



# PROJECT MANAGEMENT MATURITY IN POLISH NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

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## Introduction

It is estimated that projects are responsible for around a third of the business of organisations (Schoper et al., 2017). It is challenging, however, for organisations to improve project management performance. There is wide scope for failure to meet time, costs and other requirements. Studies by the Standish Group, the McKinsey and Oxford study cited by Bloch, Blumberg and Laartz (2012), and studies published by other researchers have identified significant budget overruns, delays in completion or failure to meet project requirements as significant problems (Miklosik, 2014). At the same time, the organisation's ability to execute projects successfully is of strategic importance to the success of the organisation (Srivannaboon and Milosevic, 2006). This organisational competency is often referred to as „maturity”. The Oxford English Dictionary (Stevenson, Starkweather, 2010) defines maturity as ‘a state, fact or achievement at the most advanced level’. Organisational design maturity is currently at the centre of discussion by researchers (Schlichter, 1999; Kerzner, 2000; Skumolski, 2001; Andersen, Jessen, 2003; Hillson, 2003; Cooke-Davies, 2007; Juchniewicz, 2016; Maier et al., 2012; Poppelbub, Roglinger, 2011; Crawford, 2015). In business, issues of design maturity are increasingly being addressed. Research results are available, which indicate the significant contribution of design maturity to the performance of organisations (Kwak, Anbari, 2009; Hulya, 2018). In contrast, non-profit organisations exhibit a low level of professional project management at all times. These organisations make limited use of project management methods and techniques and face many problems in project implementation (Czahajda, 2019; Major, 2020). At the same time, it can be stated that project activities in these organisations are the basis of their operations and development. This is evidenced by the large number of projects implemented by these organisations, the size of their budget and the number of project partners (Major, 2020).

In non-profit organisations, projects support to solve many complex socio-economic and environmental problems. Their implementation is aimed at fulfilling statutory objectives, and ensuring that deadlines are kept and development is achieved. As such, it increasingly requires a professional approach to management. Currently, these organisations have great difficulties in fulfilling their missions and financing their activities. It is also worth noting

that the pandemic, in many cases, significantly worsened the situation of service users of non-profit organisations (Charycka, Gumkowska, 2021). Greater interest in the effective implementation of projects can, therefore, be expected. Additionally, the migration crisis currently observed in Poland affects the areas of activity that non-profit organisations have been engaged in so far, but to a lesser extent than is currently visible. The new situation requires the reformulation of strategy and the adaptation of finalised projects to changing external conditions. Non-profit organisations have to navigate between the need to create interconnected programmes while delivering coordinated services and post-project reviews, assessing the sustainability of their activities and data collection, which will facilitate future activities (Garland, 2009; Turner, 2009; Biesenthal, Wilden, 2014; Pitsis et al., 2014). The introduction of projects gives an opportunity to present statutory activities, develop a specific social position and implement unique projects. The orientation of such projects towards ensuring lasting effects for the environment seems particularly important here. This requires a specific level of project maturity.

In the literature, one can find research findings that indicate a relationship between the level of project maturity of an organisation and the effects obtained at the project level and the organisation as a whole. These, however, relate to business activities (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2004; Juchniewicz, 2016). The third sector in which non-profit organisations operate is different from the private sector and, therefore, requires scientific attention. Few researchers have considered the Polish non-profit sector in their research, and project management practices are still one of the least researched areas. A search in selected databases led to the conclusion that there is a cognitive gap in the knowledge of project maturity in non-profit organisations operating in Poland. When analysing the publications obtained in this way, no articles were identified that dealt with project management maturity issues relating to non-profit organisations. This topic is important for many reasons. The level of project maturity corresponds to the professionalization of project management. Professionalization is conducive to improving the effectiveness of non-profit organizations in achieving both social and economic goals. Polish non-profit organizations require changes in many areas of their functioning. This applies

m.in fundraising and management of internal processes. (Charycka et al., 2022). With effective project management, these organizations can streamline their operations, better satisfy stakeholders and inspire greater confidence in the institutions financing their activities. This gap was the main inspiration for the design and conduct of this study. The aim of the study was to expand knowledge and contribute to the consideration of project maturity in non-profit organisations, as well as indicating ways to measure it. We present these considerations against the background of the construct of project maturity of a non-profit organization, which was related to the PMMM model by H. Kerzner (2001).

