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**OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN METROPOPLITAN CENTRES
OF SOUTH-WEST POLAND**

It is both a political challenge and aspiration of contemporary Poland to integrate fully with the economic and social structures of the West. After a long-lasting period of stagnation and after over a decade of transformation, the basis for the work can be deemed ready. Now it is necessary to diminish the development gap between Poland and the countries of the advanced market economy. This task requires more dynamic economic development of our country and an increase in its competitiveness on the transnational level. To this end, one of the pre-conditions is taking advantage of regional, as well as macroeconomic, factors and opportunities. From this point of view, the geopolitical situation of Poland is of importance, since it facilitates improvement of the competitiveness of the Polish social-economic space and participation in the process of forming a new European "spatial order".

Poland is situated in the area where two big structures meet: the European Union and, on the other hand, a group of East European countries, commencing, with certain delay, transformation processes. For the development of Poland, it is also important that on the line North-South the country connects two areas emerging out of the European space: the Baltic area and the Danube-Balkan area. Being a point of junction is for Poland both favourable and dangerous: the country can profit from its involvement in different structures, but on the other hand there is also a threat of remaining a periphery of each of the zones.

The threat may be neutralized by an active regional development policy creating political, economic, social and spatial connections in all directions. Another important way of counteracting the adverse phenomenon of being a periphery of the European development areas is creation of strong metropolitan centres holding the most appropriate, for their position in the spatial structure of the continent, functions.

Taking into account the European integration, one should answer the question whether Polish agglomerations are able to compete with other European agglomerations and metropolitan centres. This implies a further problem: how to improve the competitiveness of Polish regions. By joining their potentials and power to influence, major centres may contribute to strengthening the significance of Polish regions in Europe. There are good reasons to perceive agglomerations as focal points for the social-economic processes. Their economic, service, scientific and cultural capacity as well as administration institutions are sufficient to constitute a development pole for the surrounding area. There are many criteria to delimit the area influenced by such a pole. However, a true challenge is to convince regional authorities, competing with each other in a sense, that they can profit from co-operation and specialization. Such an arrangement of two metropolitan centres, mutually complementing their functions and thus effectively competing within a wider space, is called a "bipolar configuration".

According to the analyses taking into account the interests of the whole area of Poland, it is possible to indicate a number of potential bipolar development centres, differing from each other in terms of capacity and range of connections. The most important of them will be able to improve their competitiveness to such an extent that they will be able to play an important role in the space of the whole European continent. There are 5 such prospective bipoles in Poland, two of them situated on the borders of important European co-operation zones: Kraków-Katowice and Wrocław-Poznań. The differences between them in terms of their development level, external connections and degree of their internal integration provide an interesting material for research work. They may also constitute a basis for a differentiated and effective government policy seeking to reinforce interregional co-operation in order to make the Polish space more competitive in Europe.

In order to investigate the Wrocław-Poznań bipolar zone influenced directly by both Poznań and Wrocław agglomerations, a diamond-shaped area has been demarcated, Poznań, Leszno, Wrocław and Kalisz being its apices. All districts (poviats) within this geographical

area have been analysed. As a result two zones, related to the regional division, have been identified: the Dolnośląska and Wielkopolska zones.

The Dolnośląska Zone is characterised by particularly favourable development conditions related to its structurally diversified economy. Modern fields of the economy should be developed here, based on the scientific-research capacity, professional resources and application of innovative forms of management. Advantage should be also taken of the geographical situation of the region and well developed transborder co-operation, which opens new possibilities of exchanging experiences, as well as finding new markets for the products of the region. The policy of economic transformations should be aimed at further diversification, especially at the development of services and environment friendly industries.

The Wielkopolska Zone in comparison with the Dolnośląska Zone has better results of the social-economic analysis, develops more dynamically, has stronger intellectual resources, more scientific and R&D units and more money assigned to the purpose. Both of the zones, however, have problems with applying science in the economic activities, which may constitute a field of co-operation or exchange of experiences. The Wielkopolska Zone is characterised by much more job opportunities and a noticeably lower unemployment rate (by 6%) than the Dolnośląska Zone. This situation opens the possibility of migration for work within the bipolar area.

