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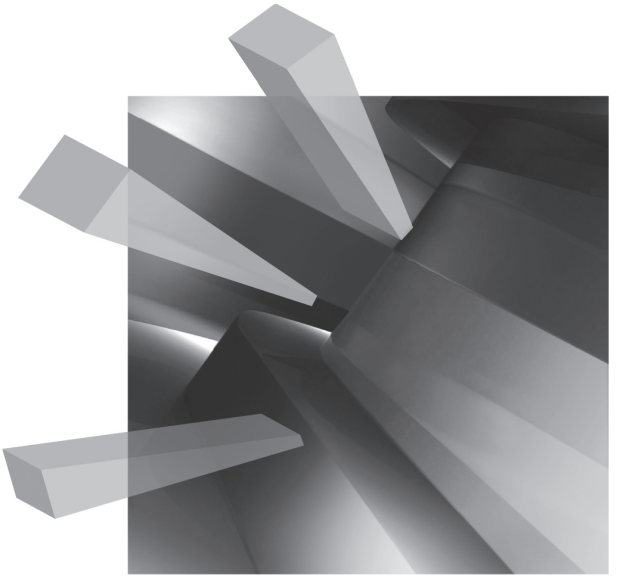

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EFFECTIVENESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS IN POLAND – EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS[1]

Summary: In the research carried out by one of Polish research agencies [Pentor 2010], local administration offices were in general seen as institutions which, despite high expenditures, maintained inefficient operations and as a result did fully satisfy the needs of citizens. In addition, searching for the causes of failures in projects, the lack of professional approach to project management should be highlighted, which relates to the undertaken *ad hoc* adaptation activities to changes in the environment, and the implementation of projects in interim and in unsystematic way. The research found that the consequence of this state of affairs was the reduction of the effectiveness of implementation of projects and of synergistic effect created by audited entity. As a result, the growing importance of project management in the functioning of local government units in Poland, with low levels of performance previously practiced in this field, tended to take the search for a new approach to project management in the units.

Keywords: project management, basic units of local government, effectiveness of project management.

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1. Introduction

Local government as a form of civil society organizations is one of the elements of the state [Rabska 1977, p. 345; Stoker 1998; Jessop 2002, p. 452; Wykrętowicz 2008, p. 134]. Its development is an exemplification of principle of subsidiarity[2], which is closely correlated with three main objectives in the functioning of local government units, which are: the implementation of specific tasks, shaping desired

[1] The article is a fragment of research funded under the budget for science in the years 2013-2016 as a research project No.2013/11/ D /HS4/03863.

[2] The subsidiarity principle is that the public authority and its subordinate organizational units meet the needs of public by non-authoritative measures, and the use of public power constitutes a necessary exception [Szostek (ed.) 2009, p. 96]

behavior of local communities and the improvement of the natural environment [Szostek (ed.) 2009, pp. 26-31]. These objectives imply that local authorities, focusing their attention on meeting the expectations of stakeholders, at the same time being under public and political pressure, have to meet increasing and more complex requirements regarding the reduction of time in performed tasks while optimizing the limited financial resources and providing high quality services rendered, which is possible to achieve, *inter alia*, through the implementation of project management.

Undoubtedly the increased interest in issues of project management on the part of local government is largely a result of investment financed with external resources, including since 2004 the European Union Structural Funds and pre-programs of the World Bank and the European Union pre-accession funds (i.e. ESF, ISPA, PHARE and SAPARD). In addition, significantly important is the fact that the local authorities are in the process of transformation from traditional management to so-called co-management, using market mechanisms and management methods that have worked for the companies [Behn 1995; Pollitt, Bouckaert 2007; Markowski, Banachowicz 2003, pp. 28-29][3].

The growing importance of project approach in the management processes of local government units makes [Dunleavy, Hood 2009; Kwamena 2012] that a quest for answers to the question about the level of effectiveness of implementation in such projects becomes essential.

In an attempt to answer a research problem outlined in such a way, the main aim of this article is to present the results of the survey on the effectiveness of project management in management practice local government units in Poland. To fulfill the implementation of assumed goal, the starting point has been done to embed the concept of local government units in the structure of public administration, taking into account their specific nature and tasks.