The choice of the model was dictated by a literature review of the available models of project maturity and a critical analysis of the specificity of project management in non-profit organisations. The ideas behind the model are universality, simplicity and commonness (Bolles, 2002). The article sought answers to the following research questions: (1) What is the current state of knowledge about project maturity in non-profit organisations? (2) What is the level of project maturity in the individual project management areas? (3) Which areas of project management in non-profit organisations need to be improved? (4) What are possible further research directions resulting from the presented research?

The article has a defined structure, divided into several sections. First, the theoretical framework is presented, highlighting the importance of the maturity construct in project management. Next, the methods of data collection and analysis are described. This is followed by the presentation of the results and a discussion. Finally, some conclusions, implications and limitations are presented<sup>1</sup>.

## Literature review

There is no consensus on the understanding of the term „maturity in project management”. Saures defines project maturity as openness to project management, while Andersen and Jessen define project maturity as the sum of project management knowledge, project attitude and project experience (Andersen, Jessen, 2003, p. 459). Conversely, Schlichter (1999, pp. 39–40) defines a project-mature organisation as an entity that understands the reason for success behind ongoing projects. A project-mature organisation has the ability to avoid repetitive problems and selects project portfolios to suit its own development goals. It also uses tools and working methodologies in a way that leads to repeatable successes in the projects implemented. Kerzner emphasises that project maturity should be understood as ‘the degree of system and process development that is inherently repeatable and gives a high probability of success in subsequent projects. However, repeatability of systems and processes does not guarantee success, but only increases the chance of success’ (Kerzner, 2005, p. 53). The Project Management Institute (PMI) defines project maturity as ‘the degree of an organisation’s ability to effectively select and manage projects to achieve and support the organisation’s objectives’ (PMI, 1996). The Software

Engineering Institute (SEI), the institution that developed one of the first maturity models, notes that project maturity is ‘the degree of development in project management or readiness for unique projects’ (Tyson et al., 2003).

Most of the definitions in the literature focus on clarifying what design maturity is by highlighting the criteria that an organisation needs to meet in order to determine its maturity. Therefore, the literature points out that from a semantic point of view, maturity should be a state reflected at different levels. This implies the need to indicate not only when an organisation can be considered mature, but what an entity needs to do in order to become design mature (Wysocki, 2004; Crawford, 2015; Hillson, 2003, p. 3). For the purposes of the article presented here, project maturity is assumed to be the ability of an organisation to manage projects effectively and professionally as a result of applying various project management techniques, tools and methodologies. A project mature organisation completes projects successfully and has the ability to display best practice.

Project management maturity is not a one-size-fits-all concept and organisations should explore and understand the factors that determine it (Hulya, 2018). The increased importance of the project maturity concept has led to a focus on project maturity assessment models. Project maturity models are comprehensive diagnostic tools to examine the state of project management in an organisation (Andersen, Jessen, 2003; Poppelbub, Roglinger, 2011; Artto, 2001, p. 7). Currently, there are approximately 30 models on the market acting as tools to assess the project maturity of an organisation, developed by experts setting standards in the field of project management (Andersen, Jessen, 2003, pp. 457–461). Many models are used by consultancies to develop strategies to increase the project maturity of a given company. It is also indicated that project maturity models may yet become the most popular tool for improving organisations in the near future (Juchniewicz, 2016). Among the best-known are: PRINCE PMMM, Kerzner’s Project Management Maturity Model (PMMM), OPM3, SPICE (Cooke-Davies, 2007, pp. 1234–1255; Hillson, 2003, pp. 298–311; Juchniewicz, 2016, p. 47; Khoshgoftar, Osman, 2009; Valdes et al., 2011, pp. 176–187).

Models are subject to constant modification to meet client expectations typically regarding time, cost and ease of assessment (Juchniewicz, 2016). Mullaly and Thomas point out that most of the available models are based, to a greater or lesser extent, on the project management knowledge areas described in detail in the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBok). The number of areas may vary from model to model, as these change in subsequent editions of the PMBoK.

The tools available on the market, however, are mainly complex models whose use is associated with the involvement of external specialists. Therefore, it is important to familiarise oneself with the available models and choose the one that best suits the needs and implementation capabilities of non-profit organisations. The literature (Comas et al., 2018) points to four main criteria that can facilitate the selection of a reliable tool to measure an organisation’s project maturity. These are: (1) availability of



free self-assessment tools, (2) guidance to understanding results, (3) ease of understanding, and (4) guidance for improving implementation.

The criteria adopted enable the selection of a project maturity model aimed at carrying out a detailed diagnosis of the state of project management in non-profit organisations, which often operate with limited resources. Table 1 presents an assessment of the seven maturity models available for the organisations in question, from the point of view of the aforementioned criteria.

