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The process of shaping regional policy in Poland

Abstract: The main objective of this piece is to present the process of shaping regional policy in Poland in the period 1990–2020, with the main focus on theoretical aspects, including the evolution of the paradigm of regional policy in Poland against the background of its changes at the level of the European Union. This text will attempt capturing the impact of Poland's integration with the European Union on the formulation of domestic regional policy, including the process of drafting new programme documents, both in the national and regional context, as a conscious targeting of pro-development activities in a changing reality, determined by external and internal premises. In order to achieve the outlined research goal, it was necessary to find an answer to the following question: Was the process of shaping regional policy in Poland influenced by Poland's integration with the European Union and its participation in EU structures? In order to answer the research question formulated like this, the discussion starts with explaining the basic concepts such as: regional development, regional policy, or describing development factors in theories and models of regional development. The following part of the article will outline the process of shaping regional policy in Poland, indicating both theoretical, legal, institutional and financial aspects of the discussed issues.

Key words: regional policy, region, development, European Union

Introduction

The history of modern regional policy in market economy countries begins with the Great Depression of 1929–1933 and the intensification of state interventionism the purpose of which was to reduce spatially diversified unemployment and recession. It's important to remember, however, that at first the need to implement regional policy was not as strong as it is today. In this context, the 1957 Treaty of Rome, establishing the European Economic Community, confined itself to expressing in its preamble the need to strengthen the unity of the economies of the signatory States in order to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions. In the 1960s, the actions aimed at creating a common regional policy were more postulates rather than any specific solutions. Despite the fact that in 1969 the European Commission presented to the Council the first proposal which justified the need to introduce a common regional policy, *actually* no specific actions were undertaken at that time, and the tasks undertaken within the framework of regional policy were limited to initiatives the purpose of which was to reduce differences in the spatial development of individual countries by means of interregional redistribution of budgetary resources. At that time the most important tools for implementing regional policy included grants and subsidies, fiscal incentives as well as state expenditure on the so-called heavy infrastructure, or decisions concerning the location of productive investments in undeveloped regions. Insufficient, or in fact limited, effectiveness of the undertaken activities, the crisis of the

1970s and the effects of scientific and technological progress all resulted in a thorough reorientation of regional policy and profound changes in both its actors as well as its objectives and tools. An important stimulus for the development of regional policy was the conclusion of the Single European Act, which entered into force in 1987. The conclusion of this treaty formed the legal basis for the implementation of regional policy, introducing the provisions of title V: "Economic and social cohesion." These provisions were also the reasons which justified the launch of a multiannual framework programme for the first time. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which entered into force the following year and laid the foundations for deepening the process of European integration and further development of regional policy, was another breakthrough which helped shaping the regional policy in an integrating European continent. The deepening process of European integration, the creation of the economic and monetary union, the accession of further countries to the European Communities, including also countries featuring a lower level of development, both social and economic, and with significant interregional differences, resulted in establishing another financial instrument, namely the Cohesion Fund, as well as in actions with the purpose of effective coordination of structural funds.

Subsequent plans for the enlargement of the European Union through accession of fifteen countries of the Central and Eastern Europe were associated with establishing a new regional policy concept. The changes introduced at that time took into consideration, on the one hand, large differences in the social and economic potential of Central and Eastern Europe countries compared to other EU countries, and on the other hand, they were supposed to facilitate mitigation of negative effects of integration.

The next two multiannual budget perspectives of the European Union covering the regional policy were developed with an enormous involvement of Poland. The work carried out at that time covered both the internal context of the European Union as well as the external and global situation, which was to contribute to creating a strong, competitive EU economy. Regional policy had not been limited only to reducing, as much as possible, the disproportions in development, but first of all it had become a stimulator of social and economic development of relevant regional policy recipient countries.

The main objective of this piece is to present the process of shaping regional policy in Poland in the period 1990–2020, with the main focus on theoretical aspects, including the evolution of the paradigm of regional policy in Poland against the background of its changes at the level of the European Union. This text will attempt capturing the impact of Poland's integration with the European Union on the formulation of domestic regional policy, including the process of drafting new programme documents, both in the national and regional context, as a conscious targeting of pro-development activities in a changing reality, determined by external and internal premises. In order to achieve the outlined research goal, it was necessary to find an answer to the following question: Was the process of shaping regional policy in Poland influenced by Poland's integration with the European Union and its participation in EU structures?