2. Local government units in the structure of public administration in Poland – role and tasks

In Poland, the concept of public administration refers to administrative functions exercised by state and local authorities [Zielinski 2001, pp. 12-13, 27-42; Boć 2007, pp. 15, 129-131]. This means that the activities of public administration are based upon the acquisition by the state and by its pending satisfaction of authorities, as well as by the local government, collective and individual needs of citizens, resulting from the coexistence of people in the community. Public administration can also be understood as an overall organizational structure of the state and people employed in these structures meet public tasks, collective, individual, regulatory powers and organizational leadership and decision-making bodies.

[3] In the last two decades of the twentieth century in Western Europe, there were intense changes aimed at improving the functioning of public administration [Nowak 2006, p. 41].

This way of defining a concept of public administration allows to make a distinction between state administration (which includes organizational units or components of the non-government or local government), government administration and self-government administration which are the subject of discussion in this article [Filipek 2003, p. 14 ; Sługocki 2003, p. 13-14; Izdebski, Kulesza 2004, pp. 23-27; Radwanowicz 2004, pp. 10-11; Błaś, Boć, Jeżewski 2006, pp. 18-23] (see Figure 1).

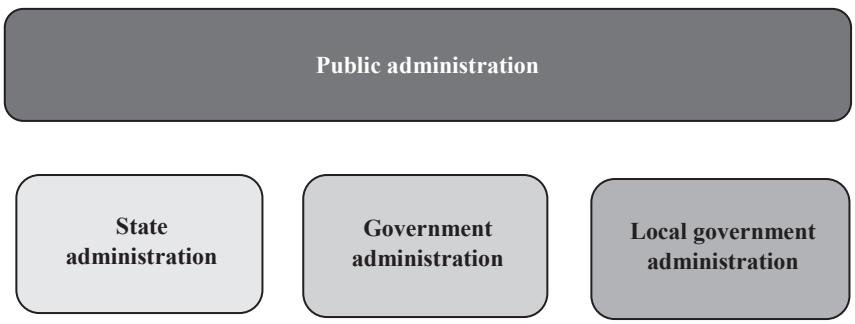

Figure 1. Typology of public administration based on criterion of generic division

Source: own elaboration.

State administration, sometimes mistakenly equated with public administration, is defined as a system of entities organized and equipped by legislature in the competence necessary to conduct organization spread and managerial activities. In this meaning, there was rightly emphasized the separation and the establishment of bodies in state administration, which includes the President of Poland, Supreme Chamber of Control, the National Broadcasting Council, the Ombudsman, the National Council of the Judiciary, the Polish National Bank and the central administration subordinate to the Parliament [the Polish Constitution of 2 April 1997 (Journal of Laws No. 78, item. 483); Zielinski 2001, pp. 19-21; Wajgner 2003, pp. 33-42; Hausner 2005, pp. 189-195].

While making the definition statement in both concepts: public administration and state administration, it can be easily seen that the difference in meaning relates mostly to political criterion. Public administration should be apolitical, which means that its employees cannot be members of political parties, nor may combine their functions with deputy or senator mandate. Then, the state administration, carried out by the President, Council of Ministers and provincial governors cannot maintain political neutrality criterion, due to the affiliation of its contractors to political parties.

Carrying on a discussion relating to types of public administration, the concept of government should also be explained. Similar to public administration, there is no a universally accepted definition of government and a clear definition of its scope, which means that sometimes government departments are mistakenly identified with

state administration. Therefore, for the accurate determination of structures and areas of operation, as well as for the clear definition of relations between the government and the state, in this article it has been assumed that government administration is a set of bodies, offices of central and local institutions that promote the collective and individual needs of people, arising out of their existence in society [Cieślak 2004, p. 15]. This means that due to the scope of government, it can make its distribution to government departments as follows: central and local. The authorities of central government cover the whole territory of the country, while the local government bodies work only on a specific territory. The structure of central state administration comprises the President of the Council of Ministers, the Council of Ministers, ministers, Prime Minister's Office, ministries, central offices, state organizational units. Then, the government structure of local administration form: government general administration, provincial governors and their subordinate departments, administration unit (which includes, inter alia, provincial police commanders, commanders of Provincial State Fire Service, the curators of education, provincial pharmaceutical inspectors) and non-combined administration (which includes, among others, the commander of military districts, heads of provincial military staffs, directors of customs chambers and heads of customs offices, directors of tax chambers) [Błać, Boć, Jeżewski 2006, p. 48].