Both zones are well urbanized and both are considered attractive for investors. In Wrocław the quality of work, business environment infrastructure and marketing activity are estimated to be lower than in Poznań. In the case of the Dolnośląski Region the rate of net turnover remunerativeness is higher and equals 2.2%, whereas in the case of Wielkopolska it equals 1.5% and tends to drop. In the Dolnośląski Region average monthly salary/wages level in industry is higher, whereas in the construction sector it is lower than in Wielkopolska. As far as the GDP per capita value is concerned, both regions are in the same group. In this situation, competition between them can be taken into account, all the more so as in the ranking of cities Wrocław and Poznań are separated only by Kraków.

The analysis has not revealed significant differences in the development potential of both parts of the bipolar area. The differences in the inner potential of the Dolny Śląsk region are focused around the following issues:

- problems related to degradation of the natural environment;
- industrial zones dominated by one branch;
- technical and transport decapitalisation;
- unsatisfactory quality of life;
- bad state of buildings and obsolete model of the tourist services and recreation;
- unclear ownership structure;
- delayed privatisation process;
- unclear system of the local interests impeding integration and identification with the region;
- delay in the development and modernisation of the transport systems.

In the case of Wielkopolska, differences in the inner potential relate to:

- uneven communication accessibility;
- low share of the innovative sectors of the economy;
- low salaries/wages;
- lack of co-operation between communes (gminas);
- high number of farms representing a low level of agriculture;
- economic marginalisation of a great part of the area;
- dumping-grounds.

Synergy processes in the western zone area may be grounded on:

- R&D co-operation;
- creating conditions for the high technology absorption;
- forming a strong lobby for pro-ecological actions (both regions suffer from devastated natural environment);
- co-operation seeking to improve the conditions for agriculture;
- more dynamic development in the area influenced by the bipolar centres, based on better transport and telecommunication infrastructure;
- joint investments in the business environment infrastructure;
- more active labour market and joint counteracting the growing unemployment;
- co-operation between the self-government units and investments at transcommune, and transregional levels;
- promotion of the bipolar area.

The role of both of the agglomerations as important communication nodes will have a considerable impact on forming a functional and sustainable bipolar structure around Wrocław and Poznań. If it was not for them, it would not be possible to diversify the economic basis of the bi-pole. To this end, it is necessary to investigate the opportunities related to the position and transport infrastructure of both agglomera-

tions. The aim of the exercise is to identify development capacity in the points of main communication axes intersection.

The concept of competitiveness within a bipolar structure has double meaning:

- direct competitiveness – meaning rivalry between territorial units in order to gain various profits (attracting investments, important government institutions, organisation of international events);
- indirect competitiveness – understood as having or forming such conditions for companies of the region that enable them to compete successfully. In this case competitiveness of the region is expressed and measured by the ability to compete by the firms located within its territory.

Although the businesses of the Wrocław-Poznań bipolar area can compete successfully at the national level, they still need further transformations and higher level of innovations to be competitive also on the world markets.

Referring to the second meaning of competitiveness, one can maintain that the bipolar area Wrocław-Poznań already can be seen as a business-friendly zone, attracting many foreign investments.

From the point of view of the economic actors the most important features offered by the bipolar area include:

- accessibility of well-qualified professionals;
- developed business environment institutions;
- R&D institutions, higher education institutions;
- promotional actions carried out by the local and regional authorities;
- well developed co-operation network;
- favourable position on transport routes.

The concept of the Wrocław-Poznań bipolar centre has a sort of unofficial character – it is not mentioned in the spatial plans in force and development strategies of both regions. Similarly, co-operation between the agglomerations, districts (poviats) and communes (gminas) has not been noticed by the authors of regional, district and commune strategies. Usually, only advantages from the co-operation with other communes on joint undertakings at local level are acknowledged. There is far bigger interest in the co-operation with foreign partners, even if it is usually limited to the area of culture, art, or education.