In order to answer the research question formulated like this, the discussion starts with explaining the basic concepts such as: regional development, regional policy, or describing development factors in theories and models of regional development. The following part of the article will outline the process of shaping regional policy in Poland, in-

dicating both theoretical, legal, institutional and financial aspects of the discussed issues. The deliberations were rooted in the context of Poland's integration with the European Union, which had a strong impact on the description of the phenomenon. The last part of the paper will discuss the process of regional development programming in Poland following its accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004. Special attention was given to legal changes, and first of all to issues regarding the creation of strategic and planning documents, with simultaneous discussion on their importance and role in the process of negotiations between Poland and the European Commission of relevant budgets in the next financial perspectives. The whole discussion will end with a conclusion, which is an attempt to formulate a synthetic answer to the research question in the introduction.

Concepts of regionalisation, region, regional development, regional policy and development factors

When considering the term regionalisation, one should be aware that it has different meanings. Regionalisation can mean functionally, as an activity and in content – as a result. Joanna Grzela in her work *Region, regionalizm, regionalizacja – wybrane aspekty teoretyczne* [*Region, regionalism, regionalisation – selected theoretical aspects*] claims that the concept of regionalisation, depending on the research perspective, may cover a very wide range of issues, including those regarding activities culture, identity, language development (Grzela, 2015, p. 11). The literature on the subject most often identifies regionalisation with a territorial division into regions, but it can also refer to the distribution of resources, funds between regions or to an approach to a specific problem that is regionally differentiated. Bolesław Woś points out that regionalisation may also mean, for instance, regionalisation of politics or some kind of activity. He also notes that when talking about regionalisation, it is important to bear in mind that this concept should be understood not only as an act or its effect, but, at the same time, a specific regional concept is required to be adopted in each case (Woś, 2005, p. 19). The concept of a region can be created based on geographical, historical, economic, social and cultural or political and administrative criteria. Agnieszka Huczek, in her deliberations in the study *Polityka regionalna jako instrument rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego polskich regionów* [*Regional policy as an instrument of social and economic development of Polish regions*] notes that in the sociological dimension the region is a synonym of a regional community, whose essence is a in more or less developed sense of distinctiveness and ties, resulting from an emotional relationship with the territory, where the community lives (Huczek, 2010, s. 375). Irena Pietrzyk, on the other hand, in *Polityka regionalna Unii Europejskiej i regiony w państwach członkowskich* [*Regional policy of the European Union and regions in the Member States*] suggests that the term region requires each time a careful definition, as no definition exists that would correspond to the enormous diversity of regional, territorial structures that exist in the European Union. A region may mean both part of the structure of a federal state and an entity featuring political, administrative and financial autonomy. It is also important to consider that a region may as well be a level of the state structure which features no legal personality (Pietrzyk, 2000, pp. 213–218).

Mieczysław Adamowicz in *Wsparcie rozwoju regionalnego w warunkach uczestnictwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej* [*Support for regional development in the conditions of Poland's participation in the European Union*] point out that the notion of a region is defined in different ways, the criteria on which regions classified also vary, based on the subject and objective of the research, but he also adds that the common elements of these definitions indicate that a region is a separate area featuring specific resources and production potential, different from neighbouring areas, consisting of similar and interrelated elementary (local) units, open to the outside and maintaining external ties, with authorities setting internal legal norms and enforcement these norms and capable of shaping the development policy and managing the region (Adamowicz, 2011, p. 61). Another aspect that needs to be defined is regional development. Geographically and economically, the problem of social and economic development is the deepening spatial diversity occurring and considered in the regional perspective. The literature regarding the subject presents, more and more often, opinions which indicate that the growing geographical diversity of the nature and level of social and economic development on a global scale reduces the importance of theory and general economic research in favour of regional research. At the same time another view emerges, according to which regional concepts and research are becoming the key to understanding the nature of social and economic development. By adopting the concept that a region is a territorial social system being part of the territorial division of a country, regional development can be defined as a set of social and economic changes, taking place within the region. These changes generate mechanisms that shape the transformations of the region, both from a process perspective as well as purposeful and activism point of view, which are set in a historical and geographical context. The main objective of regional development is to increase regional productivity and competitiveness. It refers both to quantitative changes, among which the basic ones include an increase in employment, an increase in income and increase in value added production as well as qualitative changes concerning social development understood as an improvement in the level of health care, improvement in the welfare of the population, improvement in the quality of the environment, creation and expansion of entrepreneurship, creativity and social activity. Regional development objectives can be considered in their entirety and in part in relation to each aspect of the development process occurring in the region. The overall objective of regional development can be defined as a sustainable increase in the standard of living of the inhabitants and improvement of economic potential on a regional scale. Sub-objectives are associated with such aspects of development as: economic change, social change, technical and technological change, environmental change. Setting the sub-objectives for regional development requires a comprehensive approach based on the assumption that regional development covers changes taking place in all the above mentioned aspects. Many researchers of the subject point out that the development processes corresponding to these aspects and the development goals assigned to them do not need to be convergent (Churski, 2008, pp. 32–33).

