan areas. The **most negative** impact concerned 'mayors' focus on electoral interests' and the 'perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and other municipalities', the latter to a higher extent in LFA as it continued during ongoing ITI implementation while in CS it was limited over time. Other negatively impactful factors in both regions was 'homogeneity in the efficiency in EU funds absorption and project preparation', which created divisions between municipalities during ITI implementation. This was particularly problematic in CS, where the division of resources was informal, and time pressure on funds absorption increased the risks of opportunistic behaviour among municipalities.

As for factors with a **solely positive impact**, these related to the 'perceived administrative leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests', 'personal networks and friendships among mayors' and 'mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration'. This again shows how much is brought into collaboration by individuals, especially ITI Office Directors who in both metropolitan areas made an important positive change. This positive change were especially seen in managing equal information exchange and building trust through ensuring transparency and strategic thinking on the operational level (the latter aspect to a higher extent in CS). The other two factors show the important, positive role of individual experiences and relations of mayors, for example in contributing to alliances around joint projects and facilitating negotiations. These aspects were also developed to a significantly higher extent in CS, differentiating the cases despite their positive impact in both regions.

Some factors had particular importance in each of the cases, helping to explain differences between them. In LFA, a **distinct factor with a positive impact** was 'level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration'. The dominant position of Lublin as a leader limited the power division risks and reduced the costs of associated negotiations, while in CS this was a more complex and lengthy process. In CS, apart from the factors already mentioned, two others made a positive difference: 'Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism' and 'Level of political leader's active

involvement in existing ICA mechanisms'. The two main political and administrative leaders in CS created a duo that improved collaboration across various elements of the ICA Framework.

Other factors had **specific negative impacts** on collaboration in each metropolitan area. In LFA, apart from the already mentioned lower level of trust and longer-lasting anomalies with the capital city, the 'perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration' was lower than in CS. This limited the potential collective benefit perceived by mayors, and increased the risks of non-strategic joint projects. In CS, a clear factor making collaboration more difficult was the high number of collaborating mayors, as it increased the variety of interests to be included during power and resources division and increased the associated costs of achieving consensus.

Among **non-political factors**, the highest impact on collaboration was exerted by: 'Project selection mode', 'Scope of tasks delegated to the metropolitan authority' and 'Level of administrative and financial capacity'. The first factor played the biggest role in differentiating the two cases among non-political factors. It influenced all aspects of collaboration in a positive way in LFA and in a negative way in CS, as it limited the risks and costs of collaboration in the first case, and increased in the latter (see Sections 7.3 and 8.3). The second factor, 'level of administrative and financial capacity' had a positive impact in both metropolitan areas, but to a higher extent in CS where also the scope of tasks delegated to ITI Office was higher. Administrative capacity had a varied impact within both cases, rather differentiating municipalities within a single metropolitan area than between them.

A non-political factor that had a purely negative impact, especially in the beginning of collaboration, was the 'Frequency of changes in the rules', which created uncertainty and delayed the work of collaborating actors. Moreover, the 'Time pressure on joint projects realisation' had a mostly negative impact in both regions, as it forced them to limit the strategic scope of ITI-funded projects and focus on fast funds absorption. Generally positive non-political factors in both metropolitan areas were 'Personal networks and friendships among civil servants' and 'Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees' the latter to a larger extent in the CS which increased their role in ensuring the strategic value of ITI implementation for metropolitan development.

Analysis of the CS case identified two additional non-political factors that were not detected in LFA. On the one hand, 'regional identity' had a positive impact by increasing the awareness of interdependencies, collective image, and solidarity among partners. On the other, 'cultural-historic differences' in CS had to be taken into account in power and resources division.

Overall, the analysis showed an **impact of 42 out of 48 political factors**, and 15 out of 21 non-political factors. The remaining political factors were recognised by research participants, but further analysis did not identify their impact on joint ITI implementation. This can be explained by the context in which they were mentioned, which mostly involved speculation about potential political changes in the future (e.g. scope of financial and legal autonomy of mayors), or an observed general tendency, which did not have an impact on ITI implementation (e.g. level of fluctuation of mayors' party membership). Some factors did not have a direct impact, but influenced other factors and in this way contributed to ITI implementation (e.g. level of administrative turnover after local elections influenced efficiency in EU absorption).

Among non-political factors, some also had an indirect impact. For example, the heterogeneity of the municipalities of origin of ITI Office employees influenced the trust of mayors and legitimacy of the ITI Office, but this did not affect any element of collaboration directly. A number of factors turned out not to have had impact when related to civil servants, although they did play a role in association to mayors, e.g. their number, trust among them, or the percentage of this group participating in earlier ICA mechanisms. Finally, geographical proximity among municipalities was not identified to have had an impact on the analysed cases, although it is a factor typically analysed in the ICA literature. This can be explained by the predefined territory of ITI implementation consisting of the whole metropolitan area, and municipalities were expected to collaborate regardless of the distance between them (see Section 6.2.2).

### 9.3 Summary

The findings from the empirical analysis provide the answers to both research questions. In summary, the answer to the first research question is that in the two Polish metropolitan areas there were **48 political factors** involved in the in collaboration within ITI implementation. They can be divided into eight categories, related to: mayors, leaders, higher-level rules, political structure, existing ICA mechanisms, higher-level politicians, ITI coordinators and ITI office employees. Most of the factors were related to mayors and leaders.

In addition, the research identified also **21 non-political factors** within five categories: higher-level rules, community characteristics, existing ICA mechanisms, ITI coordinators and ITI office employees. Following the interpretive research design, the distinction between the

political and non-political factors follows the understanding of politics and political actors by research participants, analysed in Chapter 5.

Regarding the second research question, the research demonstrated that the impact of identified political factors on collaboration within ITI implementation varied. Four main findings can be highlighted in this regard.

First, political factors had a **mainly positive impact in CS and a mostly negative impact in LFA**. However, in both metropolitan areas they had a strong impact, which contradicts the initial expectations that politics would mainly affect LFA due to the non-competitive mode of project selection. In comparison with non-political factors, political factors had a higher impact in absolute terms, but lower in relative terms (calculated as an average impact of a single factor of each kind).

Second, among ICA Framework elements, in both metropolitan areas political factors mostly affected **negotiations and bargaining costs and division risks**, followed by non-strategic projects risks and collective benefit. The weakest impact was identified in relation to the costs of joint project assessment and enforcement, followed by defection and incoordination risks. The differences between cases in this context were minor: the biggest one was related to negotiation costs, where the impact was higher in CS due to more intense involvement of mayors in the ongoing implementation of ITI, stemming from the non-competitive mode of project selection.

Third, among categories of factors, in absolute terms **mayors had the highest impact** in both metropolitan areas, while in relative terms it differed between cases. In CS, the most impact was exerted by leaders, while in LFA the strongest influence had higher-level rules. It needs to be highlighted that the latter category is a mixture of political and non-political factors. In general, the character of the impact on collaboration in both metropolitan areas was mostly influenced by individual rather than community characteristics.

Fourth, the research identified a **varied impact of 42 out of the 48 identified political factors** on collaboration within ITI implementation. The most impactful political factors, which also differentiated the most the two cases, were related to the **political leaders and mayors' support for metropolitan development**. In addition, the research demonstrated the impact of 15 out of 21 identified non-political factors, out of which the most impactful were those related to higher level rules.

Table 49 Assessment of the impact of political factors on inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation

Category	Political factor	Positive character		Negative character		Character TOTAL		Metropolitan area TOTAL		TOTAL IMPACT SCORE
		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	Positive	Negative	LFA	CS	
Leaders	1. Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism		14	9		14	9	9	14	23
Mayors	2. Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development		13	7		13	7	7	13	20
Leaders	3. Perceived political leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests		11	8		11	8	8	11	19
Mayors	4. Mayor's focus on electoral interests			8	10	0	18	8	10	18
Leaders	5. Perceived administrative leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests	5	9			14	0	5	9	14
Mayors	6. Level of trust among mayors		4	8	2	4	10	8	6	14
Mayors	7. Number of mayors involved in collaboration	6	2		6	8	6	6	8	14
Leaders	8. Level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration	9	2		2	11	2	9	4	13
Mayors	9. Perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and the other communes		2	7	4	2	11	7	6	13
Mayors	10. Personal networks and friendships among mayors	4	8			12	0	4	8	12
Existing ICA mechanisms	11. Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration	2	9			11	0	2	9	11
Higher level rules	12. Perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration	2	1	6	2	3	8	8	3	11
Leaders	13. A number of leaders' initiatives for particular joint projects	2	5	2	2	7	4	4	7	11
Leaders	14. Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	1	8	1		9	1	2	8	10
Mayors	15. Homogeneity in the efficiency in EU funds absorption and project preparation			2	8	0	10	2	8	10
Leaders	16. Personal qualities of the political leader: consensus-building, charisma...	2	6			8	0	2	6	8
Mayors	17. Mayors' vision on priorities homogeneity	1	5	2		6	2	3	5	8
Higher level rules	18. Perceived attractiveness of the amount of available joint resources	2	3	1	1	5	2	3	4	7
Higher-level politicians	19. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and regional authority		2	4	1	2	5	4	3	7
Existing ICA mechanisms	20. Level of political leader's active involvement in existing ICA mechanisms		6			6	0	0	6	6
Leaders	21. Personal qualities of the administrative leader: consensus-building, charisma...	2	4			6	0	2	4	6
Mayors	22. Perceived mayors' charisma and ambition			2	4	0	6	2	4	6
Higher level rules	23. Perceived easiness to get joint resources	3	2			5	0	3	2	5
Mayors	24. Human capital of mayors	2	3			5	0	2	3	5
Mayors	25. Level of approval of the division mechanism	3	2			5	0	3	2	5
Political structure	26. Time after national/regional elections			3	2	0	5	3	2	5
Higher-level politicians	27. Level of support for metropolitan development of regional and national authorities		2	2		2	2	2	2	4
Leaders	28. Level of support for the administrative leader among members of collaboration			2	2	0	4	2	2	4
Political structure	29. Time before local elections			2	2	0	4	2	2	4
Political structure	30. Time after local elections			2	2	0	4	2	2	4
Political structure	31. Turnover among mayors after elections			2	2	0	4	2	2	4
Existing ICA mechanisms	32. Percentage of mayors involved in previous collaboration		3			3	0	0	3	3
Higher level rules	33. Perceived equal application of higher-level rules to all partners			2	1	0	3	2	1	3
Higher-level politicians	34. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and national authority			2	1	0	3	2	1	3
Mayors	35. Perceived clientelism level			2	1	0	3	2	1	3
Higher-level politicians	36. Perceived personal conflicts or likings between mayors and higher-level politicians			1	1	0	2	1	1	2
Political structure	37. Time before national/regional elections			1	1	0	2	1	1	2
Higher-level politicians	38. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and county authority			1		0	1	1	0	1
Higher-level politicians	39. Government's relations with EU institutions		1			1	0	0	1	1
Mayors	40. Party affiliation homogeneity among local mayors				1	0	1	0	1	1
Mayors	41. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayor and group dominant in municipal council				1	0	1	0	1	1
Mayors	42. Mayors' age homogeneity	1				1	0	1	0	1
ITI Coordinators	43. Level of administrative staff turnover after local elections					0	0	0	0	0
ITI Office employees	44. Perceived legitimacy of metropolitan authority among mayors					0	0	0	0	0
Mayors	45. Level of fluctuation of mayors' party membership					0	0	0	0	0
Mayors	46. Homogeneity of the number of terms in the function of mayors					0	0	0	0	0
Political structure	47. Scope of financial and legal autonomy of mayors					0	0	0	0	0
Political structure	48. Turnover among key political parties in power at higher levels					0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>322</b>

Table 50 Assessment of the impact of non-political factors on inter-municipal collaboration within ITI implementation