At present, despite many positive circumstances, odds are against forming a bipolar arrangement on the line Wrocław-Poznań. It seems that links in other directions, having strong historical, economic and communication background, prevail.

Modernised road and rail connections, as well as new international roads connecting both agglomerations could all help in the “bipolarisation” process.

There are also economic obstacles to be taken into account, such as an insufficient share of the innovative sectors and difficult situation in the processing industry. Restructuring of the industry, promotion of the investments seeking to implement technical progress and the newest technologies – could be a remedy in this case.

Even though bi-polarity in the area is not obvious yet, it is still possible to create a zone of active and efficient co-operation based on common development goals. The following factors could contribute to forming such an area:

- similar economic and social potential of both centres;
- a significant role of the agglomerations in the social and economic structure of the country;
- common interests, and especially:
 - the Odra river management;
 - extension and promotion of communication routes along the axis Wrocław-Poznań;
 - joint promotional actions focusing on the tourist attractions and rich cultural heritage;
- similar development goals formulated in the strategies and planning documents both for the cities and the whole regions;
- relatively small distance between Wrocław and Poznań (around 180 km).

Bringing the bipolar structure into being would require a common development strategy for the region surrounding the two centres – Wrocław and Poznań. Such a strategy should be commonly accepted and it should take the interests of both parts into consideration. The co-operation should take place not only at the city authorities level, but as a result closer contacts at lower levels would be expected. This refers to the local organisations, cultural centres, scientific institutions and – above all – economic actors.

Such a bipolar configuration could hardly exist unless the area between Poznań and Wrocław was activated so as to create a platform connecting the agglomerations and contributing to the development of the whole area.

Determinants of functional bipolarity seem much more perceptible in southern Poland, where the Kraków–Katowice area is emerging. The Katowice agglomeration together with the Kraków agglomeration form a metropolitan area distinguishing itself spatially, with two, situ-

ated close to each other, strong economic centres. The centres are located in the middle of the highly urbanised area in southern Poland, along communication routes connecting the agglomerations of Dolny Śląsk in the west and Rzeszów and Przemyśl in the east.

The Katowice agglomeration is a central part of the Silesian region, basic administrative, social, economic and cultural functions being concentrated here. This agglomeration consists of 15 cities. The rates of urbanisation and density of population keep growing.

Industry is a crucial component of the economy in the Katowice agglomeration (varying from 64.5% in Ruda Śląska to 8.4% in Sosnowiec). Most of the Polish coalmines, as well as steelworks and trade companies related to these branches are situated here. From year to year, the motor industry grows stronger in the area (the Katowice Special Economic Zone). The role of the service sector is also growing systematically, even though it is still insufficiently developed.

The development of the Katowice agglomeration took over 150 years. Its role as a European industrial and raw materials centre, based predominantly on coal and zinc-lead ores and heavy industries increased gradually. In course of time power plants became an important part of the economy not only in the agglomeration but also in the close neighbourhood.

The territorial scope of the so called Krakowska agglomeration has not been defined clearly. According to a recent definition the agglomeration covers, apart from the Kraków city, Kraków district (powiat) and Wieliczka, Myślenice, Chrzanów, Olkusz, Wadowice, Oświęcim, Proszowice, Miechów and Bochnia districts.

Kraków is the biggest settlement unit in the Małopolska region. This statement refers to the social issues – number of inhabitants, social infrastructure – and to the economy as well. The political system and economic transformation have resulted in a new hierarchy of development factors. It seems that not only nowadays but also in the future the ranking of the development strengths in the case of Kraków could be as follows:

- industrial plants susceptible to modernisation processes including the high technology industry inclusive;
- administrative self-government of the city, independent in the field of the spatial planning and financing;
- regeneration of economic self-government involved in the SME sector development in the field of production and services;
- higher education system and R&D institutes;

- service sector development, particularly tourism and financial institutions;
- extension of the communication system (A 4 motorway, Kraków Communication Centre).