The identification of development factors is particularly important from the point of view of regional policy. Factors of regional development include an element of ownership of a region or an event taking place within its borders, influencing changes in its condition understood as an influence on its social and economic development. A de-

velopment factor may also include an event that is not occurring in the region but is an external cause of changes taking place in the region. The literature on the subject divided development factors into three main groups: technical infrastructure, human capital and soft factors, including social capital and innovations. According to Paweł Churski, development objectives and factors are two basic elements for building models and theories of regional development. These theories must include both evaluation elements concerning the development objectives as well as empirical elements, concerning development factors and mechanisms. P. Churski understands regional development as a sequence of targeted, irreversible changes, which can be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively. He assumes that regional development covers both dynamic processes occurring due to the influence of specific factors, which generate the nature, direction and pace of social and economic changes, as well as purposefully targeted changes, which, through pro-development factors, aim at the implementation of tasks within the regional policy (Churski, 2008, pp. 32–33).

The literature offers many different definitions of regional policy. The multitude of definitions is a consequence of the diversity of entities that are responsible for implementation, as well as definition of objectives. Regional policy is a deliberate action of the state which involves using the resources of a specific region in order to improve its competitiveness and stimulate its development. Regional policy pursued by the central government is a transposition of the macroeconomic policy to country territory and is not a separate area (Michalewska-Pawlak, 2015, p. 89). Piotr Hajduga points out that public authorities have to shape economic policy measures in various ways in relation to relevant regions and territories in the country. What it means is that most measures in economic policy undertaken and implemented by state authorities feature a regional dimension. Piotr Hajduga also claims that this approach to economic policy is defined as regional policy, which is understood as the complete set of measures pursued by the state in conscious influence on the social and economic development of country's regions. He also points out that regional policy is one of many areas of contemporary economic policy, which is conducted at the level of the European Union, Member States as well as local authorities. In his deliberations, P. Hajduga defines regional policy also as an activity which involves the identification of the state of public affairs, evaluation of their causes and conditions as well as deliberate impact on the social and economic development of regions and smaller territorial units within one country on the basis of some developed programme (visions, assumptions, strategies and development plans) which sets objectives, means, ways of achieving them and the expected effects of changes (Hajduga, 2013, pp. 57–58). Tadeusz Madej, on the other hand, claims that regional policy is a field of cooperation between the central, regional and local government bodies (Madej, 1998, pp. 17–20).

When discussing the regional policy one must indicate two main dimensions of that policy, namely the interregional policy and the intraregional. In short, the interregional policy covers the measures undertaken by the state in relation to regions. These measures include decisions on the redistribution of state budget resources allocated to regional development to ensure implementation of national development priorities, which include equalisation of regional differences in the social and economic development (Churski, 2008, p. 17). If the regions are have power or authority, they may influence the development processes occur-

ring within their territory. In doing so, regional authorities pursue an intra-regional policy, which can be defined as a systematic impact on the development processes taking place in the region. Intra-regional policy covers measures undertaken by the self-government authorities of the region and their divisions (Gilowska, 1998, p. 17).