In the empirical section of this article, we refer to the model by Kerzner – the Project Management Maturity Model (PMMM). The validity of this model was confirmed by the analysis carried out (Table 1). The model takes into account the capabilities and needs of non-profit organisations to improve project management. It stands out from the others mainly because it provides the opportunity to conduct a self-assessment of the organisation without involving external people, while the criteria contained in it take into account the specificity of non-profit organisations. The individual levels of project maturity correspond to the areas of knowledge (Knowledge Areas) defined in the Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMI, 2013). Such an approach takes into account what is widely considered as good practice in the area of project management with the specificity of project management processes occurring in the entities under study.

## Research methodology

The considerations presented in the article were based on the results of quantitative research, the aim of which was to determine the level of project maturity of a non-profit organisation in Poland. The research was conducted in 2017 and 2018 on a group of 93 non-profit organisations with project experience, including 29 foundations and 64 associations. A basic prerequisite for participating in the survey was project experience. The organisations included had implemented single projects, several projects at once or subordinated their entire activity to a project approach. Organisations with little project experience (occasional project implementation) were excluded from the survey. The research was conducted in Poland. The number of operating non-profit organisations within a given voivodeship was taken into account. The PAPI and CAWI techniques

were used to conduct the study. A research platform was used in the data collection process. An e-form was completed online. In some cases, data acquisition was done using a paper version of the questionnaire. The survey was based on the PMMM (Kerzner, 2001), which was considered the most appropriate. The model is based on a five-point scale and the analysis of ten knowledge areas described in detail in the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) (PMI, 2008). This model is simple to apply, universal (i.e. not business oriented) and useful for any organisation regardless of size and nature of business. The level of advancement of tools and techniques used in project undertakings is assessed. The conducted research is based on Knowledge Areas, which are indicated in the sixth edition of the PMBoK® Guide (PMI, 2017). In 2021, the seventh edition of this guide was published, in which there is strong reference to volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA), and the fact that projects are no longer aimed solely at delivering products, but also at achieving specific results, forming a value chain, combining them with the realisation of a strategy that applies to both the organisation and its stakeholders. It is worth noting, however, that the areas of knowledge adopted in the research questionnaire have elements converging with Performance Domains, which were proposed in the new edition of the PMBoK® Guide. The Project Stakeholder Management knowledge area is currently represented in the Stakeholders domain, while Project Risk Management finds its counterpart in the Uncertainty domain. The issues of managing people from the Project Resource Management area are covered by the Team domain. Conversely, issues in the areas of quality and scope management are now jointly in the domain of Delivery. In turn, the Measurement domain corresponds not so much to an area of knowledge, but to a group of Monitoring and Controlling processes from the sixth edition of PMBoK. Similarly, the Planning domain is referred to as the Planning Process Group (PMI, 2021).

PMMM identifies five levels for achieving excellence in project management:

- Level 1: Common Language is the basic knowledge of PM and the terminology used.
- Level 2: Common Processes, defined and developed, are applicable and repeatable.
- Level 3: Singular Methodology is the synergistic effect of combining all corporate methodologies.

Table 1. Evaluation of maturity models according to selected criteria

Criteria for selection	PMMM	CMMI	Ibbs@ Kwak MM	OPM3	P3M3	P2CMM	IPMA Delta
Availability of free self-assessment tools	+	+	–	–	+	–	–
Guidance to understand results	+	–	–	–	+	–	–
Ease of understanding	+	–	+	–	+	–	+
Guidance for improvements' implementation	+	+	+	+	+	–	+

Source: Comas et al., 2018, pp. 76-78

- Level 4: Benchmarking process improvement is required to maintain a competitive advantage.
- Level 5: Continuous Improvement evaluates the enhancement to PM from each improvement.

Kerzner developed this model by studying project management efforts and lessons learned from hundreds of organisations. In his project management maturity model (PMMM), certain levels can and do overlap, but each level must be completed before moving up to the next level. The magnitude of the overlap is based on the amount of risk the organisation is willing to tolerate.

The study used a modified project maturity assessment questionnaire. The basis of the project maturity measurement carried out was a tool that took into account: (1) the knowledge presented in the PMBoK and widely recognised as good practice in the area of project management, and (2) the specifics of project management found in non-profit organisations.