Category	Non-political factor	Positive character		Negative character		Character TOTAL		Metropolitan area TOTAL		TOTAL IMPACT SCORE
		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	Positive	Negative	LFA	CS	
Higher level rules	1. Project selection mode	16			18	16	18	16	18	34
ITI Office employees	2. Scope of tasks delegated to the metropolitan authority	8	12			20	0	8	12	20
Community	3. Level of administrative and financial capacity	3	3	6	4	6	10	9	7	16
Higher level rules	4. Frequency of changes in the rules			7	7	0	14	7	7	14
ITI Office employees	5. Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees	3	10	1		13	1	4	10	14
Higher level rules	6. Time pressure on joint projects realisation	1	1	3	7	2	10	4	8	12
Community	7. Homogeneity of municipal size	5	2		2	7	2	5	4	9
Higher level rules	8. Project form	3	1	3	2	4	5	6	3	9
ITI Coordinators	9. Personal networks and friendships among civil servants	4	4			8	0	4	4	8
Community	10. Social capital			5	2	0	7	5	2	7
Community	11. Regional identity		5			5	0	0	5	5
Existing ICA mechanisms	12. The number of ICA mechanisms		4			4	0	0	4	4
ITI Coordinators	13. Human capital of civil servants	2	2			4	0	2	2	4
Community	14. Cultural-historical divisions				3	0	3	0	3	3
Higher level rules	15. Perceived relevance of the thematic scope for metropolitan development challenges		1	1		1	1	1	1	2
Community	16. Proximity					0	0	0	0	0
Existing ICA mechanisms	17. Percentage of civil servants involved in previous collaboration					0	0	0	0	0
Existing ICA mechanisms	18. Civil servants' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration					0	0	0	0	0
ITI Coordinators	19. Level of trust among civil servants					0	0	0	0	0
ITI Coordinators	20. Number of civil servants involved in collaboration					0	0	0	0	0
ITI Office employees	21. Municipality of origin and/or residence of ITI office employees					0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>161</b>

Score	Impact
≥11	High positive
6-10	Medium positive
1-5	Low positive
1-5	Low negative
6-10	Medium negative
≥11	High negative

## 10. Conclusions

The thesis started with the puzzle related to the contradiction between strands of the politicisation literature and within the practice of EU cohesion policy (CP). On the one hand, politicisation literature and CP practitioners have highlighted the negative impact of politics on public policy. On the other, some researchers have suggested the important role of politicians in strategic development, and the European Commission has recently introduced ITI as an EU cohesion policy tool, calling for more impact of local politicians on the implementation process. Consequently, the research took an exploratory, neutral approach towards politics, and aimed at identifying the meaning of politics in relation to public policy and its impact, following an interpretive research design. The research included three months of participatory observation and 46 in-depth, expert, semi-structured interviews in two Polish metropolitan areas: the Central Subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (CS), and the Lublin Functional Area (LFA).

In general, the research contributes to the puzzle by showing that, in both metropolitan areas, political factors had a strong impact on collaboration within ITI implementation. This contradicts the initial expectations that politics would mainly affect LFA due to the non-competitive mode of project selection. This shows that politics can significantly influence public policies even if politicians are formally eliminated from the decision-making process.

Moreover, in CS the political factors had a mostly positive impact on collaboration within ITI implementation, while in LFA it was mostly negative. The three political factors with the most impact in both regions had the same direction of the influence (positive in CS, negative in LFA). This suggests that the impact of politics is complex, and in many cases even particular factors cannot be assessed as fully positive or negative. For example, the factor with the highest impact in both cases ('Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism') shows that the nature of the impact depends on the characteristics of particular political factors.

In any case, the research demonstrates that politics and particular factors differentiated the processes of collaboration and policy implementation in both metropolitan areas. Taking into consideration specific aspects of collaboration covered by the ICA Framework, political factors influenced most the negotiations and bargaining costs, and the associated division risks. Mayors were strongly involved in the division of power and resources, deciding on the internal governance of their collaborative structures, as well as distribution of the allocated ITI funds.

Their previous experiences, personal characteristics and ambitions, as well as the extent to which they shared a vision for metropolitan development, significantly shaped the extent of the costs and risks involved in the beginning of the process (high in CS, medium in LFA), as well as during ongoing ITI implementation (medium in CS, none in LFA).

Another aspect of collaboration strongly influenced by political factors and shaped differently in both metropolitan areas were the risks of non-strategic joint projects. Considering that all mayors have personal and electoral interests, there is always a risk that their decisions on how to invest joint resources could undermine the collective interest. Thus, it is important to know what other political factors are involved, e.g. to what extent mayors support the broader metropolitan development and share their vision in this regard. The research shows that the risks of non-strategic projects dropped from high to medium over time in LFA and from medium to low in CS. Their higher level in LFA can be explained through the lower support to joint metropolitan development among mayors, and more frequent instances of clientelistic behaviour. The drop in both cases was mostly thanks to non-political factors, as project assessment during the implementation process was a purely administrative procedure.

The last aspect of collaboration where a relatively high impact of political factors was identified concerned the perception of collective benefit from ITI implementation. At the beginning of ITI implementation it was low in LFA and medium in CS, and over time it grew to medium in LFA and to high in CS. The analysis showed that the higher perceived benefit in CS was mostly due to the activity of political and administrative leaders, who consciously built the common vision of joint development, spread knowledge about interdependencies and ensured that the interests of small municipalities were taken into account to the same extent as those of big cities.

Overall, the thesis demonstrates that the role and impact of politics can change significantly in the processes of collaboration and policy implementation, regardless of how much decision-making power politicians are formally given. The research identified 42 political factors, which to some extent impacted ITI implementation in formal or informal ways.

This chapter presents the main conclusions from the conducted research. The first section sets out the thesis' contribution to theory, highlighting the innovations introduced to the ICA Framework, and assessing how the findings correspond with the politicisation literature. The second section focuses on the thesis' contribution to methodology, discussing the added value and limitations of using ethnographic methods in the studied context. Third, the policy implications of the research are discussed, especially for the future implementation of



Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland and other countries. The chapter finishes with recommendations for further research.

## 10.1. Contribution to theory

The main theoretical contribution of the thesis is the innovation it brings to the ICA Framework and associated literature. In addition, the research provides some points for debate within the politicisation literature. Both areas are described below.

### 10.1.1. Contribution to the ICA Framework

The thesis introduces some novel elements to the ICA framework and associated literature. First, the research introduces a more **comprehensive selection of political factors** within the sources of collaboration risks. It demonstrated the impact of 42 political factors, out of which only five were empirically studied in the existing ICA literature (see Section 1.2.1). The interpretive research design allowed a broader definition of politics, building in the understanding of the term among local actors involved in the collaboration process. This allowed the formulation of an extended list of political factors, and provided in-depth insights on their impact on collaboration within particular elements of the Framework.

Most of the previously studied political factors focused on partisan issues that proved to have a marginal impact on collaboration in the Polish context (partisan affiliation among mayors, elements of political structure, party registration among communities). What mattered to a higher extent was the party affiliation heterogeneity between mayors and higher-level politicians, which had a negative but low impact on collaboration. Moreover, the personal networks built by mayors and civil servants proved to play an important role, which supports the findings of previous research (Feiock et al., 2010, Feiock, et al., 2012). Also the existence of ICA approaches, especially mayors' previous experiences in inter-municipal collaboration, was confirmed to have a positive impact on various aspects of collaboration. The previously studied **non-political factors** showed medium impact (homogeneity among municipal size, administrative capacity, social capital), or no impact (proximity in terms of distance between municipalities) on collaboration within ITI implementation. The research additionally suggests a list of non-political factors that were important in this context, to be further tested in future empirical studies (notably 'the scope of mayors' decision-making power regarding joint projects selection', 'frequency of changes in the higher-level rules', and 'motivation and expertise of ITI office employees').

Several **political factors not analysed previously within the Framework** exerted significant impact on collaboration. The most prominent in this regard are: 1. ‘Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism’, 2. ‘Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development’ and 3. ‘Perceived political leader’s care for joint and other municipalities’ interests’. These factors differentiated the cases to the highest extent, as their impact on collaboration was positive in CS and negative in LFA. Given this, it is strongly suggested that these and other factors with high impact be further tested within empirical studies applying the ICA Framework.

The newly identified factors demonstrate the crucial role of political leaders in inter-municipal collaboration. In fact, the second contribution of this research to the ICA literature is the identification of **new types of actors**, whose impact has not been empirically studied so far in the ICA literature. Among these new actors, those with the most impact were collaboration leaders. Leaders are highlighted as key actors in local and urban development literature (e.g. Sotarauta, 2016; Sotarauta et al., 2017; Swianiewicz et al., 2004), and in EU cohesion policy implementation (e.g. Vironen, Dozhdeva, 2019, Sielker 2016a, 2016b). The thesis brings this literature to the ICA Framework. This research showed three types of actors of this kind: political leaders (mayors appointed to chair the inter-municipal association/agreement), administrative leaders (ITI Office directors), and leaders of joint projects (mayors and ITI coordinators initiating projects with the scope beyond a single municipality). Other new groups include ITI Office employees (working in the administration of the association/agreement), and higher-level politicians (representatives of national, regional and county authorities). Municipal councillors, typically studied in the ICA literature, had a marginal role in joint ITI implementation in both Polish metropolitan areas.

Third, the research demonstrates the **dynamic dimension** of the Framework by extending its application to policy implementation. Empirical studies based on ICA often focus on explaining why some municipalities are more likely to collaborate, and why they chose particular integration mechanisms. This thesis analyses this initial stage, but mainly used the Framework to explore how the collaborative process evolved in time. In particular, it shows how the perceived collective benefit, collaboration risks, transaction costs and perception of the appropriate integration mechanisms changed, and which factors played a role in shaping this evolution. In this way, the research contributes empirical evidence to the newest revision of the ICA Framework (Kim et al., 2020), which acknowledges the dynamic aspect of the involved processes.

Fourth, the thesis suggests new elements to be included in the ICA Framework: a **new category of risks** related to non-strategic joint projects. These stem from situations in which joint resources were used for individual rather than collective interests, or where collective interests were not met for other reasons. In this way, without breaking any resources or power division rules (so without defection), municipalities could nevertheless limit the potential collective benefit from collaboration and humper trust among partners. The analysis showed that this type of risk is strongly impacted by political factors, including some related to higher-level politicians, such as homophily of partisan affiliation between the mayor and regional marshal, and a some factors emphasised in the politicisation literature, including the level of clientelism.

Fifth, the analysis of empirical material also revealed a **new type of transaction cost**, related to the assessment of joint projects. These costs directly concern the newly identified risk of non-strategic projects, as the assessment of projects funded from collective resources should prevent these types of investments. In the analysed cases, the assessment involved a multi-dimensional procedure, however factors impacting it were mostly of a non-political character.