The last of the topics discussed in this part of the article is the issue of approximation of the foundations of theories which explain the mechanisms and factors of regional development. The literature search shows that the concepts of regional development can be divided into two groups. One of them is the concept of the neoclassical trend, which, in accordance with the liberal doctrine, assumes reducing interventionism to minimum and considers the free market as a regulatory mechanism. The other group includes concepts of the Neo-Keynesian trend. The concept of the neoclassical trend assume, in accordance with the liberal doctrine, minimisation of interventionism and consider the free market as a regulatory mechanism. Moreover, the concepts of the Neo-Keynesian trend consider interventionism as a necessary and most important regulatory mechanism for regional development. Paweł Churski claims that the foundations of theories and concepts of regional development are related to the trend of classical economics defined in the literature as the economics of economic development, which considers the issue of development in the system of national economies. When explaining the process of regional development and its factors, in addition to regional adaptation of the neoclassical development model, also demand models and new theoretical concepts, including the new growth theory and new economic geography, turned out to be very helpful. Demand oriented development models based on J. M. Keynes's economic assumptions are in conflict with the neoclassical development paradigm. It's important to remembered that Keynes developed his concept at a time of mass unemployment, which was the consequence of the global economic depression of the 1930s. Therefore, unlike neoclassicism supporters, he would ignore the supply aspect, focusing on the analysis of the demand aspect of economic processes. Consequently, he rejected the basic assumptions of classical economics, including the argument that the supply of goods always creates demand. He also rejected the Say's law of markets, which is the foundation of classical economics and which assumed that there could be no mismatch between supply and demand in the economy, so in other words the whole growth process is in balance. Supporters of demand-oriented regional development models concluded, based on this, that the fact this balance is missing a characteristic feature of the economy, thus denying the law of markets. These models also include assumptions that it is necessary to support the market mechanism, as a regulator of economic processes, with the interventionism of public authorities, which, using regional policy, should stimulate development and reduce development discrepancies (Churski, 2008, pp. 47–48).

Shaping regional policy in Poland after 1990

The processes of shaping the territory of the Polish state was highly dynamic and this dynamics left clear traces in the cultural landscape as well as in demographic, ethnic, economic and social structures, differentiating today's territory of Poland and determining regional divisions, at the foundation of more or less active social movements. The

sustainability of the settlement network and agrarian structures clearly shows that the current spatial diversity of economic processes has very old, pre-partitioning roots. The processes of nineteenth-century industrialisation also had a significant impact on how the country's space was shaped. Different conditions for the development of territories, which in 1918 became part of the Polish state, led to significant differences in the level of economic growth, infrastructure network, advancement of urbanisation processes, in the legal system, or in the preservation of population and cultural landscape. Zyta Gilowska, Grzegorz Gorzelak, Bohdan Jałowiecki and Karol Sobczak in their paper *Kierunki polityki regionalnej Polski* [*Directions of Poland's regional policy*] point out that spatial structures are considerably sustainable and poorly susceptible to external impacts. However, these differences are not petrified, as the centres of growth are changing and so is the relative economic and social situation of individual locations. The authors of the paper claim that the factors of such transformations include the change in the relationship between the features of relevant area and the location criteria applicable at a specific stage of development, which are also subject to change. Further on, the authors of the paper pointed out that the spatial (regional) policy of the state should be oriented towards achieving strategic objectives of the entire Polish economy and therefore should support pro-innovative measures that increase the effectiveness of investments and the competitiveness of Poland as a part of the global system on global capital, goods and services markets; it should also support efforts to ensure territorial integrity of the country and safety of its citizens, where all citizens can be ensured a standard of living considered minimal in relevant conditions as well as equal opportunities in access to education. They claim, however, that this should not be considered as demanding unconditional satisfaction of legitimate social needs without efforts on the part of the persons concerned, on the contrary: their activity and self-responsibility should be stimulated (Gilowska, 1998, pp. 10–14).

Given that before 1999 there were no regions in Poland, the central government was able to carry out spatial distribution of financial and material resources in the territories of its choice. Regional policy pursued until 1999 was being implemented exclusively by various institutions operating at the national level – ministries and central offices. This approach to regional policy implemented at that time meant that only the interregional policy was in place, with no premises which would enable the implementation of intraregional policy. The policy pursued at that time had many shortcomings, which included the lack of coordination of the activities of individual ministries, or even some considerable chaos, because each ministry pursued their own policy of spatial allocation of funds. Moreover, these measures, which when considered together were quite significant, were very dispersed, making it impossible to concentrate activities aimed at solving a problem. The lack of coordination of activities was escalated by the existence in Poland of several territorial networks of ministerial administration, commonly known as special administration. As a result, considerable financial resources spent from the state budget, which were otherwise insufficient anyway, would be wasted. Back then some claimed that the regional policy pursued at that time by ministries was a relic of a centrally controlled command and control economy and it should disappear with decentralisation of state functions. It would also be pointed out that the measures undertaken by different government agencies should be spatially coordinated (Gilowska, 1998, pp. 17–19).

