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COHESION POLICY IN POLAND: ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Poland, one of the new member states of the European Union, has the largest area and the greatest population number in this group. This means relatively the most serious challenges connected with the spatial scale of differences in development and differences in its determinants. As a consequence, on entering the EU Poland became a sort of a 'laboratory' of the European cohesion policy. The 'experiment' concerns not only the efficiency of the implementation of the Community's regional policy at the national level in the conditions of a post-socialist state, but also, and perhaps primarily, its effectiveness in the conditions of a large member state, internally diversified at the regional and subregional scales.

The goal of this analysis is to present the state of and changes in the assumptions of the cohesion policy in Poland and progress in its implementation. The analysis proceeds in three basic steps. Presented first are the assumptions of the EU cohesion policy transferred to the national regional policy. Analysed next are the extent of and spatial differences in the intervention of the cohesion policy as measured by the support obtained from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. Analysed in step three are changes in the level of socio-economic development and the convergence effects obtained as a result of the development intervention received. As to the spatial range, the analysis embraces the national, the regional and the subregional (poviat) level. The study period includes the three financial perspectives of the European Union budget that Poland could use as a member state: 2004-2006, 2007-2013, and 2014-2020 (with the 'mid-term' for the year 2016 in the last case).