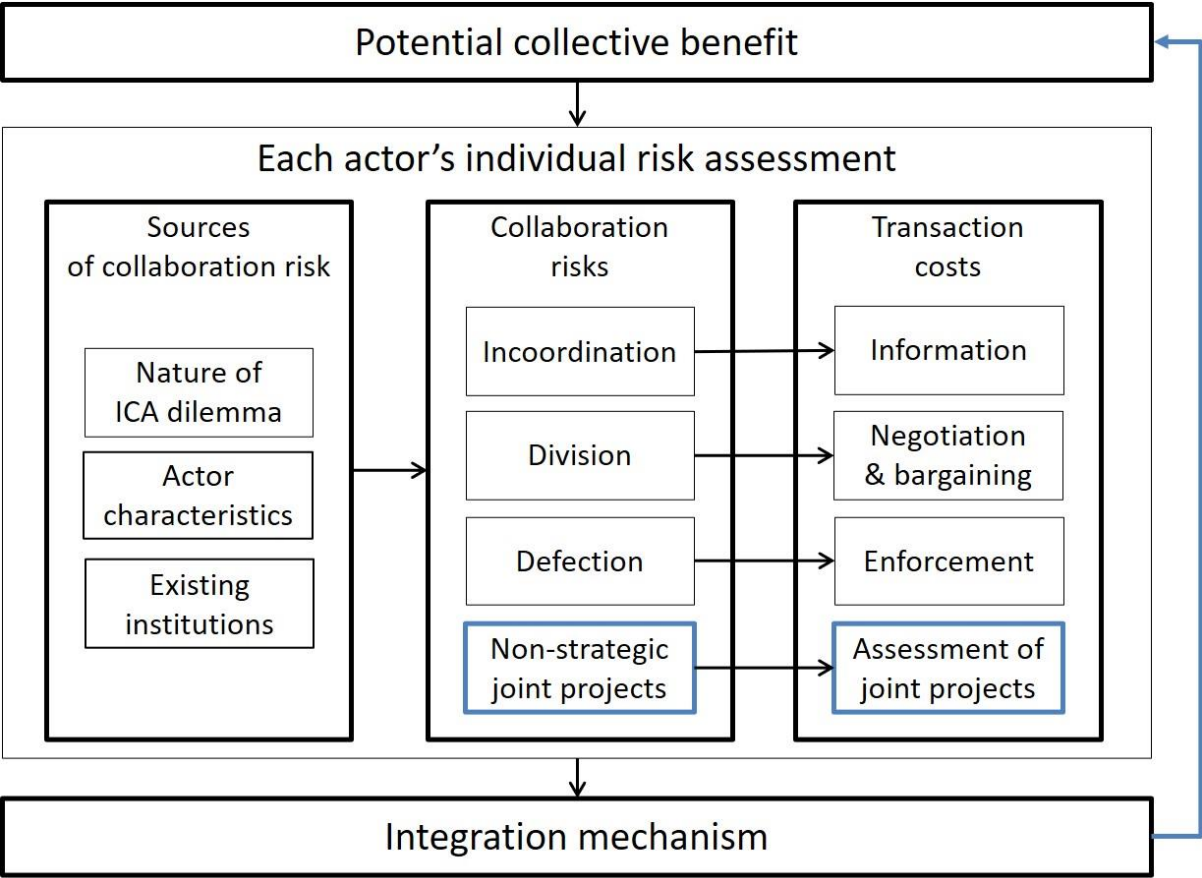
Sixth, the research also revealed a **new dimension of resources division** within the division risks and negotiations and bargaining costs. While ICA literature focuses on power and nominal resources division, ITI implementation in both metropolitan areas included another layer of bargaining between partners: thematic resources division. This was related to limits on the allocation of joint funds to particular kinds of investments, defined by higher-level authorities at regional, national and EU levels. As some types of investment were more politically attractive and relevant for metropolitan development than others, deciding the type of investment was one of the most time-consuming subject of negotiations.

Seventh, the research introduces a **methodological innovation** to the ICA literature. The Framework has not been used to analyse data collected through ethnographic methods, and more generally in interpretive research design. The qualitative character of the collected data provides empirical evidence to processes described in the ICA literature from a more theoretical perspective. It delivers an in-depth exploration of how collaborative processes happen ‘on the ground’, including their informal aspects with a detailed explanation of which factors shaped various elements of these processes. This methodological approach offers insights to be tested in future ICA studies, in particular to analyse in-depth causal processes and mechanisms that cannot be identified through conventional methods.

Lastly, the research uses the Framework to analyse inter-municipal collaboration in a **new geographical context**, as it has not been applied to Poland before. In this way, it contributes to the limited number of cases where the Framework has been applied in the European context. In particular, the thesis joins the recent studies applying the Framework in Central Eastern Europe (see Section 1.1.3).

Figure 30 visualises of the Framework including the key innovations described above: its dynamic aspect, and the new categories of risks and costs identified by the research (novelties highlighted in blue).

Figure 30 Visualisation of the innovation introduced to the ICA Framework



**10.1.2. Contribution to the politicisation literature**

Beyond the contribution to ICA literature, the thesis also enriches the wider literature on political impact on public policy and public administration, in particular on politicisation of EU cohesion policy implementation. In general, it provides ethnographic data in the political science context, answering the recent calls of researchers (Boswell et al., 2019; Rhodes,

Corbett, 2020; Schatz, 2009). In doing this, it fills in the gaps described in the Introduction and Section 1.2.2.

First, the research provided in-depth insights into **how politicisation happens**, explaining the involved processes both in terms of the variety of political factors as well as the directions and mechanisms of their impact. It uses the ICA Framework to capture specific aspects of policy implementation, broadening the scope of processes normally analysed in this context. It shows that the collaborative aspect of ITI implementation changed the channels through which political factors happened and exerted impact. This suggests that future studies on politicisation should include the specific characteristics of policies in question, in order to better understand the mechanisms of political influence.

Second, the research demonstrates the important of the **informal dimension of politicisation**, so far studied to a much lesser extent than the formal one. Contrary to initial expectations, the research shows that politics had a comparably strong impact regardless of the formal rules in place. In particular, the non-competitive mode of ITI project selection (in LFA) was expected to allow stronger politicisation of the process than the competitive procedure (in CS). However, the collected evidence shows a strong political influence on various aspects of collaboration within ITI implementation in both metropolitan areas. Moreover, the analysis revealed that specifically the division of ITI funds had very similar patterns, although this was the aspect that should differ following the formal rule. In both metropolitan areas, resources were divided proportionally to population inhabiting particular municipalities, a method perceived as fair by the great majority of collaborating mayors (see Section 8.1.2). The difference was that in LFA this division was formalised through the preselected projects, while in CS it had a fully informal character (mayors agreed not to compete with each other in particular project calls respecting the allocated limits of funds in particular thematic areas), and was a subject of constant renegotiation among mayors during the ITI implementation process (internally called a 'resources trade'). Nevertheless, the European Commission's intention of formally eliminating political influences on project selection by introducing the competitive procedure in CS, failed. Political influences moved to the informal sphere, following the same political rationale (acceptable method of division).

Third, following the interpretive research design and opening the definition of politics and political factors, the research also **broadens the selection of factors to be studied in the politicisation context**. In this way, the research fills the gap in the existing literature that mostly

focuses on the formal, quantitative, aspects of politicisation, especially when operationalising it for the purpose of empirical studies. The 48 identified political factors can serve as independent variables that influence outcomes of policy implementation. They could be used to create a comprehensive ‘politicisation indicator’, which could be calculated and treated as a dependent variable, which could be explained by other factors in further studies.

Fourth, the thesis delivers some evidence to the existing studies on politicisation by examining the **impact of the factors typically considered in literature**. For example, the research identified the low impact of clientelistic behaviour increasing the risks of non-strategic joint projects. Moreover, the research identified turnover among administrative staff after elections as one of the political factors acknowledged by local actors. However, the analysis did not show any direct impact of this on collaboration within ITI implementation. Rather, the analysis revealed anecdotal evidence on the improvement in ITI funds absorption in two municipalities following the appointment of highly qualified staff members from among the networks of newly elected mayors.

Fifth, the research shows both **positive and negative** impact of politics on collaboration processes within ITI implementation. This engages with debates in existing studies, which so far mostly highlight the negative character of politics’ impact. This thesis shows that the factors with the strongest impact – related to mayors and political leaders – had a positive impact in CS, and negative impact in LFA. Only a few factors were solely negative (e.g. clientelism, mayors’ focus on short-term electoral interests), or only positive (e.g. mayors previous experiences from earlier inter-municipal collaboration). Other factors were to some extent positive and negative in the same metropolitan areas, depending on the aspect of collaboration. This suggests that a particular political factor seldom has always a single direction of influence. For example, a charismatic mayor’s vision of local development can bring a positive innovation and serve the long-term public interest, or bring severe debts due to exaggerated ambitions adjusted to short-term electoral interests. Therefore, the thesis suggests that further studies on politicisation should take into consideration a more nuanced and qualitative account of the characteristics of political actors and their decisions in order to determine their influence.

Sixth, the research contributes to studies on **‘pork-barrel’ politics in CP implementation** (see Section 1.2.2.). First, the analysis suggests that ITI limited the regional marshal’s influence on project selection. In LFA, this was thanks to the preselection of projects which had to be agreed among all mayors – overcoming any potential partisan differences. Projects still had to be

accepted by the marshal. However, the process was – contrary to expectations – more transparent from the perspective of mayors: normally the decision-making process happens behind the closed doors but in ITI it was based on dialogue. In CS, mayors informally agreed among themselves the projects for which they would apply for funding, in this way overcoming partisan logic in favouring some projects. By empowering mayors in the process of project selection, ITI moved the scope of political influences from regional to local level.

However, contrary to expectations, the research did not identify any **partisan logic** in ITI resources allocation (as explained above, it followed the percentage of population in a particular municipality in relation to the whole metropolitan area). Partisan differences increased to a limited extent the risks and costs related to the power division at the initial stage of ITI implementation. At later implementation stages, party affiliation was not identified to have impacted the ITI collaboration at the local level. Rather, the partisan tensions in this regard were acknowledged on the axis between mayors and national government, or mayors and regional marshal. This suggests that politics is involved in CP implementation even if it is formally eliminated from the decision-making procedures, which however can empower some politicians over others.

## **10.2. Contribution to methodology**

This thesis contributes to the ethnographic research of political power with a study at the local level. It answers recent calls for more political and organisational ethnographies, and more generally for in-depth studies and qualitative data collection in political science (Boswell et al, 2019, Rhodes, Corbett, 2020). In particular, according to author's knowledge it is the first use of ethnographic methods to study inter-municipal collaboration and EU cohesion policy implementation. The research shows that this methodology can bring a particular value to studying both processes, and exploring the impact of political factors involved in them. The methodology also has certain limitations described after the main value added is set out.

### **10.2.1. Added value of ethnographic methods in the studied context**

Extensive field research revealed aspects of inter-municipal collaboration and policy implementation which were crucial for answering the research questions. Ethnographic methods enabled accessing information and collecting data that are inaccessible by other methods, such as surveys, publicly available documents, or even standard interviews.

Participatory observation in particular added depth and detail to the collected data, allowing nuances to be identified and increasing the authenticity of collected data. This was especially important considering the sensitivity of the topic, as political aspects of collaboration were often treated as a form of taboo by research participants. Participants were more open about it after the researcher spent more time in the field and in informal conversations rather than interviews. In general, the ‘rapport’ built over time with research participants increased the scope and validity of collected data, as participants spoke more openly and honestly, helped to arrange interviews and study visits with actors that could be difficult to reach, and ensured access to meetings that normally would be closed for outsiders.. Official and unofficial meetings attended during the fieldwork allowed to directly experience the collaboration processes at operational and strategic levels, and the observation of interactions between mayors. This was crucial as their characteristics and relations were the main research area.

Participatory observation also facilitated greater understanding of the behaviour of local actors in the context of joint ITI implementation. Everyday interactions with ITI Office employees revealed the meaning of particular concepts from their point of view (including politics), their value system, motivations and behaviours. This also revealed some informal processes and logic behind them, e.g. the ‘resources trade’, informal method of resources division or rationale behind the project recommendation system.

Study visits helped build understanding of particular joint projects, often revealing their real strategic or non-strategic value for the metropolitan development, including examples of clientelism or electoral interests behind particular investments. Study visits also ensured strong contextual knowledge of research participants, as the nuances involved in deciding on the strategic character of investments would be hard to assess on the basis of official documents

The expert, in-depth and semi-structured character of interviews allowed the collection of data adjusted to the specific knowledge of a particular research participant. The high level of detail allowed the assembly of anecdotes and examples of the mechanisms in question. Adjusting the scope of interviews supported the cross-checking of information provided by previous interviewees against the information provided by others, and in this way triangulate the data.

In general, ethnographic methods revealed the intangible added value of ITI. While typical evaluations of ITI focus on the analysis of quantitative indicators, the data collected during fieldwork produced a more qualitative assessment of effects. Crucially, many political factors identified in this research come from the possibility of informal conversations with research



participants and meetings attended within fieldwork. They also revealed informal ITI governance relations, i.e. a difference between the official delegation of governance tasks, and the informal influence that particular actors exercise, and through which channels this influence is exercised. For example, the crucial role of the leaders was identified both in interviews and during meetings attended during fieldwork. This diverse experience led to the identification of the specific factors that mattered most in terms of their impact on collaboration, including qualitative characteristics such as charisma or personal support for smaller municipalities in the metropolitan area.

### **10.2.2. Limitations of ethnographic methods in the studied context**

The main limitation for this research were limited resources, which affected the time spent in the field. Typical ethnographic field works often take a year or more, although researchers do not specify the minimum required time (Galman, 2007; Schwartz-Shea Yanow, 2012). Nevertheless, a longer period than the three months spent in the field could have delivered more knowledge on how the different factors changed over time. For example, a year after the research there were local and regional elections, which meant a change of political leaders and perhaps changes in staff among administration representatives, commitment to collaboration and power relations between ITI collaboration members. Nevertheless, at the end of stay in each region the field notes no longer indicated any new areas for learning, which in the literature is considered to be the right moment to leave the field. Moreover, one cannot predict how the regional and local authorities would react to the idea of continuing the participatory observation for a year – potentially this could have even closed access to the field completely.