In the context of previous considerations regarding the critically assessed regional policy conducted in Poland at that time, a question may arise: Why no intra-regional policy was pursued at that time based on the existing structure of Polish provinces? Certainly, this question should be seen as justified, but it is important to realise that the provinces existing at that time were too small and economically weak to have an independent intra-regional policy. Moreover, the provinces were administered by a government representative and had no representation of the territorial community at this level. The existing division into a large number and weak provinces was challenged from the very beginning from the point of view of their ability to fulfil their tasks, especially when it came to economy; such division failed to take into consideration objective economic ties and even severed those ties. The implementation of regional policy at that time was also significantly impeded by the lack of proper legal solutions.

The progressing process of Poland's integration with the European Communities, and above all the possibility to participate in the cohesion policy, was one of the fundamental premises for the preparation and implementation of the so-called administrative reform of the state. The basic reason behind the new territorial organisation of the country was the adaptation of the political and spatial structures to the needs of a modern, efficient state, capable of long-term development. No less important was the possibility to pursue an active regional policy. The creation of self-government provinces wasn't a guarantee for implementation of the strategic objectives of regional development, but created an opportunity for decentralisation of the state's development policy. The regions are the destinations of redistributive efforts of the central level, as well as an independent subject of regional policy. Significant decentralisation of public revenues encourages regions to adopt strategies for competitiveness of behaviours, mobilisation of the activity of regional community, as well as to create systems of innovative activities and attractive environment for capital. Regions which are strong economically, territorially, demographically and culturally enable local authorities in the regions to make potential decisions and the intra-regional policy may take the form of corrective, complementary and interventional actions.

In Poland the new category of local government was introduced by the Act of 5 June 1998 on Province Self-Government, which states that the main objective of activities a province self-government is to stimulate the development of their regions and provide public services of a regional nature and scope. This is based on the competence of a province self-government to draft province development strategy, specified in Article 11 of the Act. The strategy is implemented through a resolution of the provincial assembly. It should be embedded in the diagnosis of the initial state and on conclusions drawn from that diagnosis and its content should define the directions of measures of the province self-government, while the provincial assembly must take into consideration the objectives set out in general in the act on province self-government. For the legislator specified objectives that should be included in this strategy, including both general civilisation objectives (such cultivating the Polish character of regions as well as developing and shaping national awareness, preservation of the value of cultural and natural environment, considering the needs of future generations as well as creating and maintaining the spatial order) and regional development objectives (stimulating economic activity and increasing the level of competitiveness and innovativeness of provincial

economies). Provincial development strategy should be implemented through provincial programmes. Bestowing competences on provincial self-governments to prepare and then adopt provincial development strategy means creating the opportunity for active involvement of provincial self-government in the process of formulating the state regional policy, which will now be created not only by the central government, as before, but also by the self-governments of individual provinces. The essence of the provincial development strategy should be in creating a framework for activities of both provincial self-government bodies as well as local self-governments (in municipalities, districts) and other players, such as enterprises or universities. Provincial self-government is also responsible for pursuing provincial development policy. The development policy of provincial self-government covers aspects such as creating conditions for economic development, which includes activation of the labour market, maintenance and development of social and technical infrastructure important for the province, supporting and conducting activities aimed at improving the level of education of citizens, supporting the development of science and culture, facilitating development opportunities of the province (Ślugoński, 2001, pp. 6–9).