The last type of public administration is self-government administration[4] (local government), understood as a separated in the state structure, based on the act association of local communities (municipalities, county) or regional (province), appointed to perform the tasks of public administration independently and equipped with the material means to implement entrusted tasks [Ochendowski 2006]. Local government administration in Poland occurs in the form of local government state, municipal county and the region. In the literature, self-government is defined as a separation in the structure of state these social groups and their representations (so called union bodies), which were established normatively to fulfill independently their functions of public administration in the decentralized forms [Rabska 1977, p. 345; Leoński 2004, p. 7, Wykrętowicz 2008, p. 134], which involves transfer by public authorities necessary powers to represent a social group and act in its interest. Bodies of each local government unit perform public tasks within strictly defined area. The organs of local self-government are: the constitutive organs (province council, district council and municipal council) and executive bodies (marshal and the board, governor and the board of county governor, village head, mayor, president).

Having fully defined the essence of local government, it must be assumed that its essence prejudges following elements: subjective scope, material scope and structure of local government units. Local government entities form local communities, residing in the area, organized into associations of local government created in order

[4] The article assumes that the concept of local government will be used interchangeably with the concept of local self-government.

to carry out the tasks assigned to them. In accordance with Art. 16 of the Polish Constitution all residents of fundamental administrative division are self-governing community; in addition the membership in a given community proves so-called permanent registered residence. Under the provisions of Polish Constitution and the laws of self-commune, district and province show that a Polish citizen is by the law a member of three communities of the district - provincial, municipal and communal (with the exception of city dwellers in the county who are members of two communities-urban and provincial). A very important factor providing the empowerment of local government, is giving legal personality to local units. In turn, within the scope of local government in Poland public tasks stand out. Local government performs these public tasks that have not been reserved by the statutes to organs of other public authorities in the context of local government[5], which means commune, district and province [Maciołek 1991, p. 3; Niewiadomski 1995, pp. 27-30; Korzeniowska (ed.) 2004, pp. 29; Szumowski 2005, pp. 132-138].

As a result of decentralization reforms conducted in Poland, all local government authorities in both local and regional sphere under the law have been fitted with administrative power. This means that the local authorities are able to deal with public functions delegated by the country to local governments in the belief that local government – as a decentralized form of government - will do it so more efficiently than centralized and strictly formalized government administration. According to M. Jaroszyński [1990, p. 78] centralism and bureaucracy are rooted in the organization of the state. Therefore, an effective counterweight is the appropriate shaping of political system, including the decentralization of state administration. The level of state centralization or decentralization and the supervision of local government decides about the division of tasks and responsibilities and the division of income and expenditure between state and various levels of local government [Nykiel 1993, p.11]. Of crucial importance there are two of its features: the independence of self-government (within certain limits of the law) and the inclusion of factor in organization of society, by providing them with power to co-decide about public affairs, which is a reduction of excessive formalism [Jaroszyński 1990, p. 8].

According to Polish Constitution local governments are authorized to deal with public authority and perform a substantial part of public tasks on their own behalf and responsibility. Tasks of local government should be realized within its activity by local government, whereas the scope of matters belongs to it. When it comes to the method of determining tasks that should be public tasks, understood as meeting the collective needs of local or regional communities (the government bodies should be headed in their actions by the general good of inhabitants of the municipality,

[5] In the framework of fundamental administrative division there are communities, districts and provinces. Moreover in case of fundamental units of local self-government (offices of communities) there was made a division to urban municipalities, rural municipalities, urban-rural municipalities and in frames of the district for cities on laws of the district.

community or province, minding the interests of social and legitimate interests of citizens) [Łętowski 1990, pp. 64-65; Wykrętowicz 2008, p. 134]. As a result, every local government unit in Poland performs tasks on a local (at the level of municipalities and districts) or a regional nature (at the level of provinces). This condition has led to so-called the duality competence of local government, which means the division of tasks on their own tasks and responsibilities assigned by the government, which is illustrated in Figure 2.