Other limitations are related to the typical aspects of the interpretive research design. For example, data collection was limited in terms of space and time: the researcher cannot be in multiple places at the same time, and often there was a need to make a choice in terms of which meeting to attend or which observation spot to choose for the particular moment. Another limitation was the dual potential bias. This concerned researcher's perception of the field and the way of collecting data, and also the potential bias of the research participants choose. Regarding the first aspect, this was the first long ethnographic study the author has ever made, and although she made sure to receive a theoretical and practical training in this area, and to prepare in the best possible way to fieldwork, certainly a more experienced researcher potentially could have captured more relevant data and deepened their interpretation.

Regarding the research participants' bias, it is important to remember that they were aware of the researcher's presence and often wanted to present their actions in a positive way. However, this was balanced by the significant time of participatory observation as it would be hard to pretend and behave differently every day for over a month. Research participants gradually became accustomed to the researcher's presence and more open with their informal conversations. On the basis of this experience, it is argued that this type of research is even less prone to gathering idealised data than typical interviews, as during a single conversation respondents may easily manage to present themselves in a certain light, while the everyday observation verifies what they say with what they actually do and how they behave.

### **10.3. Policy implications**

The research offers valuable insights for policy makers involved in ITI and broader EU cohesion policy programming, implementation and evaluation at European, national, regional and local levels. These insights can be particularly useful when planning the future of this particular instrument in various countries<sup>44</sup>, but also more broadly where EU funds are being invested in territories surpassing administrative units (e.g. in international cross-border collaboration or building urban-rural linkages). Moreover, the insights can be instructive for Polish representatives of municipalities engaging or planning to become involved in inter-municipal collaboration.

The research provides in-depth insights into ITI implementation process at the micro level, explaining the 'unwritten rules of the game' and showing the informal but crucial added value of the instrument, which is not captured by typical evaluations. Notably, the thesis showed how formal rules are interpreted by the actors applying them in practice. This is particularly important for ITI, an instrument which aims to support 'place-based' approach to EU funds. The research demonstrated how such a policy and investments within it were indeed shaped on the ground, which higher-level rules clashed with local actors' expectations and needs, and how resulting dilemmas were solved in practice.

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<sup>44</sup> The author made extensive efforts to use the conducted research in practice. In 2019 she engaged with practitioners involved in ITI programming at the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy at the European Commission, sharing initial implication from the research before planning of the ITI in 2021-2027 at the European level. The author contributed also a Polish case study to the World Bank's report advising on ITI implementation in Romania for 2021-27, and participated in discussions with the representatives of Romanian national authorities. In 2018, the author contributed to the evaluation report of the ITI implementation in Poland conducted by external experts for the Ministry of Economic Development. In the same year she presented insights from the research at the conference for practitioners on territorial interrelations, which was organized by ESPON EGTC - a European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation, supporting policy making with territorial evidence.

The higher-level rule with the strongest impact on collaboration was the project selection mode. The research showed that imposing the competitive mode on CS made it much more complicated for municipalities to coordinate their investments, substantially increasing the costs that local actors had to invest in collaboration. Despite the formally open, competitive calls for projects, local actors agreed on the division of resources among themselves informally. In order to coordinate investments contributing to the joint strategy, they informed each other about projects, agreed who was to apply for funds in which call and decided not to compete with one another.

Another consequence of such informal coordination was the increased chance for smaller municipalities to access funding. This was important as due to lower financial and administrative capacity these actors tend to lose out to bigger cities in open project calls (Medve-Balint, 2016). Moreover, one of the most surprising discoveries during field research was that in both regions the approved and commonly accepted method of resources division was based on the proportion of inhabitants per municipality in the ITI area. The method was used in both cases despite the two different project selection modes. This shows that a higher-level rule can be complemented with a parallel informal process in order to increase the decision-making power of local politicians over project selection. This research does not assess the value of such a method of funds distribution for strategic development. However, it is important to highlight that finding a method of division acceptable for all mayors was a crucial condition without which joint ITI implementation would not be possible (see Section 7.2.2).

Moreover, formal rules defined the scope of tasks of particular actors, while the research revealed a difference between the official delegation, and the informal influence that actors exercised. Apart from the above mentioned mayors, the ITI Offices played a more important role in ITI implementation than was indicated by the scope of tasks officially delegated by MAs. These newly created institutions managed not only to comply with the typical EU funds administration tasks, but also fulfilled additional important and complex functions of inter-municipal partnership building and representing the collective metropolitan interest. This is an important change as in the Polish local government system as elected politicians represent the interest of a single municipality, a county or a region, while the metropolitan level does not have formal representation.

The research also showed the extraordinary level of complexity of the accountability relations that ITI Offices operated in. Not only had they to face the usual complexity of an implementing

body dealing with EU funds, complying with regional, national and European indicators and requirements, but at the same time they faced all typical complexities of inter-municipal organisations, e.g. conflicting interests of the core city(ies) and smaller municipalities, to whom ITI Office was equally accountable. The latter aspect was particularly complicated in LFA, as the agreement form determined that ITI Office staff were officially employed by the capital city, while it had to represent the collective interest of all municipalities in the ITI.

Some other rules had unintended consequences in practice. First, the pressure on fast absorption of funds undermined the expected strategic coordination of ITI projects. The latter requires significant amount of time and resources from collaborating partners, and the time pressure was one of the factors limiting the quality and coordination of the projects. Second, formal project partnerships imposed in LFA brought limited added value to the strategic coordination of projects, while causing significant delays and frustration among partners due to formal interdependence. On the contrary, informal coordination of individual projects in CS and LFA often brought more significant strategic value (see Section 7.1). Third, the thematic scope of ITI investments defined at the EU, national and regional level only to some extent reflected the place-based needs and challenges of metropolitan development. This was especially the case in LFA, where the scope of investments was more limited by the regional authorities, negatively influencing the perceived benefit from joint implementation of ITI, and reducing the motivation of municipal representatives for more ambitious joint actions. Fourth, the ambiguity of the concept of ‘integration’ in the name of ITI led to different interpretations among actors and its translation into bureaucratic requirements that did not capture the real added value of the joint implementation of this instrument (see Section 6.3.1).

At the same time, the research showed the significant added value of ITI implementation, and the limitations of the typical evaluations in capturing these aspects. First, regular meetings among mayors and ITI Coordinators led to building trust, informal networks and bridging social capital. Meetings boosted information exchange among municipalities, leading to examples of mutual inspirations, strategic coordination and the avoidance of duplication and rivalry over funds. Second, the research shows that decentralised EU funds management led to empowerment of local actors and promoted a functional, metropolitan perspective among them. This suggests at least a partial fulfilment of the ultimate purpose of ITI. Third, the thesis shows the administrative capacity built over time by both ITI Offices and partnering municipalities, which was observed in studies conducted at the initial stage of ITI implementation (Ferry, Borkowska-Waszak, 2018).

Overall, ITI implementation tested collaborative mechanisms and in this way prepared a solid base for future collaboration in the two metropolitan areas. The crucial role of earlier experience in inter-municipal collaboration was not only mentioned by the ICA literature but also other studies in Poland (Krukowska, Lackowska, 2016). The research showed that there are already some spill-over collaboration cases exceeding the ITI scope, to a higher extent in CS but also LFA. It created communication networks at strategic and operational levels, and equipped both mayors and ITI Coordinators with capacities and experiences in inter-municipal collaboration in the metropolitan area, which could be used for strengthening collaboration in the future.

Although evaluation of ITI implementation is not a purpose of this research, there are a number of insights that could be useful for future improvements. First, EU funds could support to a larger extent data collection at the local level in comparable ways, so that they can be aggregated to metropolitan areas. Lack of data was a huge challenge when preparing quality joint strategies and consequently, also projects of evidence-based strategic value. Second, considering the importance of political and administrative leaders in joint ITI implementation demonstrated in the research, it would be valuable to create an international network and perhaps a dedicated training programme, to enable experience exchange on a larger scale, build capacity and improve local leadership and partnership brokering skills. Third, it would be important to involve other local actors to the metropolitan development planning and joint ITI implementation, e.g. NGOs, universities and private sector representatives. Lastly, more qualitative indicators could enrich the future evaluations of ITI implementation, and other collaborative arrangements. In order to capture their crucial added value, the factors and impacts explored in the research could be taken into consideration when preparing such indicators.

#### **10.4. Recommendations for further research**

An often mentioned limitation of the interpretive research and using ethnographic methods is the lack of possibility to replicate it (as explained in Chapter 2). However, there are several ways in which future studies can address the findings of this thesis.

First, an area of potential future could apply a similar methodological and theoretical approach in different territories and time and covering different collaborative initiatives. The insights from this research could be an inspiration for how to approach similar studies in other countries and regions in Poland, in order to explore collaborative processes and the role of political factors

in them in these other contexts. A similar study could be repeated in the same metropolitan areas to explore long-term effects of identified political factors, and strengthen the dynamic dimension of the ICA Framework.

A second strand of studies could use the findings of this research to build on the ICA Framework while using different methodologies. For example, the most impactful political factors identified in this research could be tested in quantitative studies in various territories. This is especially recommended for other countries in Europe, considering the comparable context and so far limited number of the Framework's applications in this context. Conducting chi-square tests on summary tables with codes could be a measure of association where statistically significant differences can be observed. Moreover, the dynamic dimension of the ICA Framework could be further explored, and the newly introduced categories of risks and costs could be tested in cases of inter-municipal collaboration without the use of EU funds. Another aspect would be to use the ICA Framework to assess other collaborative arrangements in functional spaces, e.g. international cross-border collaboration or instruments focusing on urban-rural linkages.

Third, the findings of this research could be developed to advance theory. Studies could test the conditions in which political factors exert impact on particular aspects of collaboration and policy implementation. Further research could identify when they matter and how they are inter-related. For example, Qualitative Comparison Analysis could be used to determine which factors are necessary for the success of collaborative projects. A separate strand of studies could examine the relationship between political and non-political factors. This could show when and why particular factors matter. Such studies could be done within the ICA Framework as well as within other theoretical frameworks related to public policy.

Finally, the thesis encourages the use of other methods to further explore the role of politics on inter-municipal collaboration and EU funds implementation. This research revealed the richness and variety of the factors involved, and both positive and negative character of their impact. Undoubtedly, there is more to be explored. Further studies dedicated to this subject can contribute evidence to multiple research areas, formulating insightful practical implications.

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## Annex I. Pre-fieldwork ‘Request for support’ letter (ENG)

7<sup>th</sup> of May 2017

**‘The role of political and administrative factors during EU Cohesion Policy implementation’  
Study being carried out under the PhD studentship funded by the University of Strathclyde.**

### REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

To whom it may concern

The European Policies Research Centre (EPRC), University of Strathclyde certifies that

**Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak**, a PhD researcher at the EPRC, has been mandated to undertake the study **‘The role of political and administrative factors during EU Cohesion Policy implementation in Central Eastern Europe: the case of Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland’**.

The PhD is a part of EPRC’s wider research programme on Integrated Territorial Strategies (ITIs), including recent project ‘Territorial strategies supported by EU territorial tools (sustainable urban development under Art. 7 ERDF, ITI and CLLD when related to SUD)’, carried out on behalf of the European Commission.

The aim of the study is to analyse the implementation of ITIs, in particular the role of political, administrative and external factors during project selection. Within that, it will identify formal and informal rules of implementation, as well as structures and mechanisms influencing the input of these stakeholders during decision-making process.

The study will use the following methods:

- **Systematic content analysis** of relevant documents on ITI implementation, in particular project selection, i.e.: strategies, reports, guidelines, data sets, selection criteria, agreements, protocols, minutes from the meetings of ROP and ITI committees, project calls documentation, etc.;
- **In-depth interviews** with various participants of ITI implementation process: politicians, civil servants, experts, external stakeholders, beneficiaries, members of monitoring and steering committees, etc.;
- **Participatory observation** during the process of ITI implementation, in particular project selection – e.g. in the MAs and IBs, the meetings of ROP Monitoring Committees and ITI Steering Committees, etc.