The research began with participants answering several additional questions regarding: (1) the position held, (2) the project experience of both the person participating in the study and the organisation, (3) the number of implemented projects, along with the sources of their financing, (4) the level of knowledge in the field of project management, and (5) the level of support for the project approach. The rest of the research questionnaire dealt with aspects of design maturity. In order to measure the level of design maturity, respondents were offered 100 statements organised into ten categories (ten statements each). The respondents' task was to evaluate the descriptions provided (in a standardised table) relating to the

studied areas. In the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale was used, as recommended by Robinson (2019). A verbal description of the answers given was adopted and numerical values were assigned (0 = Don't know, 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Usually, 4 = Often, 5 = Always). The adopted form of the research allowed us to calculate efficiently the average determining the level of maturity for each of the areas of knowledge. Each was individually assigned to one of five levels of project maturity. The adopted scale of project maturity levels is consistent with the level descriptions in Kerzner's PMMM. On this basis, averaging to a single numerical value, the overall level of design maturity of the surveyed organisations was calculated.

The research was dominated by organisations whose area of operation concerned "education and upbringing" (31.1%), "social services and social assistance" (14%), "culture and the arts" (9.7%). The main source of financing the activities of the surveyed organisations was the respective local government (funds from municipalities, districts or provincial governments), indicated by as many as 75.3% of the surveyed organisations. Conversely, the main scope of the implemented projects was related to projects focused on the education and upbringing of young people (58.1%) and children (35.5%), as well as training activities (41.9%) (Table 2).

Project managers (63 indications – 67.7%) and project team members (20 indications – 21.5%) predominated among respondents.

From the point of view of experience in project implementation, the surveyed organisations were characterised by

Table 2. Scope of implemented projects

Scope of projects	Number of indications	Percentage
Education and upbringing of young people	54	58.1
Training activities	39	41.9
Education and upbringing of children	33	35.5
Training and advisory activities	24	25.8
Support for cooperation between organisations	20	21.5
Actions for the elderly	16	17.2
Activities for people with disabilities	15	16.1
Providing assistance to the poor	14	15.1
Advisory activities	12	12.9
Organisation and implementation of traineeships and internships	11	11.8
Work placement activities	6	6.5
Research and development	6	6.5
Activities related to the protection of intellectual and industrial property	5	5.4
Other	5	5.4

Source: own study



Table 3. Persons participating in the study and their role in the project

Role	Frequency	%	Share of the total sample (%)	Cumulative share
Project Manager	63	67.7	67.7	67.7
Member of the Project Team	20	21.5	21.5	89.2
Deputy Project Manager	6	6.5	6.5	95.7
Other	4	4.3	4.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: own study

average<sup>2</sup> (50.5%), large<sup>3</sup> (36.6%) and very large (12.9%)<sup>4</sup> experience (Table 4). The research sample did not include any organisation that did not carry out projects at all.

This selection of organisations allowed the topic of project management to be explored and project maturity to be assessed. The use of the questionnaire also ensured that weaknesses were identified, allowing conclusions to be drawn and directions to be proposed for the development of project management in the surveyed non-profit organisations.

Cramer's V coefficient was used to show the relationship between the PMBoK knowledge areas surveyed and the key factors identified that influence project maturity in each project management area.

## Research findings

When presenting the results of the study, the focus was on those relating to the relationship between the level of project maturity of the surveyed

Table 4. Project experience of a non-profit organisation

Project experience	Frequency	%	Share of the total sample (%)	Cumulative share
Very high	12	12.9	12.9	12.9
High	34	36.6	36.6	49.5
Average	47	50.5	50.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: own study

Table 5. General level of project maturity of a non-profit organisation

PMBoK knowledge area (2013)	Average	Standard deviation
1. Integrity	3.19	1.064
2. Scope	3.53	1.010
3. Time	3.15	.932
4. Cost	3.83	.977
5. Quality	3.07	1.088
6. Human resources	3.45	.921
7. Communication	3.18	.937
8. Risk	2.68	1.113
9. Supplies	3.16	1.131
10. Stakeholders	2.34	1.047
<b>Project maturity</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>.871</b>

Source: own study

organisations and elements of strategic management. Special attention was given to the realisation of the adopted mission, the achievement of statutory goals and the professionalisation of the activities undertaken. The results were subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS software. First, the level of project maturity of the surveyed non-profit organisations was determined. This is the arithmetic mean of the results obtained in ten areas of PMBoK knowledge from 2013. For this study, it is 3.15 with a standard deviation of 0.871. Table 5 presents the detailed structure of the project maturity of the surveyed non-profit organisations.