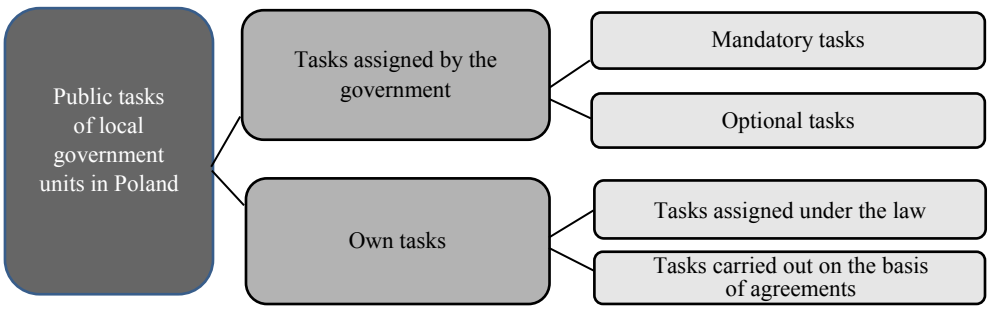

Figure 2. Structure of the tasks of local government in Poland

Source: own elaboration on the basis of [the Local Government Law; Law of county government; Law on local governments].

Table 1. Criteria of tasks allocation of local government units

DIVISION CRITERIA	OWN TASKS	COMMISSIONED TASKS
Nature of the tasks	Local or regional	National
Method of financing tasks	Single-handedly by a local authority	By the government in the form of grants-in-aid
Method of delegating tasks	The principle of decentralization – casuistically	The principle of deconcentration – by agreement, principle of decentralization – casuistically
Legal regulation	Covered by the general properties clause (due to setting the fluids)	To accomplish these tasks authorization is needed every single time
The way of performing tasks	It occurs when two mentioned conditions are not fulfilled in relation to the tasks assigned, or at least the second one.	The tasks are performed all over the country, in the formal mode and using the same rules, standards of operation
The degree and scope of self-government entities	On their own behalf and independently	On behalf of the government, which has competence of so called government interference

Source: own study based on [Olejniczak-Szałowska1993; Stec1998; Tarno et al. 2004, pp. 42-43].

Polish legislation does not clearly specify the criteria for allocating tasks on their own (local) and the commissioned ones (government). This division is not the result of specific legal regulations, is not subject to any permanent principle of law, which means that it is contractual in nature and is quite smooth. The result is that it is difficult to indicate a sharp principle of the division of tasks between central and local government, which would allow a precise separation between these two bodies. The article tries to show the criteria for allocating the tasks of local government units, which are presented in Table 1. However, it should be emphasized that none of proposed criteria is strong enough to be a base for making a clear tasks division into the tasks undertaken on their own and the commissioned ones, and is only a proposal typology division of tasks. This means that in order to distinguish two types of tasks described above, we refer to their specific requirements, taking into account mainly two principles: the principle of rationality, and subsidiarity [Dolata 2014].

3. Methodology of research

This article presents research results on the effectiveness of project management in the local government units in Poland. The results of research are part of broader research aimed at determining the level of project management maturity and they indicate the directions of improvement of project management from the perspective of project management maturity of the local government units in Poland. The considerations presented in the article apply to survey results, which were attended by 1900 local government units in Poland. As a result of research procedures filled questionnaires were obtained from 598 subjects, whereof after verification, due to the inconsistency of information given in the questionnaires, 241 were rejected. After taking 23 out of 25 correctly completed questionnaires coming from the pilot study, the total number of survey questionnaires adopted for the analysis was 380, the rate of return of questionnaires survey stood at 20%, of which 37 questionnaires were received from municipalities, 111 from urban and rural municipalities and 232 from rural communities. The received level of maneuverability questionnaires naturally caused as light disturbance in adopted structure of research, the observed structural differences amounted to 3.3 percentage points, which means these deviations may be considered acceptable. The research sample structure obtained with an actual structure of study population is presented in Figure 3.