The success of this study depends on the data and information that the PhD researcher is able to gather from stakeholders. Therefore, EPRC would be grateful if you could provide her with the assistance, information and documents she needs to successfully conduct the study.

Researchers at the University of Strathclyde are bound to confidentiality rules and, in case of sensitive data, are obliged to ensure data protection and anonymity of sources. It is therefore guaranteed that Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak will treat the information collected during the study as confidential and use it only for academic purposes.

Thank you in advance for your kind support and collaboration. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,  
Professor John Bachtler  
EPRC Director

## Annex II: Sample participant information sheet and consent form (ENG)

### Research Project: The role of political and administrative factors in the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy: The case of Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland

conducted by Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak,  
European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde (UK)

#### Introduction

You have been invited to take part in a PhD research study financed by the University of Strathclyde (UK). The study is funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 programme. This sheet provides information about the project and the role of participants. Please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

#### What is the purpose of this investigation?

The aim of the study is to analyse the implementation of ITIs, in particular the role of political, administrative and external factors during project selection. Within that, it will identify formal and informal rules of implementation, as well as structures and mechanisms influencing the input of these stakeholders during decision-making process. An important part of the study is to understand and present the ITI implementation from the perspective of persons and institutions directly involved in the process.

#### What will happen in the project and what will be your role?

The fieldwork will take place in Slaskie and Lubelskie Voivodeships in Poland between Spetember and December 2017.

For about a month the researcher will be participating in the work of each ITI Office. During this time she will want to get to know your everyday responsibilities and tasks regarding ITI implementation. She will participate in meetings and ask for explanation and inclusion in the following stages of ITI implementation.

Moreover, chosen persons will be asked to answer additional questions in expert interviews, which timing will be agreed beforehand.

During the study the researcher will ask for access to documents related to ITI implementation. Form and scope of the documents will be agreed according to legal and procedural rules.

#### Why have you been invited to take part?

The aim of the project is to get to know the process of ITI implementation from the perspective of various participants of the process. Invitation to participate in the study means that you play an important role in ITI implementation, and that your work, knowledge and opinions are crucial for the success of the study.

#### Do you have to take part?

You are being invited to participate voluntarily in the project. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without any consequences. The researcher hopes to solve any doubts before you decide to do it.

#### What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

There are no foreseen risks, burdens or specific preparatory requirements for you.

#### What are the benefits to you taking part?

It is likely that you will not receive any personal benefit for your participation in this study besides possible knowledge and experience exchange on public policies and cooperation. With your participation, you will make a substantial contribution to our understanding and disseminating the practitioners' perspective on ITI implementation.

**What happens to the information in the project?**

Responses you give in the questionnaires, interviews, focus groups will be kept confidential. Recorded data will not include any personal identification so it will not be possible to identify you afterwards. The data will go into an archive stored securely at the University of Strathclyde so that people in the future will be able to understand people's attitudes to the European Union. Your identity will be protected at all times. The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

**What happens next?**

You will be able to obtain the main results of the study after the investigation is complete, which is planned for December 2018. The researcher will be happy to send her dissertation and/or related publications by e-mail.

**Who do I ask if I have any questions or concerns?**

In case of any issue involving you in your role of participant of this research study, you are invited to contact me or my supervisor Dr Martin Ferry from the Strathclyde University.

**Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak**

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In Poland you may contact a representative of the Centre for European Regional and Local Studies EUROREG at the University of Warsaw, who knows this project and supports its realisation.

**Dr hab. Agnieszka Olechnicka**

Dyrektor  
Centrum Europejskich Studiów Regionalnych  
i Lokalnych (EUROREG)  
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e-mail: a.olechnicka@uw.edu.pl

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the European Policies research Centre's Ethics Committee. More information can be found here: <http://www.eprc-strath.eu/supportPages/Ethics-and-sustainability.html>. If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

**Secretary to the University Ethics Committee**

Research Knowledge Exchange Services  
University of Strathclyde  
Graham Hills Building  
50 George Street  
Glasgow, G1 1QE  
Telephone: 0141 548 3707  
Email: [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME TO READ THIS INFORMATION**

## SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

### Research Project: The role of political and administrative factors in the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy: The case of Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland

conducted by Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak,

European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde (UK)

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences. If I exercise my right to withdraw and I don't want my data to be used, any data which have been collected from me will be destroyed.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study any personal data (i.e. data which identify me personally) at any time.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e. .data which do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project
- I consent to being audio recorded as part of the project
- I consent to being photographed during the project and to using these photographs for publications related to the project.

(PRINT NAME)	
Institution	
Signature of Participant:	
Date:	/ /2017

## Annex III. Sample participant information sheet and consent form (PL)

### BROSZURA INFORMACYJNA NA TEMAT BADANIA

#### **‘Rola czynników politycznych i administracyjnych podczas wdrażania Polityki Spójności UE: Przypadek Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych w Polsce’**

realizowanego przez Sylwią Borkowską-Waszak,  
European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde (UK)

#### **Wprowadzenie**

Zostali Państwo zaproszeni do udziału w badaniach doktoranckich, finansowanych przez University of Strathclyde w Glasgow (UK). Poniżej znajdują się najważniejsze informacje na temat badania oraz roli jego uczestników. Jeśli coś będzie niejasne, chętnie odpowiem na dodatkowe pytania.

#### **Jaki jest cel badania?**

Celem badania jest analiza procesu wdrażania Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych (dalej ZIT), w szczególności roli czynników politycznych, administracyjnych i zewnętrznych podczas wyboru projektów. Badanie ma zadanie określić formalne i nieformalne zasady wdrażania, jak również struktury i mechanizmy wpływające na wkład różnych interesariuszy w proces podejmowania decyzji. Ważnym elementem badania jest poznanie i zaprezentowanie procesu wdrażania ZIT z perspektywy osób i instytucji bezpośrednio w nim uczestniczących.

#### **Co będzie się działo podczas badania i jaka będzie Państwa rola?**

Badania będzie realizowane w Województwie Śląskim i Województwie Lubelskim w terminie wrzesień – grudzień 2017 r.

Przez około miesiąc będę uczestniczyć w pracy Biura ZIT. Zależy mi, aby poznać Państwa codzienne obowiązki dotyczące wdrażania ZIT. W tym czasie będę prosiła o możliwość udziału w spotkaniach merytorycznych i organizacyjnych, oraz o wyjaśnienie i włączenie mnie do procesu przygotowania i realizacji kolejnych etapów wdrażania ZIT.

Wybrane osoby zostaną również poproszone o udzielenie odpowiedzi na dodatkowe pytania podczas wywiadów pogłębionych, których terminy zostaną wcześniej uzgodnione.

W trakcie badania będę również prosiła o dostęp do dokumentów związanych z wdrażaniem ZIT. Forma i zakres przekazania dokumentów zostaną uzgodnione w zależności od odpowiednich wymogów prawnych.

#### **Dlaczego zostali Państwo zaproszeni do udziału w badaniu?**

Celem badania jest poznanie procesu wdrażania ZIT z perspektywy jego różnych uczestników i organizatorów. Zaproszenie do udziału w badaniu oznacza, że pełnią Państwo istotną funkcję we wdrażaniu ZIT a Państwa praca, wiedza i opinie są kluczowe dla powodzenia badania.

#### **Czy trzeba wziąć udział w badaniu?**

Są Państwo zaproszeni do dobrowolnego udziału w badaniu. W każdej chwili będzie można bez konsekwencji zrezygnować z udziału w nim. Mam jednak nadzieję wyjaśnić wszelkie wątpliwości zanim Państwo się na to zdecydują.

#### **Jakie są korzyści z udziału w badaniu?**

Badanie nie przewiduje bonifikat ani wynagrodzeń dla jego uczestników, oprócz potencjalnej wymiany wiedzy i doświadczeń w zakresie polityk publicznych i współpracy. Państwa udział w badaniu będzie jednak stanowił istotny wkład w zrozumienie i upowszechnienie perspektywy osób i instytucji odpowiedzialnych za wdrażanie ZIT.

### Jakie jest potencjalne ryzyko związane z udziałem w badaniu?

Badanie nie przewiduje żadnych potencjalnych ryzyk ani zagrożeń, a także nie wymaga odrębnych przygotowań w stosunku do jego uczestników.

### Co stanie się z informacjami pozyskanymi podczas badania?

Informacje uzyskane podczas obserwacji, wywiadów i analizy dokumentów będą wykorzystane i przechowywane zgodnie z zasadami poufności. Poszczególne wypowiedzi zostaną zanonimizowane w największym możliwym stopniu: zapisane dane nie będą zawierać danych personalnych, a tam gdzie podanie sprawowanej funkcji ujawniłoby tożsamość, również ta informacja zostanie pominięta. Zebrane dane będą bezpiecznie przechowywane na komputerze chronionym hasłem i używanym jedynie przez autora. Zostaną one wykorzystane jedynie do opracowania rozprawy doktorskiej oraz ewentualnych publikacji naukowych. Nie przewiduje się wydania komercyjnych publikacji. Badania prowadzone przez pracowników i studentów European Policies Research Centre muszą być zgodne z dokumentem 'University of Strathclyde's Code of Practice on Investigations on Human Beings', zawierającym zbiór zasad zapewniających etyczny sposób prowadzenia badań. Ponadto University of Strathclyde, jako instytucja zarejestrowana Information Commissioner's Office, zapewnia że wszelkie dane osobowe uczestników badania będą przetwarzane zgodnie z przepisami ustawy *Data Protection Act 1998*. Państwa prywatność będzie chroniona zarówno podczas jak i po zakończeniu badania.

### Kiedy będą dostępne wyniki badania?

Zapoznanie się z wynikami badania będzie możliwe po jego zakończeniu, które planowane jest na grudzień 2018 r. Zainteresowanym osobom chętnie prześlę ukończoną pracę doktorską i/lub pochodne publikacje drogą mailową.

### Do kogo można się zwrócić w razie pytań lub wątpliwości?

W razie jakichkolwiek spraw związanych z Państwa uczestnictwem w badaniu, bardzo proszę o kontakt ze mną lub moim promotorem Dr. Martinem Ferry ze Strathclyde University (dane kontaktowe obok).

### Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak

PhD Researcher

European Policies Research Centre

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40 George Street, Glasgow G1 1QE

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### Dr Martin Ferry

Senior Research Fellow

European Policies Research Centre

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tel: +44 141 548 3920

e-mail: [martin.ferry@strath.ac.uk](mailto:martin.ferry@strath.ac.uk)

W Polsce można skontaktować się z przedstawicielką EUROREG na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim, która znanijsze badanie i wspiera jego realizację.

### Dr hab. Agnieszka Olechnicka

Dyrektor

Centrum Europejskich Studiów Regionalnych i Lokalnych (EUROREG)

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tel.: (+48) 22 826 16 54

e-mail: [a.olechnicka@uw.edu.pl](mailto:a.olechnicka@uw.edu.pl)

Nienijsze badanie zostało zatwierdzone przez Komitet ds. Etyki przy European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde. Więcej informacji na ten temat można uzyskać na stronie: <http://www.eprc-strath.eu/supportPages/Ethics-and-sustainability.html>. Jeśli będą mieli Państwo pytania lub wątpliwości związane z kwestiami etycznymi podczas lub po zakończeniu badania, albo chcieliby skontaktować się z niezależną osobą od której można uzyskać więcej informacji, proszę skontaktować się z:

### Secretary to the University Ethics Committee

Research Knowledge Exchange Services

University of Strathclyde

50 George Street, Glasgow, G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707

Email: [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk)

**DZIĘKUJĘ ZA CZAS POŚWIĘCONY NA  
ZAPOZNANIE SIĘ Z POWYŻSZYMI INFORMACJAMI**



## ZGODA NA UDZIAŁ W BADANIU

### **‘Rola czynników politycznych i administracyjnych podczas wdrażania Polityki Spójności UE: Przypadek Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych w Polsce’**

realizowanym przez Sylwią Borkowską-Waszak,  
European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde (UK)

- Potwierdzam, że przeczytałem/am i zrozumiałem/am broszurę informacyjną na temat powyższego badania, a prowadząca badanie wyczerpująco odpowiedziała na ewentualne pytania;
- Rozumiem, że mój udział w badaniu jest dobrowolny i mogę się z niego wycofać w każdej chwili do momentu zakończenia badania, bez konieczności podania przyczyny i bez konsekwencji. Jeśli skorzystam z tego prawa i nie chcę, aby moje dane zostały wykorzystane, informacje których udzieliłem/am zostaną zniszczone;
- Rozumiem, że mogę wycofać z badania dane personalne (pozwalające zidentyfikować moją tożsamość) w każdym momencie do zakończenia badania;
- Rozumiem, że zanonimizowane dane (takie, które nie pozwalają zidentyfikować mojej tożsamości) nie mogą zostać wycofane od kiedy zostaną włączone do badania;
- Rozumiem, że informacje nagrane podczas badania pozostaną poufne i żadne dane, które pozwalają na moją identyfikację, nie zostaną publicznie udostępnione;
- Wyrażam zgodę na mój udział w badaniu;
- Wyrażam zgodę na nagrywanie moich wypowiedzi na nośniki audio w trakcie trwania badania;
- Wyrażam zgodę na bycie fotografowanym w trakcie trwania badania i wykorzystanie fotografii z moim wizerunkiem w publikacjach związanych z badaniem.