According to the obtained results, non-profit organisations in Poland have project experience, which can be classified at a level between 3 and 4, and indicates the use of a consistent project management methodology and attempts to use benchmarking. As per the assumptions of the Kerzner PMMM model, there is a possibility of overlapping individual levels, but it is not possible to jump between levels. This distinguishes this model from other traditional maturity models. Therefore, when analysing the obtained results, it was possible to indicate how many organisations reached particular levels (Table 6).

In the following section, the project experience of the surveyed organisations, taking into account individual areas of PMBoK knowledge (Table 7), is presented.

The obtained results indicate that organisations with extensive project experience achieved a higher project maturity index than organisations with very extensive experience in project realisation. Knowledge areas such as quality, risk, sourcing and scope have the greatest impact. This may result from the need to reconcile two perspectives: project management and non-profit organisation management. It seems that the surveyed organisations with very extensive project experience are not fully focused on the perception of the organisation's success only from the point of view of implemented project undertakings. Reaching a higher level of project maturity, they „shift” their interest to managing the organisation itself, assuming that the project experience gained is sufficient to complete projects successfully.

In order to demonstrate the relationship between the project maturity of the surveyed organisations and the project management of these organisations, a proposal was made to compare with individual areas of PMBoK knowledge (Table 8).

## Discussion of results

The research presented here was intended to signal trends in the level of project maturity of non-profit organisations, as well as directions for the improvement of ongoing projects. In seeking an answer to research

Table 6. Non-profit organisation project maturity levels

Projects Count	Number of organisations at the maturity level	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Level 1	0	0	0
Level 2	14	15.05	15.05
Level 3	26	27.96	43.01
Level 4	34	36.56	79.57
Level 5	19	20.43	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: own study

Table 7. Project experience of non-profit organisations and the level of maturity in individual areas of PMBoK knowledge

Project experience of the surveyed organisations	Integrity	Scope	Time	Cost	Quality	Human resources	Communication	Risk	Supplies	Stakeholders	Maturity
Very high	3.29	<b>3.44</b>	3.17	4.06	<b>2.67</b>	3.80	3.22	<b>2.38</b>	<b>2.89</b>	2.49	3.14
High	3.37	<b>3.74</b>	3.28	4.02	<b>3.40</b>	3.58	3.30	<b>2.91</b>	<b>3.35</b>	2.39	3.33
Secondary education	3.03	3.39	3.06	3.63	2.93	3.27	3.07	2.59	3.09	2.26	3.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>3.15</b>

Source: own study



Table 8. Implications for project management in non-profit organisations in individual PMBoK knowledge areas

PMBok knowledge area	Level of maturity	Consequences for project management
Integrity	3.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal approach to strategic planning</li> <li>• Limitation of the possibility to control the adopted indicators/targets during the project implementation phase</li> <li>• Lack of access to a knowledge base that could be used at the strategic planning stage</li> <li>• Limiting IT support in strategic management</li> <li>• Failure to achieve the common goals of the organisation through projects</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of stakeholder tolerance to risk</li> </ul>
Scope	3.53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of integrated change control</li> <li>• Baseline plans are not always up to date or do not take into account shifting project scopes</li> <li>• No clear selection of project initiatives</li> </ul>
Time	3.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited use of the extensive Project Management Instruments</li> <li>• No formal approach to strategic planning</li> <li>• Limited use of IT forms of strategic management support</li> <li>• Lack of rules for measuring project performance</li> <li>• Lack of control thresholds for implemented projects</li> <li>• Dominance of informal rules, procedures related to planning of activities</li> </ul>
Cost	3.83	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to measure the effectiveness of the goals achieved</li> <li>• Lack of earned value management</li> <li>• There are problems in coordinating the cost management process when implementing larger projects</li> </ul>
Quality	3.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-compliance of the project outputs/results with the expectations of the contracting authority</li> <li>• Additional costs of the project not included in the budget and resulting from the need to introduce additional activities/tasks</li> <li>• Informal approach to the manner and time of reaction to non-conformities</li> <li>• Inability to adapt to changes quickly</li> </ul>
Human resources	3.45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitations in attracting project team members</li> <li>• Insufficient management support to achieve project goals</li> <li>• Lack of strong leadership</li> <li>• Employees do not show willingness to participate in the project management improvement process</li> </ul>
Communication	3.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of formalisation of recommendations for corrective actions</li> <li>• Lack of consideration for the specifics of a given project in the communication plan</li> <li>• Misunderstanding of the role of projects in achieving organisational goals</li> </ul>
Risk	2.68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited access to assessment of probability and impact of risks</li> <li>• Lack of detailed risk management plan</li> <li>• Lack of risk register</li> <li>• Lack of formal approach to qualitative risk analysis</li> <li>• Lack of risk controls</li> </ul>
Supplies	3.16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of investment in adequate resources</li> <li>• Lack of purchasing procedures</li> </ul>
Stakeholder commitment	2.34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of strategy for effective stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Lack of information at the level of involvement of all stakeholders</li> <li>• Archived project database does not contain information on stakeholder involvement</li> </ul>