The structure of research sample differs only slightly from the structure of population. For this reason, obtained results allow to bring the general conclusions and may give the base (due to the size of and decomposition of sample) to generalizability of results to the entire population of local government units in Poland.

The spatial range of research included the area of the Polish Republic. The sample size and the level of dispersion of units in each region have led to the aggregation of research results. Therefore there was used regional division into provinces in

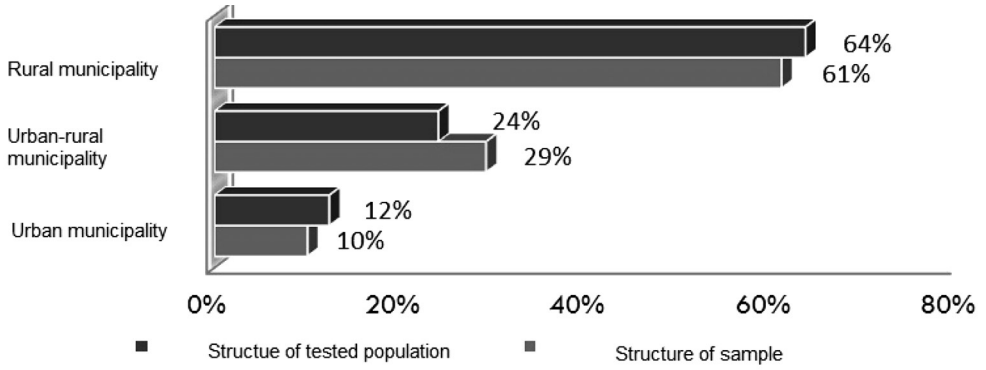

Figure 3. Structure of studied population and research sample due to the criterion of the type of municipality (in %)

Source: own study based on empirical research and data statistics [2012].

accordance with the adopted methodology [CSO 2012], according to which provinces were assigned to six groups, distinguished by the criterion of territorial region of the country (see Figure 4): north (kujawsko-pomorskie, pomorskie and Warmia, Mazury), the north-west (lubuskie, wielkopolskie and zachodniopomorskie), east (lubelskie, podkarpackie, podlaskie and świętokrzyskie), central (łódzkie and mazowieckie), southern (małopolskie and śląskie) and the south-west (dolnośląskie and opolskie).

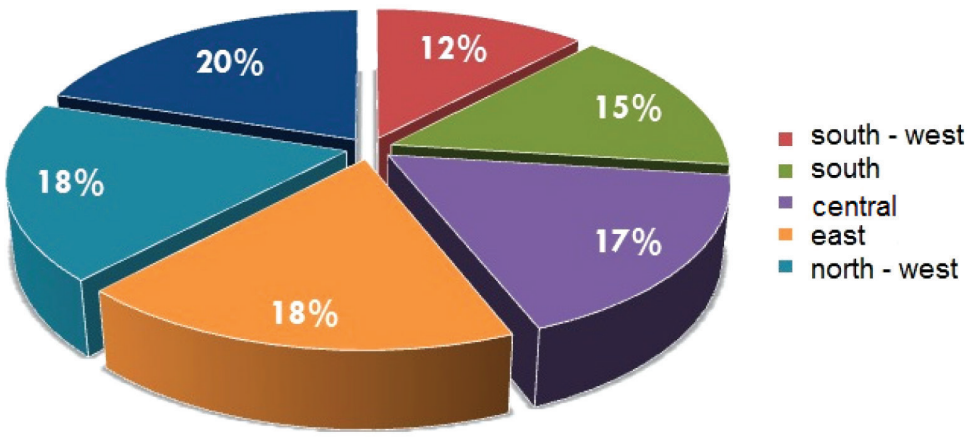

Figure 4. Structure of entities based on the criterion of territorial area in the country (in %), $n = 380$

Source: own study based on empirical research.