IMIĘ I NAZWISKO	
Instytucja	
Podpis	
Data	/ / 2017

## Annex IV. Sample interview scenario (PL)

### SCENARIUSZ WYWIADU DO BADANIA

#### 'Rola czynników politycznych i administracyjnych podczas wdrażania Polityki Spójności UE: Przypadek Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych w Polsce'

realizowanego przez Sylwię Borkowską-Waszak,  
European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde (UK)

Respondent	
Stanowisko	
Instytucja	
Data	/ / 2017

#### Początki ZIT

1. Od kiedy uczestniczy Pani we wdrażaniu Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych?  
(Strategia, formowanie stowarzyszenia, przygotowanie kryteriów)
2. Jakie miał Pani obawy na początku formowania się ZIT?  
(Które z nich się potwierdziły, a które nie?)
3. Pani gmina jest jedną z najskuteczniej ubiegających się o środki europejskie gmin w Związku ZIT. Co jest kluczem do sukcesu?  
(Czy ubiegaliście się o środki europejskie już wcześniej? Na ile pomaga biuro ZIT?)

#### Terażniejszość: Projekty

4. Z którego projektu realizowanego przez Miasto jest Pani najbardziej zadowolona?  
(Który projekt przyniesie największe korzyści gminie? Z czyjej inicjatywy on powstał?)
5. Jak Pani ocenia łatwość uzyskania dofinansowania z ZIT w porównaniu z innymi źródłami, np. RPO i Krajowymi? Co umożliwia te ułatwienia?
6. Co Pani zdaniem obecnie gwarantuje sukces w uzyskaniu dofinansowania?  
Kto Pani zdaniem ma największy wpływ na to, które projekty zostaną wybrane?  
Co i kto powinno decydować o wyborze projektu?
7. Czy Pani zdaniem sposób oceny projektów jest sprawiedliwy?  
(A sposób podziału środków pomiędzy podregionami i gminami?  
Na jakiej zasadzie podejmujecie decyzję o rekomendacji dla projektu zewnętrznego?)

### **Teraźniejszość: Współpraca**

1. Jaka Pani zdaniem powinna być rola wóldarzy, lokalnych koordynatorów, i innych osób oraz instytucji we wdrażaniu ZIT?
2. Jak układa się współpraca w Państwa podregionie?  
Jak często się Pan kontaktuje z sąsiednimi gminami?
3. Jak ocenia Pani współpracę z biurem ZIT? Jak często Pana gmina się kontaktuje z biurem ZIT? Co jest Pana zdaniem największą **korzyścią z ZIT** w ubieganiu się o fundusze UE?
4. Czy realizujecie lub planujecie Państwo jakieś projekty partnerskie? Dlaczego?

### **Przyszłość**

5. W co by Pani inwestowała fundusze UE, gdyby nie było ograniczeń narzuconych przez KE i MR? Do jakiego stopnia na to, co jest realizowane wpływa KE, MR i IZ?
6. Czy widziałaby Pani sens w płaceniu składki członkowskiej Związku ZIT po 2020 roku, gdyby nie było więcej dedykowanych ZIT funduszy unijnych?
7. Co Pani zdaniem można poprawić w funkcjonowaniu ZIT po 2020 roku?  
Co jest obecnie największą trudnością?

## Annex V. Interview questions (ENG)

Stage of ITI implementation	Main interview questions	Potential follow-up interview questions
The past	1. Since when have you been involved in the implementation of ITI?	What was the stage of ITI preparation? What has been your main role in the process? How did it happen that you started working on ITI implementation?
	2. Could you describe the first ITI meetings that you remember?	Who was there? Did you know the representatives of other municipalities? What were the main topics? What was the atmosphere like? What changed the most in the way ITI operates now in comparison to the beginning?
	3. What kind of hopes and concerns did you have in the beginning of ITI formation?	Which of them came true and which did not? In critical situations, who played the key role in achieving consensus?
	4. How did it happen that municipalities in your FUA formed an association/ agreement?	Was there any discussion about the legal form of cooperation? If yes, who participated in the discussion? Who took the decision? How did it happen that more municipalities were included in ITI?
	5. How did the process of preparation of the ITI strategy look like?	What was the role of municipalities/mayors/ITI office/Marshal Office/external partners? Who wrote the text? Who prepared the diagnosis? To what extent was it a collective process?
	6. How were the main strategic objectives selected?	What was the order of preparing particular parts of the strategy? Was there a discussion on the objectives among mayors?
	7. Which project realised in your municipality are you the most proud of/happy about?	What will be the added value that the project will bring – to the municipality? Whose initiative was this project? Where did the ideas of projects come from in general?
	8. How was the decision taken on which projects will be prepared to be ITI-funded in each municipality?	How was it decided in which priorities and how many projects will be realised in your municipality? Who had influence on the money and priority distribution in the whole ITI?
The present: projects	9. Which of the projects realised in other partnering municipalities is the most beneficial for citizens of your municipality?	At which stages were particular projects consulted or coordinated with each other? To what extent such coordination was important in project preparation for mayors/local coordinators/ITI office/Marshal office or others?
	10. How do you assess simplicity of obtaining funds from ITI in comparison to other EU sources, e.g. regional and national operational programmes?	What makes one of them easier/more available? What is the biggest added value of ITI in applying for EU funds? To what extent can local actors have influence the choice of projects, and to what extent it is still decided by the Marshal Office?
	11. What in your opinion guarantees success in obtaining ITI funding?	Who has the most influence on the project selection? What and who should decide on the project selection? What is the current role of mayors/ experts/ local councillors/ Marshal/ Ministry in the ITI implementation? What in your opinion should be the role of mayors (etc.) in ITI implementation?
	12. What do you think about the current system of ITI project selection?	Is it fair? How does the internal allocation system work? How was a consensus over project selection criteria achieved? How the (non-) competitive mode affects projects? How does the assessment alongside the ITI strategy work? How do you assess the work of experts assessing projects in MA and ITI?

<b>The present: collaboration</b>	13. How does cooperation work in your ITI area?	How often do you contact other municipalities? When do mayors contact each other, when local coordinators contact each other, and when do local coordinators contact mayors? How often were the contacts before ITI? Do you contact other municipalities about any non ITI-related issues? If yes, can you describe an example of such a contact?
	14. How do you assess cooperation with the ITI office?	How often do you contact the ITI office? What is their main role? When are they helpful? When are they unnecessary or disturbing? When do local coordinators and when do mayors contact them? Do you think it makes a difference that the ITI office is formally within/outside the urban structure?
	15. Do you conduct projects in partnership with other municipalities?	If yes, what are your experiences from such a project partnership? How did you choose your partners/how did you become the leader? What is the main added value and main obstacles in project partnership? If not, do you cooperate informally with other municipalities when preparing your individual projects? Have you conducted partnership projects in the past?
<b>The future</b>	16. What would you invest EU funds in your municipality, if there was no limitations by the European Commission and Ministry of Development?	Can you think of any new potential projects or that would be beneficial for the whole urban area? What are the thematic areas where inter-municipal collaboration would be needed, but now is not covered by the ITI?
	17. In your opinion, would it make sense to pay a membership fee of an inter-municipal association, if after 2020 there is no ITI-dedicated EU funding available?	What does have an influence on the decision whether to develop the collaboration or not? When is it worth it? Who makes the decision? What are the potential obstacles or challenges in prolonging or developing the cooperation?
	18. What could be improved in the way ITI functions after 2020?	What is currently the biggest obstacle/difficulty? Which elements should be kept the way they function now? Should the (non-) competitive mode be kept or improved? Who should have the main role in planning the post 2020 ITI? What advice would you give to other ITIs to ensure good inter-municipal collaboration?

## Annex VI. Ethics Application Form (ENG)

<p><b>1. Title of the investigation</b></p> <p>'The role of political and administrative factors during EU Cohesion Policy implementation in Central Eastern Europe: the case of Integrated Territorial Investments in Poland'.</p> <p>Please state the title on the PIS and Consent Form, if different: (PL) 'Rola czynników politycznych i administracyjnych podczas wdrażania Polityki Spójności UE w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej: Przypadek Zintegrowanych Inwestycji Terytorialnych w Polsce'.</p>
<p><b>2. Chief Investigator (must be at least a Grade 7 member of staff or equivalent)</b></p> <p>Name: Martin Ferry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Professor</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reader</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Senior Lecturer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lecturer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Senior Teaching Fellow</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Fellow</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior Research Fellow</p> <p>Department: European Policies Research Centre</p> <p>Telephone: +44 141 548 3920</p> <p>E-mail: martin.ferry@strath.ac.uk</p>
<p><b>3. Other Strathclyde investigator(s)</b></p> <p>Name: Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak</p> <p>Status (e.g. lecturer, post-/undergraduate): PhD student</p> <p>Department: European Policies Research Centre</p> <p>Telephone: +44 141 548 3222</p> <p>E-mail: sylwia.borkowska@strath.ac.uk</p>
<p><b>4. Non-Strathclyde collaborating investigator(s) (where applicable)</b></p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Status (e.g. lecturer, post-/undergraduate):</p> <p>Department/Institution:</p> <p>If student(s), name of supervisor:</p> <p>Telephone:</p> <p>E-mail:</p> <p>Please provide details for all investigators involved in the study:</p>
<p><b>5. Overseas Supervisor(s) (where applicable)</b></p> <p>Name(s): Agnieszka Olechnicka</p> <p>Status: Director</p> <p>Department/Institution: University of Warsaw, Centre for European Regional and Local Studies (EUROREG)</p> <p>Telephone: (+48) 22 826 16 54</p> <p>Email: a.olechnicka@uw.edu.pl</p> <p>I can confirm that the local supervisor has obtained a copy of the Code of Practice: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please provide details for all supervisors involved in the study:</p>
<p><b>6. Location of the investigation</b></p> <p>At what place(s) will the investigation be conducted</p> <p>Country: Poland</p> <p>Cities: Warsaw, Katowice, Gliwice, Lublin</p> <p>Institutions: the Marshal Office of the Lubelskie Voivodeship, the Marshal Office of the Silesian Voivodeship, the Lublin City Office, the Association of Municipalities and Districts of the Central Subregion of the Silesian Voivodeship .</p> <p>If this is not on University of Strathclyde premises, how have you satisfied yourself that adequate Health and Safety arrangements are in place to prevent injury or harm?</p>

Each of the institutions listed above have their own Health and Safety Regulations, which I will be obliged to obey.

### 7. Duration of the investigation

Duration(years/months) : 4 months

Start date (expected): 01 / 09 / 2017      Completion date (expected): 31 / 12 / 2017

### 8. Sponsor

Please note that this is not the funder; refer to Section C and Annexes 1 and 3 of the Code of Practice for a definition and the key responsibilities of the sponsor.

Will the sponsor be the University of Strathclyde: Yes  No

If not, please specify who is the sponsor:

### 9. Funding body or proposed funding body (if applicable)

Name of funding body:

Status of proposal – if seeking funding (please click appropriate box):

In preparation

Submitted

Accepted

Date of submission of proposal: / /      Date of start of funding: / /

### 10. Ethical issues

Describe the main ethical issues and how you propose to address them:

The main ethical issue in the research is the usage of ethnographic methods to study implementation of public policy. The sensitive aspect of this issue to be studied is the influence of various stakeholders on the policy implementation process, what is usually a 'hidden knowledge' of every institution. However, the topic does not concern sensitive issues in the meaning of vulnerable participants or personal confidential information. All issues to be studied are connected to the professional and public sphere of participants' work.