Source: own study

question (1), it can be concluded from a critical review of the literature that there is a lack of research and publications on the topic of the project maturity of non-profit organisations. A search of the Web of Sciences (title, abstract, keywords), Scopus (title, abstract, keywords) and EBSCO (Abstract) databases using a Boolean search of the following keywords verifies this statement. The terms used in the search were: 'project management maturity',

'project management maturity' and 'non-profit', 'project management maturity' and 'NGO', 'project management maturity' and 'non-governmental', 'project management maturity' and 'voluntary organisation', 'project management maturity' and 'third sector'. The search covered the period 2010–2022 (Table 9).

The review found that only the subject headings 'project management maturity' and 'non-profit organisation'



Table 9. Number of publications containing terms related to 'project maturity' and 'non-profit organisations' and their synonyms (2010-2022)

Terms included in the titles of publications	Number of titles of reviewed publications in the Web of Sciences database (title, abstract, keywords)	Number of titles of reviewed publications in the Scopus database (title, abstract, keywords)	EBSCO (abstract)
'non-profit organisation'	331	9437	418
'project management maturity'	171	236	166
'project management maturity' and 'non-profit'	1	1	0
'project management maturity' and 'NGO'	0	1	0
'project management maturity' and 'non-governmental'	0	0	1
'project management maturity' and 'voluntary organisation'	0	0	0
'project management maturity' and 'third sector'	0	0	0

Source: own study, access date 13.06.2022

are associated with a significant number of publications. With regard to the phrase 'project management maturity', the publications retrieved from the databases refer exclusively to business organisations. With regard to the phrase 'non-profit organisation', the identified studies mainly refer to the life cycle of the organisation, strategic management, the importance of stakeholder relations, human resource management, professionalisation of management, risk management, and success factors of non-profit organisations (Courtney, 2002; Balser, McClusky, 2005; Harris, 2011; Helmig et al., 2013; Domański, 2016; Akinlade, Shalack, 2017; Langer, Leroux, 2017). In contrast, Jałocha, Bogacz-Wojtanowicz (2020) highlight the issues of project portfolio management in NGOs. Extensive research on the implementation of project management tools and approaches in non-profit organisations was conducted in 2015 by Golini et al. (2015). They looked at international development (ID) projects to determine the extent to which project management tools and approaches were used and their impact on project success. The survey was conducted among almost 500 managers of these projects. International development projects have large budgets and aim to support developing countries. Specific areas of focus for these projects include training and education, housing, health assistance, disease prevention, and protection of basic human rights. These were, to date, the only studies conducted on applied methodologies in project management in non-profit organisations. These observations, indicating a research gap, became the main reason for designing a research process aimed at providing answers to questions (2), (3) and (4). With regard to research question (2), it was concluded based on the obtained result (3.15), that the studied non-profit organisations have project experience, which indicates

a level of project maturity between 3 and 4, according to the Kerzner model. This implies the creation of synergies from combining different project management methodologies. A slight focus on level 4 means emphasis being placed on benchmarking and, through learning from others, developing project competence. Compared to the research conducted by Golini et al. (2015), this is a fairly highly rated project maturity. Admittedly, this author used a different research tool and sought answers to the question about the extent and profiles of the use of project management tools among ID project managers working in NGOs. This is because he assumed that proper use of specific methodologies and tools is crucial for effective project management. This study was international in nature. Its results indicate different levels of maturity in the implementation of PM tools, which are linked to project success in both the short and long terms. NGOs are more likely to adopt simple techniques, such as the logical framework, than to focus on more structured and analytical project management methodologies. They make little use of tools common in business organisations, such as the work breakdown structure and critical path method, Gantt charts, cost accounting, and risk analysis/management. These differences in NGOs' tool adoption would not be particularly worrying if they did not have an impact on project performance. Although the project managers surveyed declared medium to high performance, there are significant differences in performance between managers using simple and more advanced methodologies. Also, research conducted in Poland (Czahajda, 2019) shows that compared to International Development projects, Polish non-profit organisations implement project management tools at a very low level, mainly due to the lack of knowledge about them. For example, they make very