This classification of regions allowed to overcome existing disparities between the structures of units, which made shares in the population more regular. The northern region has the highest percentage of population (20%), the share of the north--western, eastern and central regions is at the average level of (18%, 18% and 17%). The share of southern and south-western regions is slightly undervalued (15%, 12%). It can be assumed that a relatively small proportion of these subjects in the study is associated with a relatively low investment activity of these groups of provinces in 2009-2011 in the study population [CSO2012, p. 639], which is reflected in the small number of projects and less use of project management in these units.

Before starting to work in the research layer, the coefficient Cronbach's alpha measures for all areas was taken into account in the level calculation of project effectiveness in local government units in Poland. This ratio stands at 0.829, indicating that results fairly reflect the actual state of the studied phenomenon, and may form the basis for further calculations.

4. Results of conducted research proceedings over the effectiveness of project management in the basic local government units in Poland

In empirical studies, originally the level of effectiveness of project management was estimated on the basis of individual effectiveness of respondents' assessment who were asked about the effectiveness level of the project activities. The results obtained were as follows: 48% of respondents indicated effectiveness at 91-100%, 25% of respondents at the level of 81-90%, 14% indicated that the effectiveness of project management was within the range 71-80%, others (13%) indicated the percentage below 70%. High level of effectiveness of projects has not been positively verified on the basis of question relating to specific values of parameters achieved in projects (see Figure 5). Discrepancies in their responses may have resulted from the high level of generality of question, which in turn allowed respondents to select a variant of answer that was intuitively closer to them. However, the question relating to performed parameters defined on the basis of triangle constraints forced the respondents to refer to effectiveness in an indirect way, which meant that the effectiveness of a comprehensive value went by the wayside. The construction of question allowed to observe the correctness being a base to attempt the self-assessing of the effectiveness level of project management in the local government units in Poland.

The action taken is effective if it allows to achieve (fully or partly) an intended target, or at least allows to achieve it hereafter. Referring to the definition of J. Zieleniewski, according to whom an effective action is an action that leads to the intended target, and the measure of effectiveness is the degree of approximation to the goal, the gradation and quantification of level effectiveness in project management was performed to high, moderate and low level [Zieleniewski1979, pp. 225-229].[6]

[6] The assumption of approaching to a target as a primary determinant of effectiveness means that the objective may be achieved in varying degrees. As a result, it should be emphasized that the effec-

It was assumed that high effectiveness shall be that, which the values of the parameters achieved (quality, time, budget and scope of the projects) were consistent with the planned ones, the effectiveness of moderate occurred when it reached valuess lightly deviated from the planned ones[7].

On this basis every single parameter compatible with the planned one was assigned a weight of 0.75, parameters slightly deviating from the planned ones were assigned a weight of 0.5, strongly deviating − a weight of 0.25. The assumption of these principles allowed for the conclusion that 17% of the units reached the maximum level of effectiveness in the projects, 11% were characterized by a low level of effectiveness of projects implementation, and the largest percentage(72%) of units reached moderate effectiveness (see Figure 5).