Another important regulation creating further foundations for regional policy was the Act of 12 May 2000 on the principles of supporting regional development, which provides for such objectives regional policy as, on the one hand, supporting the development of individual regions and improving their competitiveness as well as living standards of their inhabitants, and on the other hand, contributing to the strengthening of economic cohesion and territorial integrity of the state. Such policy should be based on the principle of sustainable development. Support for regional development was defined in the Act as “a territorially oriented set of measures of the Council of Ministers and central government administration for sustainable social and economic development and environmental protection carried out in cooperation with territorial self-government units as well as social and economic partners.” Support for regional development should be provided on the basis of the National Strategy for Regional Development and initiatives of provincial self-governments, in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. The objectives of supporting regional development cover aspects such as: development of relevant regions of the country, improvement of the quality and living conditions of citizens and the level of satisfying the needs of self-government communities; creating conditions for improved competitiveness of self-government communities; reducing the differences in the level of development between different regions of the country and ensuring the same opportunities for the citizens of the country regardless of where they live plus reduction of the underdevelopment of certain regions of which some have least favourable conditions for development. The Act provides that the strategy should be developed taking into consideration the provincial development strategy and Poland’s international obligations. The regional policy of the state is to be implemented through coordinated financial support for undertakings included in provincial programmes. Provincial self-governments were responsible for implementation of the state’s regional policy in their respective provinces as well as the tasks of the European regional development policy. The purpose of these measures is, in particular, to ensure convergence of provincial development strategy and provincial programmes (which will form the basis for the local government to apply for financial support) with the national

regional policy programme. Provincial self-government bodies will manage funds received from the state budget and the European Union on the basis of the so-called provincial contracts, or public-private agreements concluded between the government and provinces. Provincial contracts will also define mutual obligations of the province associated with the granted financial support. It is probably important to remember that these contracts are drafted as late as in 2001, although they feature an important element which should be taken into consideration in the development strategies of individual provinces, prepared as early as 1998. This means that only in the coming years will the results of the most important activities undertaken by province self-governments be fully visible (Sługocki, 2001, pp. 10–11).

Once the administrative reform was introduced, self-government provinces were established, as well as the ministry responsible for interregional policy and programming and implementation of provincial contracts, programme activities in regional policy picked up the pace. At that time, a number of documents were drafted, needed to create and implement regional policy: the concept of medium-term economic development until 2002; the strategy of public finance and economic development, the concept of spatial development of the country; the long-term strategy of sustainable development; national sectoral strategies (employment, development of rural areas and agriculture, environmental protection, transport development, fisheries). The strategic directions of regional development were established in the National Strategy for Regional Development for 2001–2006, adopted in 2000, forming the basis for actions at the national and provincial level. The NSRD was also of fundamental importance for regional policy in Poland in the pre-accession period because it defined objectives, priorities, criteria for separating support areas, principles of support, principles and means of supporting provincial programmes and ways of their connection with the state budget and pre-accession funds. It is also important that this document was consistent with the National Development Plan, which, apart from the regional approach, included also the sectoral approach (Adamowicz, 2011, p. 67).

One should note that provincial contracts played a key role in the preparation of both the process of adjusting Polish institutions as well as procedures. Parties involved in creating regional development (the minister in charge of regional development) sought to create such a system of programming and managing financial resources that would correspond to procedures adopted in the process of implementing structural funds in the European Union Member States. For this reason the adopted institutional arrangement aimed at possible verification of the possibility to implement specific procedures, measures, tasks or projects. Programming and direct execution of contracts was the responsibility of provincial bodies. Programming was the responsibility of the provincial executive board and provincial assembly, while financial flows and monitoring were managed by the province governor. A key role in the process of creating regional development mechanisms, shaping institutional potential for redistribution of funds coming from the European Union budget was played by funds granted to Poland under pre-accession programmes, that is Phare, SAPARD and ISPA. Particularly important in this process was the Phare – Economical and Social Cohesion scheme. With this model of development, using the pre-accession funds mentioned above, municipalities, districts and provinces gained practical skills in creating projects and drafting grant applications. And least but not last, new institutions and teams of experts were established, with skills

and qualifications to provide professional services to project beneficiaries. These were usually regional development agencies, which proved to be very efficient in handling various development projects (Sługocki, 2013, p. 117).

The view that the direction in which the regional policy in Poland was headed – was the right choice, is supported in the article *Przesłanki rozwoju regionalnego w Europie – doświadczeń dla Polski* [*Conditions for regional development in Europe – experiences for Poland*] by Marek W. Kozak; the author claims that the regional policy in Poland should fully take into consideration the changes taking place in the global and European economies and tune in its priorities and instruments accordingly in order to be able to effectively contribute to increasing the competitiveness of regions and Poland as a whole. W. Kozak also points out the need to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the process of decentralisation of the state and the creation of development policy entities at the province level (Kozak, 2003, pp. 153–154).