little use of the Gantt chart when scheduling tasks and mostly use the SWOT method for risk analysis. They have little control over the progress of project work, and they equate project success with the realisation of at least part of the project's scope, without analysing its impact on the targeted social problem. Furthermore, NGOs do not include all stakeholders in project definition or evaluation. Such an attitude would not be possible in the corporate sector, as it is governed by customers and demand. Finally, in many cases, non-profit organisations do not follow many good project management practices, while project implementers do not meet often enough, do not discuss project progress and do not set measurable goals. These findings correspond with the results of other studies (Major, 2020), which indicate that the level of project management competencies among project implementers is low and needs to be raised, especially among foundation representatives. The low percentage of project management methods and techniques used in NGOs may be due to the lack of adequate knowledge among those who run them.

Investigating the project maturity of non-profit organisations made it possible to create a kind of project maturity map showing the maturity levels in individual project management areas in non-profit organisations according to the PMBoK scope of knowledge, which covers other (also called „soft”) aspects of project management in addition to methodological issues. This made it possible to identify gaps in the areas studied. This approach provided information on their level of maturity in individual areas and afforded an answer to research question (3), as well as helped identify areas for improvement. There appears to be a need for process improvement at each maturity level in the surveyed organisations. It is worth pointing out, however, that in some cases it is advisable to focus only on those that have been rated below expectations and are important from the point of view of, for example, the nature of the projects being implemented. It is important that the improvement process is in line with the organisation's strategic goals and its organisational culture, while ensuring that planned activities are realistic.

With regard to the final research question (4), possible further research directions can be identified. The first concerns the readiness of non-profit organisations to increase project maturity and develop project management methods and techniques. This readiness is related to the active participation of managers, project managers and project team members. It is also linked to the development goals and learning mechanisms of the entire organisation. Readiness, understood in this way, is influenced positively or negatively by a number of factors that are characteristic of implementing change in an organisation. It is moderated by both „hard” factors (financial, physical and information resources) and „soft” ones related to people, their competencies, attitudes and behaviours (Wang, Ahmed, 2007). In not-for-profit organisations, both can be a major obstacle to increasing project maturity. Further, in Poland, third sector organisations and their importance in Poland's socio-economic system are significantly

strengthened. These organisations carry out public tasks, provide social services and cooperate with entrepreneurs. This is evidenced by the large number of projects carried out in the surveyed organisations, the size of their budget and the number of their project partners (Major, Spalek, 2019).

The second line of research has to do with the professionalisation of management in non-profit organisations. Contemporary changes in the non-profit environment have resulted in an increasing emphasis on the economic aspect of non-profit organisations. One can point to the progressive marketisation (Eikenberry, Luver, 2004) and commercialisation of the third sector (Toepler, 2006). It is increasingly being argued that NGOs need to learn to cope with increasing competition by using different strategies to balance these conditions (Sanzo-Perez et al., 2017; Langer, Laroux, 2017). Non-profit organisations are working towards social goals, and economisation and professionalisation can help them to deliver projects more effectively, achieve development goals and increase the satisfaction of the local community. Building on project maturity as a manifestation of management professionalisation can help in applying for public grants and contracts, as well as for donor money. Jałocha and Bogacz-Wojtanowska (2020) emphasise that the implementation of long-term projects requires organisations to consider development goals beyond current, reactive activities. Investing in increasing project maturity takes time and money, but pays off in the long term for both organisations and the recipients of their services. In the long term, the scale and quality of activities directed towards the goals of a non-profit organisation largely depend on the economic and organisational capabilities of the organisation. This fits into an important strand in third sector research on the efficiency and effectiveness of NGOs (Miller, 2018; Helmig et al., 2013). According to Seiler and Bortnowska (2020), popularisation issues related to the need to professionalise management in non-profit organisations and providing them with appropriate tools, such as project management, may encourage them to achieve their intended goals more effectively. Above all, it can contribute to increasing the importance of strategic planning, improving the quality of operations, and increasing the share of public funds in the organisation's budget by strengthening the level of social trust in organisations perceived as professionally managed.