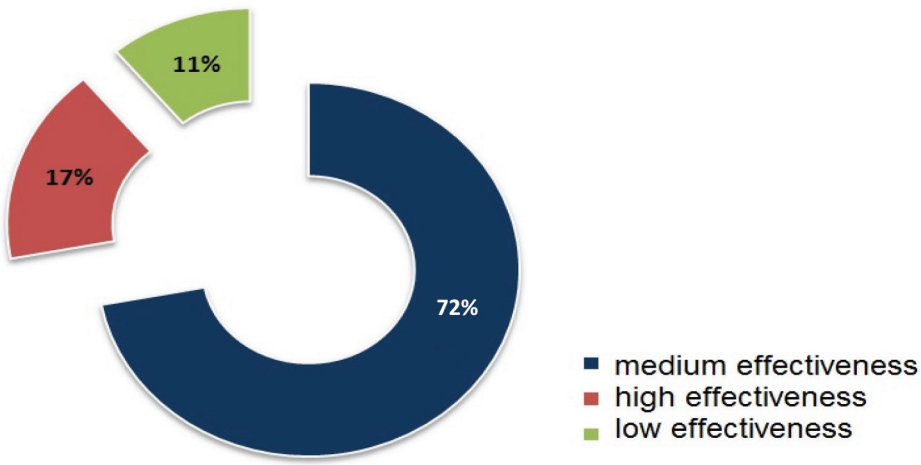

Figure 5. The level of effectiveness of project management in the local government units of local self-government in Poland (%), *n* = 380

Source: own study based on empirical research.

Subsequently, an attempt was made to analyze if the effectiveness of project management was differentiated according to the type of municipality. Surprisingly obtained results show that statistically there is no such dependence. However, this conclusion is also confirmed by the conducted analysis of correspondence. Then it was verified whether there were differences in the effectiveness of project management due to the region of units' origin. For this purpose, chi-square independent ana-

tiveness is the size of a multivalent (continuum) [Cyfert, Krzakiewicz 2013, p. 22]. Therefore, the gradation of the effectiveness in project management, which is made for the purposes of the examination procedure levels, appears to be correct.

[7] Assessing achieved parameters was indicated by respondents on the basis of appointed in local government units contractual rates of tolerance deviations in parameters in the projects.

lysis and correspondence test were carried out. The value of normalized chi-square test amounted to 47,349 at the significance level of $p = 0.023$. Thus, the test showed the correlation between the region and the effectiveness of project management.

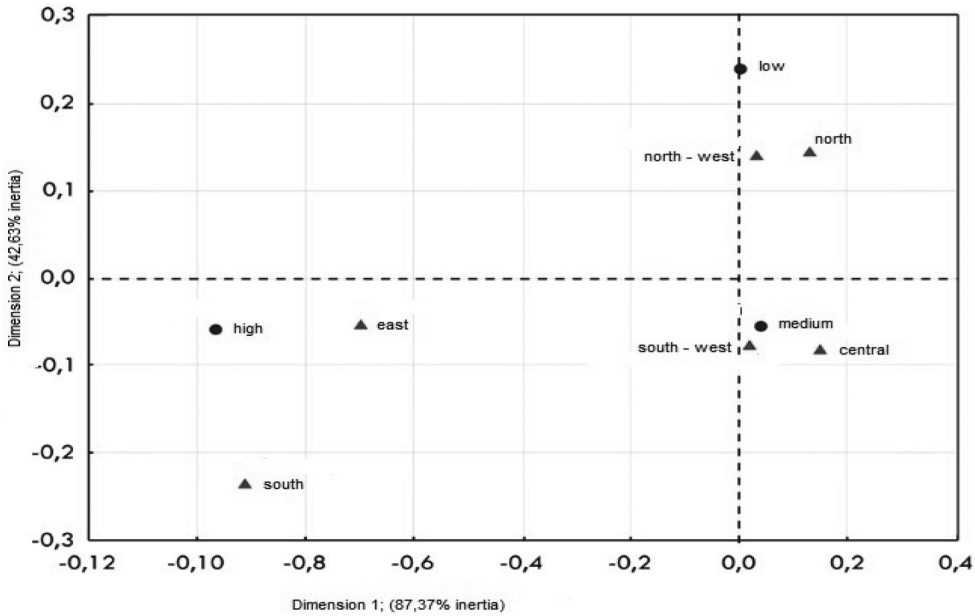

Figure 6. Variation of effectiveness of project management in the local government units in Poland due to regional conditions

Source: own study based on empirical research.

The analysis of correspondence leads to conclusion (see Figure 6) that the local government units in Poland due to regional differences are characterized by high and low effectiveness in project management. On the basis of results shown in the figure above, and in accordance with guidelines on the interpretation of points position representing the various categories, it can be concluded, that the lowest level of effectiveness of project management exists in the case of municipal offices in the northern and north-west regions, while the highest level of performance is characterized by local authorities from the southern and eastern regions (including dolnośląskie, lubelskie, lubuskie, podkarpackie and śląskie), which may be due to the fact that these regions – according to the research-are marked by the highest indicator of regional development in Poland [Rakowska 2013, p. 27].