Polish regional policy after accession to the European Union

The key moment for the development of regional policy was Poland's accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004. Jacek Szlachta and Janusz Zalewski in their article *Kierunki polityki regionalnej w Polsce do roku 2020* [*Regional Policy Directions in Poland until 2020*], stress that with and due to accession Poland gained access to the means and solutions of the European cohesion policy. Poland implemented solutions for the European cohesion policy for programming, managing, financing, monitoring, evaluating and selecting projects. The key choice was the level of decentralisation of fund management. Poland adopted a relatively decentralised model, allocating management of a significant range of resources and responsibilities to provincial level (Szlachta, Zalewski, 2010, pp. 37–38). In line with multiannual financial perspective 2000–2006 which was already in motion at that time, Poland implemented a number of legal solutions, including in particular the act of 20 April 2004 on the National Development Plan, which was the foundation for implementation of operational programmes, already running then. The National Development Plan, and before it – the Preliminary National Development Plan, was a comprehensive document defining the social and economic strategy of Poland in the first years of its membership in the European Union. The Plan also contains a social and economic diagnosis of Poland and its regions on the eve of EU Accession, sets objectives and includes a description of the strategy aimed at achieving social, economic and spatial cohesion with the countries and regions of the Community. Further to that, the document estimates the expected effects of planned interventions and their impact on the course of development processes, indicates the directions and amount of planned involvement of structural funds, Cohesion Fund and national resources and defines the way of coordination and implementation of structural assistance in the period of its implementation. Plus, importantly, the National Development Plan for 2004–2006 served as a point of reference for development activities undertaken exclusively with financing from national resources, and also served as a basis for the preparation of the Community Support Framework (CSF) for Poland. Giving the short programming period 2004–2006 of the incomplete period of regional policy in relation to the perspective

of the European Union for 2000–2006, the proposed system of implementation – in particular with regard to the measures to be implemented under the regional development programme – was of a transitional nature, and the experience gained by all parties involved in the implementation of cohesion policy contributed to its use in subsequent periods of EU cohesion policy implementation (*Narodowy*, p. 7). To implement the development objectives contained in the presented programming documents and operational programmes prepared at that time, Poland received – from the European Union budget under the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund – the amount of EUR 12.8 billion, expressed in fixed prices of 2004.

Along with the implementation of the 2004–2006 budget perspective, Poland launched preparations for programming a new multiannual budget period, this time for 2007–2013. In legal terms, two acts were adopted: the Act of 12 December 2006 on the principles of development as well as the Act of 8 November 2008 on the amendment of certain acts in connection with the implementation of structural funds and the Cohesion Fund. Launching the work on the new programming period was also a pretext for reassessing the social and economic situation in the EU and its Member States, as well as its political objectives. As a result, new documents were drafted. The key document for the whole EU was the document called Community Strategic Guidelines, which set out the strategic directions of development in the upcoming financial perspective. The objectives defined included: making Europe and its regions the most attractive place to invest and work; creating more and better jobs; developing knowledge and innovation for growth; and giving the territorial dimension to cohesion policy. While reviewing political objectives, also in the context of experiences and projects undertaken so far in Poland, a strategic document was adopted, laying the foundations for the cohesion policy programming process in the next seven years. This document is the National Development Strategy for 2007–2015. The National Development Strategy sets out the objectives and priorities for the social and economic development of Poland and the conditions which should ensure this development. The key areas that need financial support from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund include: increasing the competitiveness and innovativeness of the economy; improving the state of basic infrastructure; increasing employment and its quality; building an integrated community, security system and cooperation rules; regional development and improving territorial cohesion (*Narodowy Plan Rozwoju*, pp. 4–10). The Strategy laid the foundations for the preparation of the National Strategic Reference Framework. It's a plan of sorts that defines development objectives adopted by the Government of the Republic of Poland for implementation in the years 2007–2013. Among these objectives, the following were considered to be the primary ones in creating the social and economic development of the country: creating conditions for maintaining a permanent and high economic growth; increasing employment through development of human and social capital; improving competitiveness of Polish enterprises; construction and modernisation of technical infrastructure; enhancing competitiveness of Polish regions, developing rural areas and counteracting their marginalisation (*Narodowe Strategiczne*, p. 5). That way, the defined development objectives, being also a result of the diagnosis of the social and economic situation, made it possible to implement such a structure of operational programmes, which will enable attaining the objectives in the discussed period of time. In consequence, in 2007–2013,

sixteen regional operational programmes were prepared for the implementation of four horizontal programmes – implemented throughout the entire territory of the country, which they created: Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment, Operational Programme Human Capital, Operational Programme Innovative Economy, Technical Assistance. The last of the operational programmes implemented in this period is the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland. Globally, NSRF spending in 2007–2013 amounted to EUR 67.3 billion (Sługocki, 2014, pp. 32–33).