### 11. Objectives of investigation (including the academic rationale and justification for the investigation) Please use plain English.

The PhD focuses on a central issue in contemporary governance debates: the interaction of civil servants and politicians in the implementation of public policy. Researchers have acknowledged that public policies have recently become more politicised, and that political influence can bring substantial obstacles to successful socio-economic development (B. Guy Peters, 2013; Shepherd et al., 2014), in particular in Central Eastern Europe (Kopecký et al., 2016). Academic literature has focused on the structural aspect of politicisation at the national level (mainly political appointments of senior civil servants), and the political process of policy making (Zittoun, 2014). However, it has been advised that to fully understand the phenomenon, further studies should investigate the political influence on policy implementation (Bellò Spano, 2015), and better explore the regional level (Dabrowski, 2012; Milio, 2008).

Therefore, the purpose of the research is to fulfil this gap by identifying measures to assess the role of political and administrative factors in policy implementation, and to explain key processes and mechanisms involved. The main theoretical background used for the study is institutionalism, in particular the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (Ostrom, 2008). The research will identify key formal and informal rules of policy implementation, and explore how they work in different contexts. Moreover, it will investigate structures and mechanisms influencing the input of various stakeholders during the decision-making process. The research takes the case of Integrated Territorial Investments within EU Cohesion Policy and their implementation in selected Polish regions.

### 12. Participants

Please detail the nature of the participants:

Stakeholders of the Integrated Territorial Investments implementation: civil servants, politicians, independent experts, beneficiaries, etc.

Summarise the number and age (range) of each group of participants:

Number: 50      Age (range) 18-65

Please detail any inclusion/exclusion criteria and any further screening procedures to be used:

Participants will not be selected on the basis of gender, medical conditions or age. The only criteria to be used are connected to the positions held in the policy implementation process by the stakeholders. Here, the

research aims to investigate the broad variety of the positions held by the interviewees. *The research will take the case of two Polish regions and choose participants randomly from the list of all stakeholders involved in particular region.*

### 13. Nature of the participants

Please note that investigations governed by the Code of Practice that involve any of the types of participants listed in B1(b) must be submitted to the University Ethics Committee (UEC) rather than DEC/SEC for approval.

Do any of the participants fall into a category listed in Section B1(b) (participant considerations) applicable in this investigation?: Yes  No

If yes, please detail which category (and submit this application to the UEC):

### 14. Method of recruitment

Describe the method of recruitment (see section B4 of the Code of Practice), providing information on any payments, expenses or other incentives.

The process of recruitment for interviews will involve the snowball method of sampling. Interviewees will obtain a personal e-mail explaining the purpose and other important information of the study. As for incentives, there will not be any payments or expenses for the participants. The planned number of participants to be included in the investigation is 50.

### 15. Participant consent

Please state the groups from whom consent/assent will be sought (please refer to the Guidance Document). The PIS and Consent Form(s) to be used should be attached to this application form. The consent will be obtained according to the agreement between the UEC and EPRC.

### 16. Methodology

Investigations governed by the Code of Practice which involve any of the types of projects listed in B1(a) must be submitted to the University Ethics Committee rather than DEC/SEC for approval.

Are any of the categories mentioned in the Code of Practice Section B1(a) (project considerations) applicable in this investigation?  Yes  No

If 'yes' please detail:

Describe the research methodology and procedure, providing a timeline of activities where possible. Please use plain English.

The research employs the following combination of methods: systematic content analysis, interviews, and participatory observation. Content analysis will enable effective triangulation of data sources. Interviews and participatory observation will enable an ethnographic approach to studying public policy, what will deliver insights necessary to answer the research question. The plan includes 1 month of participatory observation in every studied region. Moreover, altogether there are planned at least 50 interviews.

What specific techniques will be employed and what exactly is asked of the participants? Please identify any non-validated scale or measure and include any scale and measures charts as an Appendix to this application. Please include questionnaires, interview schedules or any other non-standardised method of data collection as appendices to this application.

A technique for content analysis of gathered documents and data from participatory observation and interviews is qualitative and quantitative systematic content analysis using MAXQDA program. As for interviews, the special techniques to be used are expert interview and in-depth interview. Particular questionnaire and interview scenario have been attached as an appendix to this application.

Where an independent reviewer is not used, then the UEC, DEC or SEC reserves the right to scrutinise the methodology. Has this methodology been subject to independent scrutiny? Yes  No

If yes, please provide the name and contact details of the independent reviewer:

Professor John Bachtler, 01415483339, john.bachtler@strath.ac.uk

### 17. Previous experience of the investigator(s) with the procedures involved.

Experience should demonstrate an ability to carry out the proposed research in accordance with the written methodology.

The research will be conducted by a PhD student Sylwia Borkowska-Waszak. She is a Polish native speaker, so there are not any concerns about her conducting methods in this language and country. She has the following experience in terms of using planned methods:

- **Content analysis** – Completed the *Introduction to NVivo - Online Course* at the University of Strathclyde, experience of using the method for the purpose of the MA thesis, as well as for the PhD literature review (both in the MAXQDA program);



- **Interviews** – Completed the *Qualitative Methods Course* at the University of Strathclyde, experience of using the method for the purpose of the research project ‘Territorial strategies supported by EU territorial tools’ carried out by the EPRC on behalf of the European Commission, the BA and MA theses, and other research projects carried out by the University of Warsaw during studies in Poland.
- **Participatory observation** - Completed the Research Skills Workshops: *Participatory Techniques and Researching Sensitive Topics*, and *Doing Ethnographic Work* at the University of Strathclyde. Further training is planned during the Summer School in Methods and Techniques 2017, organised by the European Consortium for Political Research at the Central European University in Budapest (Hungary), 31.07-12.08.2017. Courses to be undertaken: *Practical Introduction to Ethnographic Fieldwork and Issues in Political, Policy, and Organizational Ethnography and Participant Observation*.

#### 18. Data collection, storage and security

How and where are data handled? Please specify whether it will be fully anonymous (i.e. the identity unknown even to the researchers) or pseudo-anonymised (i.e. the raw data is anonymised and given a code name, with the key for code names being stored in a separate location from the raw data) - if neither please justify. The interview transcripts, names and any potential identifying details will be pseudo-anonymised. It will be collected during participatory observation and in-depth interviews, so the identity will be known to the researcher.

Explain how and where it will be stored, who has access to it, how long it will be stored and whether it will be securely destroyed after use:

The data will be stored securely in a safe place (password-protected in the case of electronic storage), with appropriate back-ups; taking care with the transport of data (especially on laptops and memory sticks, where data should be anonymised wherever possible); ensuring that data is not shared with another organisation; and disposing of data and equipment in ways that the data cannot be recovered. Data will be stored for the purpose of completing the PhD and shall not be kept for longer than is necessary. Exemptions can be applied with the aim of preparing academic publications based on the PhD research, following the Code of Practice exception rules. Under no other circumstances will private data be transferred to any external party, including the authorities of country and regions where these data have been collected.

Will anyone other than the named investigators have access to the data? Yes  No

If ‘yes’ please explain:

#### 19. Potential risks or hazards

Briefly describe the potential Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) hazards and risks associated with the investigation:

There are no foreseen risks, burdens or specific preparatory requirements for participants. There is also not any foreseen potential risk to investigators.

Please attach a completed OHS Risk Assessment (S20) for the research. Further Guidance on Risk Assessment and Form can be obtained on [Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing’s webpages](#)

#### 20. What method will you use to communicate the outcomes and any additional relevant details of the study to the participants?

Participants will be able to obtain the main results of the study after the investigation is complete by contacting the investigators or by visiting the repository of PhD theses of the University of Strathclyde. The repository will provide a downloadable PhD thesis. The investigators will additionally provide links to external academic publications based on the research.

#### 21. How will the outcomes of the study be disseminated (e.g. will you seek to publish the results and, if relevant, how will you protect the identities of your participants in said dissemination)?

The investigators will seek to publish the results in academic journals. The identities of the participants in the potential publications will be protected due to pseudo-anonymization of collected data.

Checklist	Enclosed	N/A
Participant Information Sheet(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent Form(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample questionnaire(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sample interview format(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample advertisement(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

OHS Risk Assessment (S20)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other documents (please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 22. Chief Investigator and Head of Department Declaration

Please note that unsigned applications will not be accepted and both signatures are required

I have read the University's Code of Practice on Investigations involving Human Beings and have completed this application accordingly. By signing below, I acknowledge that I am aware of and accept my responsibilities as Chief Investigator under Clauses 3.11 – 3.13 of the [Research Governance Framework](#) and that this investigation cannot proceed before all approvals required have been obtained.

Signature of Chief Investigator

*Signed original available at the  
University archive*

Please also type name here:

Dr Martin Ferry

I confirm I have read this application, I am happy that the study is consistent with departmental strategy, that the staff and/or students involved have the appropriate expertise to undertake the study and that adequate arrangements are in place to supervise any students that might be acting as investigators, that the study has access to the resources needed to conduct the proposed research successfully, and that there are no other departmental-specific issues relating to the study of which I am aware.

Signature of Head of Department

*Signed original available at the  
University archive*

Please also type name here

Professor John Bachtler

Date:

4 / 09 / 2017

## 23. Only for University sponsored projects under the remit of the DEC/SEC, with no external funding and no NHS involvement

### Head of Department statement on Sponsorship

This application requires the University to sponsor the investigation. This is done by the Head of Department for all DEC applications with exception of those that are externally funded and those which are connected to the NHS (those exceptions should be submitted to R&KES). I am aware of the implications of University sponsorship of the investigation and have assessed this investigation with respect to sponsorship and management risk. As this particular investigation is within the remit of the DEC and has no external funding and no NHS involvement, I agree on behalf of the University that the University is the appropriate sponsor of the investigation and there are no management risks posed by the investigation.

If not applicable, tick here

Signature of Head of Department

*Signed original available at the  
University archive*

Please also type name here

Professor John Bachtler

Date:

4 / 09 / 2017

For applications to the University Ethics Committee, the completed form should be sent to [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk) with the relevant electronic signatures.

**24. Insurance**

The questionnaire below must be completed and included in your submission to the UEC/DEC/SEC:

<p>Is the proposed research an investigation or series of investigations conducted on any person for a Medicinal Purpose? Medicinal Purpose means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ treating or preventing disease or diagnosing disease or</li> <li>▪ ascertaining the existence degree of or extent of a physiological condition or</li> <li>▪ assisting with or altering in any way the process of conception or</li> <li>▪ investigating or participating in methods of contraception or</li> <li>▪ inducing anaesthesia or</li> <li>▪ otherwise preventing or interfering with the normal operation of a physiological function or</li> <li>▪ altering the administration of prescribed medication.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes/ No</p>
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If “**Yes**” please go to **Section A (Clinical Trials)** – all questions must be completed

If “**No**” please go to **Section B (Public Liability)** – all questions must be completed

**Section A (Clinical Trials)**

<p>Does the proposed research involve subjects who are either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. under the age of 5 years at the time of the trial;</li> <li>ii. known to be pregnant at the time of the trial</li> </ol>	<p>Yes / No</p>
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If “**Yes**” the UEC should refer to Finance

<p>Is the proposed research limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Questionnaires, interviews, psychological activity including CBT;</li> <li>iv. Venepuncture (withdrawal of blood);</li> <li>v. Muscle biopsy;</li> <li>vi. Measurements or monitoring of physiological processes including scanning;</li> <li>vii. Collections of body secretions by non-invasive methods;</li> <li>viii. Intake of foods or nutrients or variation of diet (excluding administration of drugs).</li> </ol>	<p>Yes / No</p>
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If “**No**” the UEC should refer to Finance

<p>Will the proposed research take place within the UK?</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
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If “**No**” the UEC should refer to Finance

Title of Research	
Chief Investigator	
Sponsoring Organisation	
Does the proposed research involve:	
a) investigating or participating in methods of contraception?	Yes / No
b) assisting with or altering the process of conception?	Yes / No
c) the use of drugs?	Yes / No
d) the use of surgery (other than biopsy)?	Yes / No
e) genetic engineering?	Yes / No
f) participants under 5 years of age (other than activities i-vi above)?	Yes / No
g) participants known to be pregnant (other than activities i-vi above)?	Yes / No
h) pharmaceutical product/appliance designed or manufactured by the institution?	Yes / No
i) work outside the United Kingdom?	Yes / No

If **“YES”** to **any** of the questions a-i please also complete the **Employee Activity Form** (attached).  
 If **“YES”** to **any** of the questions a-i, and this is a follow-on phase, please provide details of SUSARs on a separate sheet.  
 If **“Yes”** to any of the questions a-i then the UEC/DEC/SEC should refer to Finance ([insurance-services@strath.ac.uk](mailto:insurance-services@strath.ac.uk)).