Within the research, in which the average value of reached parameters of the current projects in the local government units in Poland was evaluated, respondents indicated (see Figure 7) that values which complied with the planned ones mostly related to parameters project's scope (54% of the maximum level indication) and

quality (42% of the maximum level indication) and least in relation to the budget (34% of the maximum level indication) and time of project (37% of the maximum level indication).

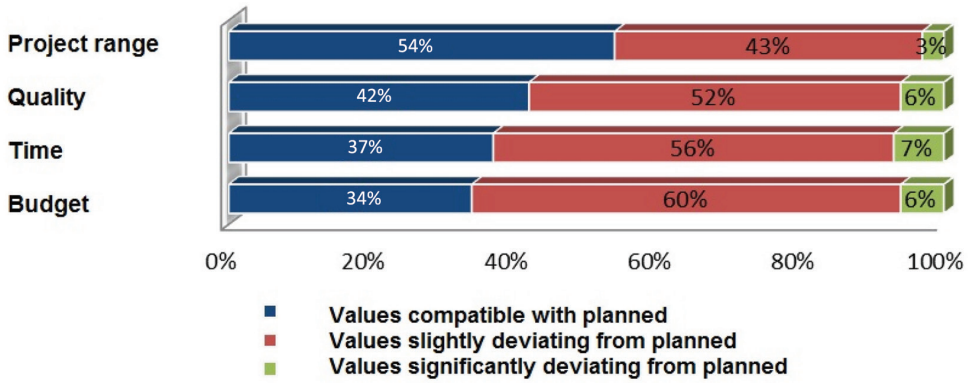

Figure 7. The average value of the parameters in the local government units of local self-government in Poland (%), $n = 380$

Source: own study based on empirical research.

Trying to interpret these results, it should be highlighted that the scope of project defines its boundaries. It can therefore be presumed that the employees of municipal offices (given the one-off nature of the projects) can easier determine the final results of the projects in the form of parameters, range and quality, rather than their sub--components (defining a list of tasks, structuring projects) that may evolve during the project. It is important, therefore, for the design team to define the scope of project properly because it is the basis for determining the schedule of work [Wysocki, McGary 2005, pp. 51-52; Pawlak 2006, p. 87]. The correct definition of scope is essential for achieving aimed goals. If the scope is not be fully defined, it the project costs may be higher due to the occurrence of changes that would lead to the necessitated repetition of certain actions, thereby increasing the duration of the project.

In parallel with the scope, respondents indicated the quality of parameter that was mostly in line with planned value (see Figure 7). These results allow to draw the conclusion that the local government units in Poland more often attribute high importance of quality to one of the results of project activities. It can be assumed that this is due to the awareness of the stakeholders' impact [Susnien 2008, p. 847] on municipal offices functioning.

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SKUTECZNOŚĆ Z PERSPEKTYWY ZARZĄDZANIA PROJEKTAMI W PODSTAWOWYCH JEDNOSTKACH SAMORZĄDU TERYTORIALNEGO W POLSCE – WYNIKI BADAŃ EMPIRYCZNYCH

Streszczenie: Wzrost znaczenia podejścia projektowego w procesach zarządzania jednostkami samorządu terytorialnego powoduje, że istotne staje się poszukiwanie odpowiedzi na pytanie o poziom skuteczności realizacji tego typu przedsięwzięć. W odpowiedzi na tak zarysowany problem badawczy głównym celem artykułu uczyniono przedstawienie wyników badań nad skutecznością zarządzania projektami w praktyce zarządzania w podstawowych jednostkach samorządu terytorialnego w Polsce. Punktem wyjścia uczyniono osadzenie pojęcia podstawowych jednostek samorządu w strukturze administracji publicznej, z uwzględnieniem ich specyfiki i zadań.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie projektami, podstawowe jednostki samorządu terytorialnego, skuteczność zarządzania projektami.