Poland obtained EUR 82.5 billion, expressed in current prices, for implementation of the cohesion policy between 2001 and 2020. Preparations for the implementation of the next, third, EU budget perspective in Poland began with the preparation of relevant strategic and planning documents. The “National Spatial Planning Concept – 2030” and the “National Development Strategy 2020” should be considered as basic in the process of formulating this perspective. As in previous programming periods, the strategy also includes strategic objectives for the country’s development until 2020, which are crucial for the definition of development activities, including in particular those that can be financed under the 2014–2020 financial perspective. The strategy indicates that it will be implemented on the basis of a stable development scenario, while emphasising that the success of all the objectives pursued will depend on internal and external factors. The “National Development Strategy” provides a framework for programming of European intervention over the period in question. An important message of the document is the integration around the development objectives of various environments, including public, social and economic environments, which play an important role in the processes of country modernisation and which can support them in the local, regional as well as national dimension (*Narodowe Strategiczne*, pp. 5–10). The above mentioned strategic documents were the basis to initiate the process of preparation of the “Partnership Agreement,” which is a kind of agreement concluded by Poland with the European Commission. The agreement contains information not only on how relevant development objectives are to be achieved but also defines the key priority areas for individual operational programmes, the scale of European and national funds that will be used for their implementation. It also includes the assumptions of the implementation system and the division of duties in the system of managing European funds between national and regional authorities (*Programowanie*, p. 3).

Conclusion

The development of regional policy in Poland progressed along with the process of European integration. In reality, the process of Poland’s integration with the European Union determined the process of forming regional policy, which enables implementation of the European cohesion policy on the national ground, for which Poland, together with subsequent multiannual financial perspectives, received greater financial resources. It is important to note that the reforms undertaken in the nineties of the last century: territorial organisation of the country, public finance, institutional arrangement contributed to the development of solutions fully enabling the creation and implementation of regional policy in Poland, both in the interregional and intraregional dimension. Twelve years of experience

in the implementation of regional policy by Poland supported with the structural funds and the Cohesion Fund under the cohesion policy of the European Union have brought about a number of tangible effects, not only in the process of forming this policy, but above all its positive impact on reducing the development gap between Polish regions and the most developing regions of the EU Member States. It has also contributed to the development of a wealth of experience and institutional arrangements at various levels of regional policy implementation and the development of competent human resources, which successfully manage the development of Poland in the central, regional and local dimension.

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Proces kształtowania polityki regionalnej w Polsce

Streszczenie

Zasadniczym celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie procesu kształtowania polityki regionalnej w Polsce w latach 1990–2020, koncentrując rozważania głównie na aspektach teoretycznych, w tym ewolucji paradygmatu polityki regionalnej w Polsce w kontekście jej zmian na poziomie Unii Europejskiej. W tekście podjęto próbę uchwycenia wpływu integracji Polski z Unią Europejską na formułowanie rodzimej polityki regionalnej, w tym proces tworzenia nowych dokumentów programowych zarówno w wymiarze krajowym, jak i regionalnym jako świadome ukierunkowanie działań prorozwojowych w zmieniającej się rzeczywistości determinowanej przesłankami zewnętrznymi i wewnętrznymi. Aby osiągnąć określone zamierzenie badawcze, konieczne było uzyskanie odpowiedzi na sformułowane pytanie: Czy proces integracji Polski z Unią Europejską oraz uczestnictwo w jej strukturach wpłynęło na kształtowanie polityki regionalnej w Polsce? W celu uzyskania odpowiedzi na tak sformułowane pytanie badawcze rozważania rozpoczęto od wyjaśnienia podstawowych pojęć takich jak: rozwój regionalny, polityka regionalna, czy też opisanie czynników rozwoju w teoriach i modelach rozwoju regionalnego. W następnej części artykułu określono proces kształtowania się polityki regionalnej w Polsce, wskazując zarówno aspekt teoretyczny, prawny, instytucjonalny i finansowy omawianych zagadnień.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka regionalna, region, rozwój, Unia Europejska.