**Section B (Public Liability)**

Does the proposed research involve :	
a) aircraft or any aerial device	Yes / No
b) hovercraft or any water borne craft	Yes/ No
c) ionising radiation	Yes/ No
d) asbestos	Yes / No
e) participants under 5 years of age	Yes/ No
f) participants known to be pregnant	Yes/ No
g) pharmaceutical product/appliance designed or manufactured by the institution?	Yes / No
h) work outside the United Kingdom?	Yes / <del>No</del>

If **“YES”** to any of the questions the UEC/DEC/SEC should refer to Finance ([insurance-services@strath.ac.uk](mailto:insurance-services@strath.ac.uk)).

## **Annex VII. Thematic objectives of EU cohesion policy 2014-2020**

- 1a.) Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest
- 1b.) Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, [...]
- 2a.) Extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks and supporting the adoption of emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy
- 2b.) developing ICT products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for ICT
- 2c.) strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health
- 3a.) promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
- 3b.) developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular with regard to internationalisation
- 3c.) supporting the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for product and service development
- 3d.) supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes
- 4a.) promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources
- 4b.) promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises
- 4c.) supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector
- 4d.) developing and implementing smart distribution systems that operate at low and medium voltage levels
- 4e.) promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures
- 4f.) promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies
- 4g.) promoting the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand
- 4i.) promoting the production and distribution of renewable ...
- 4ii.) promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in ...
- 4iii.) supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in ...
- 4iv.) developing smart distribution systems at low voltage ...
- 4v.) promoting low-carbon strategies for urban areas
- 4vi.) promoting the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand;
- 5a.) supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches
- 5b.) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems
- 5i.) supporting dedicated investment for adaptation to climate...
- 5ii.) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring ...
- 6a.) investing in the waste sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements

- 6b.) investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements;
- 6c.) Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
- 6d.) protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure
- 6e.) Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and contaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures;
- 6f.) promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
- 6g.) supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors
- 6i.) addressing the significant needs for investment in the ...
- 6ii.) addressing the significant needs for investment in the ...
- 6iii.) protecting and restoring biodiversity, including through ...
- 6iv.) improving the urban environment, including regeneration ...
- 7a.) supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T
- 7b.) enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes
- 7c.) developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility
- 7d.) developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway systems, and promoting noise-reduction measures
- 7e.) improving energy efficiency and security of supply through the development of smart energy distribution, storage and transmission systems and through the integration of distributed generation from renewable sources
- 7i.) supporting a multi-modal Single European Transport Area ...
- 7ii.) developing environment-friendly and low-carbon transport ...
- 7iii.) developing comprehensive, high quality and interoperable ...
- 8a.) supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation
- 8b.) supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources
- 8c.) supporting local development initiatives and aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create jobs, where such actions are outside the scope of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council
- 8d.) investing in infrastructure for employment services;
- 8i.) Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people,...
- 8ii.) Sustainable integration of young people not in employment...
- 8iii.) Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation
- 8iv.) Equality between men and women and reconciliation between...
- 8v.) Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to ...
- 8vi.) Active and healthy ageing;

- 8vii.) Modernisation and strengthening of labour market ...
- 9a.) investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services
- 9b.) providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas
- 9c.) Providing support for social enterprises
- 9d.) undertaking investment in the context of community-led local development strategies
- 9i.) Active inclusion
- 9ii.) Integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
- 9iii.) Combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic ...
- 9iv.) Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and ...
- 9v.) Promoting the social economy and social enterprises
- 9vi.) Community-led local development strategies
- 10a.) investing in education, skills and lifelong learning by ...
- 10b.) developing and implementing joint ... (ETC-CB)
- 10i.) Reducing early school-leaving and promoting equal access ...
- 10ii.) Improving the quality, efficiency and openness of ...
- 10iii.) Enhancing access to lifelong learning, upgrading the ...
- 10iv.) Improving the labour market relevance of education ...
- 11a.) strengthening of institutional capacity and the ...
- 11b.) promoting legal and administrative ... (ETC-CB)
- 11c.) developing and coordinating macro-regional ... (ETC-TN)
- 11i.) Investment in institutional capacity and in the ...
- 11ii.) Capacity building for stakeholders delivering employment,...
- 12c.) Freight transport services and start-up aid for ...

## Annex VIII. Full database: Assessment of the impact of political and non-political factors on collaboration within the ICA Framework in two metropolitan areas

Category	Factor	Collective benefit		Collaboration risks								Transaction costs								Integration mechanism		TOTAL		
		LFA	CS	Incoordination		Division		Defection		Non-strategic joint projects		Information		Negotiations bargaining		Enforcement		Joint project assessment		LFA	CS	LFA	CS	TOTAL
				LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS	LFA	CS							
Leaders	1. Scope of motivation of the political leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	2	3			2	2			2	2			1	3				1	2	3	9	14	23
Mayors	2. Mayors' support for inter-municipal collaboration, joint development	1	2	1	1	1	1		1	2	2			1	1		2		1	1	2	7	13	20
Leaders	3. Perceived political leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests	1	3	1	1	3	3							3	3				1			8	11	19
Mayors	4. Mayor's focus on electoral interests	2	2			3	2		2	3	1						3					8	10	18
Leaders	5. Perceived administrative leader's care for joint and other municipalities' interests			1	2							3	3	1	2				2			5	9	14
Mayors	6. Level of trust among mayors			1		2	1		1	1	1	2		2	1		2					8	6	14
Mayors	7. Number of mayors involved in collaboration					2	2					1	2	1	2					2	2	6	8	14
Leaders	8. Level of support for the political leader among members of collaboration,					3	1							3	2					3	1	9	4	13
Mayors	9. Perceived level of anomalies between the capital city and the other municipalities					3	2			1				3	2					2		7	6	13
Mayors	10. Personal networks and friendships among mayors	1	1									2	2	1	2		3					4	8	12
Existing ICA mechanisms	11. Mayors' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration	1	2				2								3				1	2		2	9	11
Higher level rules	12. Perceived attractiveness of thematic scope of collaboration	2	1			2	1	1		1				2	1							8	3	11
Leaders	13. A number of leaders' initiatives for particular joint projects									2	3	1	2							1	2	4	7	11
Leaders	14. Scope of motivation of the administrative leader to the collective action within a particular ICA mechanism	1	2								2								2	1	2	2	8	10
Mayors	15. Homogeneity in the efficiency in EU funds absorption and project preparation							2	3						2		3					2	8	10
Leaders	16. Personal qualities of the political leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc	1	3											1	3							2	6	8
Mayors	17. Mayors' vision on priorities homogeneity					2	2			1	3											3	5	8
Higher level rules	18. Perceived attractiveness of the amount of available joint resources	2	3			1	1															3	4	7
Higher-level politicians	19. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and regional authority					2	2			1	1							1				4	3	7
Existing ICA mechanisms	20. Level of political leader's active involvement in existing ICA mechanisms						3								3							0	6	6
Leaders	21. Personal qualities of the administrative leader: consensus-building, charisma, etc	1	2											1	2							2	4	6
Mayors	22. Perceived mayors' charisma and ambition						1							2	3							2	4	6
Higher level rules	23. Perceived easiness to get joint resources	3	2																			3	2	5
Mayors	24. Human capital of mayors									1	1			1	2							2	3	5
Mayors	25. Level of approval of the division mechanism							3	2													3	2	5
Political structure	26. Time after national/regional elections			2	2							1										3	2	5
Higher-level politicians	27. Level of support for metropolitan development of regional and national authorities					2	2															2	2	4
Leaders	28. Level of support for the administrative leader among members of collaboration,					1	1							1	1							2	2	4
Political structure	29. Time before local elections								1	1	1	1										2	2	4
Political structure	30. Time after local elections			1	1	1	1															2	2	4
Political structure	31. Turnover among mayors after elections					1	1			1	1											2	2	4
Existing ICA mechanisms	32. Percentage of mayors involved in previous collaboration						1								2							0	3	3



Higher level rules	33. Perceived equal application of higher-level rules to all partners			2	1																	2	1	3
Higher-level politicians	34. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and national authority									2	1											2	1	3
Mayors	35. Perceived clientelism level									2	1											2	1	3
Higher-level politicians	36. Perceived personal conflicts or likings between mayors and higher-level politicians									1	1											1	1	2
Political structure	37. Time before national/regional elections			1	1																	1	1	2
Higher-level politicians	38. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayors and county authority									1												1	0	1
Higher-level politicians	39. Government's relations with EU institutions									1												0	1	1
Mayors	40. Party affiliation homogeneity among local mayors							1														0	1	1
Mayors	41. Party affiliation homogeneity between mayor and group dominant in municipal council										1											0	1	1
Mayors	42. Mayors' age homogeneity										1											1	0	1
ITI Coordinators	43. Level of administrative staff turnover after local elections																					0	0	0
ITI Office employees	44. Perceived legitimacy of metropolitan authority among mayors																					0	0	0
Mayors	45. Level of fluctuation of mayors' party membership																					0	0	0
Mayors	46. Homogeneity of the number of terms as a mayor																					0	0	0
Political structure	47. Scope of financial and legal autonomy of mayors																					0	0	0
Political structure	48. Turnover among key political parties in power at higher levels																					0	0	0
Higher level rules	49. Project selection mode, scope of mayors' power on project selection	3	1			2	2	3	3		2	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	3			16	18	34
ITI Office employees	50. Scope of tasks delegated to the metropolitan authority			3	3					1	1	3	3				2	1	3			8	12	20
Community	51. Level of administrative and financial capacity	1	1	1		1	1	2	2	1	1	1		1	1		1			1		9	7	16
Higher level rules	52. Frequency of changes in the rules			3	3								2	2	2	2						7	7	14
ITI Office employees	53. Motivation and expertise of ITI office employees	1	1	1	2						1	1	2		1		1		1	1	1	4	10	14
Higher level rules	54. Time pressure on joint projects realisation			1	1			2	3		1			1	1		2					4	8	12
Community	55. Homogeneity of municipal size					3	2													2	2	5	4	9
Higher level rules	56. Project form	1		1	1			1	1							1	1	2				6	3	9
ITI Coordinators	57. Personal networks and friendships among civil servants	1	1							1		2	2		1							4	4	8
Community	58. Social capital					2	1			1				2	1							5	2	7
Community	59. Regional identity		2				1		1								1					0	5	5
Existing ICA mechanisms	60. The number of ICA mechanisms						2								2							0	4	4
ITI Coordinators	61. Human capital of civil servants											1	1	1	1							2	2	4
Community	62. Cultural-historical divisions						1								1						1	0	3	3
Higher level rules	63. Perceived relevance of the thematic scope for metropolitan development challenges	1	1																			1	1	2
Community	64. Proximity																					0	0	0
Existing ICA mechanisms	65. Percentage of civil servants involved in previous collaboration																					0	0	0
Existing ICA mechanisms	66. Civil servants' positive or negative experience from previous collaboration																					0	0	0
ITI Coordinators	67. Level of trust among civil servants																					0	0	0
ITI Coordinators	68. Number of civil servants involved in collaboration																					0	0	0
ITI Office employees	69. Municipality of origin and/or residence of ITI office employees																					0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>483</b>

Legend: Non-political factors are marked in orange. The method of assessment is described in Chapter 4. The colouring of the impact score follows the legend to Table 37.