## Conclusions

The presented article deals with a new, hitherto little researched area. Although the presented study was conducted in 2017–2018, research findings have not lost their relevance and are still interesting from a cognitive and application point of view. The results are part of a stream of research on the effectiveness of project implementation and, consequently, the functioning of non-profit organisations. Given the important social role of these projects and the difficulties in managing them, more attention should be paid to this area. In particular, project

activities in NGOs are fundamental to their functioning and development. The concept of project maturity stands out from other approaches presented in the literature by embedding project maturity in the management system of organisations. Its presentation should contribute to a better understanding of the specifics of project management in non-profit organisations. A focus on increasing project maturity should translate into increased project management efficiency, which in practice can mean a change in the functioning and development of NGOs.

The research conducted allowed the authors to fill the research gap regarding the project maturity of non-profit organisations in Poland. It showed that a project maturity study can be an important source of knowledge on non-profit organisations and highlight the benefits of increasing the level of project maturity. It also made it possible to indicate the maturity levels of the individual processes that make up project management in NGOs and allowed the identification of gaps in the areas studied. This approach has provided information on NGO maturity levels in specific areas, identifying areas for improvement.

Acquiring knowledge about project maturity can be seen as the first step towards an organisation's improvement in the area of project management. For the surveyed non-profit organisations, however, increasing project maturity may not be an easy task. In order to move to a higher level of project maturity, non-profit organisations must first increase the effectiveness of their project management, acquire the ability to manage risks in these projects and ensure the quality of project teams. There are many weaknesses in this area. Increasing the level of competence and project education, therefore, seems justified. Increasing competence among project implementers will also make project management more professional and organisations will be able to develop their own good project practices tailored to their objectives and the needs of their beneficiaries. For this reason, the presented research area is of interest to the management practice of non-profit organisations, as it responds to current needs for increasing professionalism in project management.

Undoubtedly, this discussion does not exhaust the subject. It does, however, open the way for further research. The issue of the project maturity of non-profit organisations is a complex problem. It requires further exploration of project management efficiency, project maturity and the functioning and development of NGOs. This is particularly important in the current climate, where, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation of the beneficiaries of the services of non-profit organisations has significantly deteriorated. In addition, there is a growing migration crisis in Poland caused by the hostilities in Ukraine. Against this background, many non-profit organisations see the need to reformulate their strategies, and adjust them to completely new external conditions and the shifting needs of their beneficiaries. Non-profit organisations enter into completely new areas of activity (organisation of cash and material collections, information, educational activities,

psychological assistance etc.). This, in turn, from a strategic perspective, requires the modification of action plans, which would ensure the continuity of services provided, the timely implementation of project commitments, the effective search for sources of financing, as well as greater skills in managing project teams, which are all part of the project maturity of a non-profit organisation. Through effective project management, actors can significantly improve the organisation and increase its efficiency.

The presented study has its limitations. It concerned non-profit organisations operating in Poland. It was conducted in a specific cultural context, in a country where the third sector was reborn after 1989 and which is still relatively weak compared to other countries. Also, the selection of the research sample was purposive, so caution should be exercised when generalising the conclusions presented in the article; they can only be applied to the surveyed organisations. Finally, the research method adopted does not provide for a full understanding of the „whys” of the identified condition.

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## Endnotes

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- 2) Average project experience – continuous implementation of single or a few projects.
- 3) Extensive project experience – continuous, simultaneous implementation of many projects.
- 4) Very extensive project experience – project organisation, its main activity is the implementation of projects.

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## Dojrzałość projektowa polskich organizacji non-profit

### Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy kwestii dojrzałości projektowej organizacji non-profit, w których działania projektowe są podstawą funkcjonowania i spełniają ważną rolę społeczną. Jest to tematyka niewystarczająco jeszcze zbadana. Zaprezentowany obszar badawczy jest interesujący dla praktyki zarządzania organizacjami non-profit, wpisuje się w strumień badań nad skutecznością realizacji projektów. Odpowiada na aktualne potrzeby zwiększania profesjonalizmu w zarządzaniu projektami w organizacjach non-profit, co przekłada się na lepsze efekty realizowanych projektów i zadowolenie beneficjentów. Zauważono, że badanie dojrzałości projektowej może stanowić ważne źródło wiedzy o organizacjach non-profit, a pozyskanie wiedzy o dojrzałości projektowej można traktować jako początek procesu doskonalenia organizacji w obszarze zarządzania projektami. Wyciągnięte wnioski bazują na wynikach badania ankietowego na próbie 93 organizacji non-profit funkcjonujących w Polsce.

### Słowa kluczowe

dojrzałość projektowa, projekt, organizacje non-profit, zarządzanie projektami