Synergy processes in the bipolar area may be connected, first of all, with:

- taking advantage of the small distance between the two agglomerations as well as of good communication connections between them;
- co-operation between both agglomerations in the field of overcoming the economic decline and making the labour market more stable;
- more dynamic development in the area situated between the two agglomerations aimed at better integration;
- co-operation between self-government units of the commune and district levels resulting in supra-local undertakings.

Shaping the bipolar area Katowice-Kraków depends on its integration potential, i.e. the inner resources of one part of the area that make it able to form close links with the other part. It is also important to identify expected profits connected with closer co-operation. Having in mind the above mentioned criterion, two basic groups of potentials can be defined:

- resources and functions which enable vertical integration, differentiate particular parts of the bipolar area, are conducive to the co-operation between economic actors and other organizations, taking advantage of the fact that functions of the integrated areas are of a complementary character;
- potentials which serve horizontal integration, including resources and functions of similar character, typical of both parts of the bipolar area, conducive to competitiveness, but at the same time making it possible to profit from close co-operation.

Vertical integration potentials

- totally different character of both agglomerations: Katowice being an industrial centre experiencing restructuring problem, pretty attractive for investors (especially the foreign ones) and Kraków, a world-renowned centre of rich tradition and strong cultural impact with the centrally planned heavy industry centre in Nowa Huta;
- distinct differences, in terms of the branch and sectoral structure, between both the economies (the primary and secondary sectors prevailing in the Katowice agglomeration and the tertiary sector being predominant in Kraków);

- relatively well qualified human resources (especially engineers and technicians) and traditional esteem for work in both agglomerations;
- considerable energy potential in the Katowice part.

Horizontal integration potentials

- close neighbourhood of Kraków and the Katowice agglomeration, supported by good road and rail connections, well developed public transport (particularly railway) between both parts of the bipolar area; this factor is conducive to the co-operation of both types: vertical and horizontal as well;
- similar problems and development goals as a result of an agglomeration character of both parts of the area;
- common ecological problems and the necessity to solve them jointly;
- overlapping of the areas influenced by both centres, intensifying competition between the agglomerations;
- many heavy industry plants, often declining, with similar production profiles;
- a great number of various higher education institutions in both parts of the bipolar area;
- similar character of the international airports in Pyrzowice and Balice.

Main development determinants for the bipolar area Katowice-Kraków may be summarized as follows:

1. Good communication connections
 - Both parts of the area are mutually easily accessible
 - a) motorway,
 - b) relatively dense network of national and local roads,
 - c) main railway and a network of secondary railways.
2. Position on international communication routes

One of the strongest points of both agglomerations is the fact that they are situated within an intersection of two transport corridors North-South and East-West (in future – a part of the trans-European transport network) and close to two international airports. Especially important is the close vicinity of the European communication route no. 3, connecting Western Europe with Eastern Europe and Asia.
3. Relatively well developed economy in the area between the two agglomerations.

There is a number of medium-size towns with a distinctive character of production (Chrzanów, Jaworzno, Olkusz, Oświęcim, Trzebinia,

Wadowice). They are important not only due to their own potentials, but they also play a significant role in the process of transmitting the influence of both agglomerations further.

4. A considerable degree of complementarity between economic structures of the agglomerations
 - a) technical and production economic bonds can be created,
 - b) in terms of demand for services:
 - possibility of developing highly specialist services of sector four (R&D, financial market services),
 - providing for inhabitants' needs in the fields of culture, education, leisure, health and job opportunities.
5. Multifunctional economic structures

This applies mainly to the agglomerations but refers also to the area between the centres. The factor facilitates find the partners in many fields of activity and is conducive to creating new economic actors (also: attracts the external capital) and further diversification of the economy.
6. Well developed metropolitan functions of the agglomerations, particularly of Kraków. This is a good basis for a prospective Euro-pole – a unit where the social and economic potentials important for pan-European space are concentrated on a relatively small area.
7. Relatively strong population movements in the area. This seems to be not only an indicator, but also an important element of the bipolar system dynamics.
8. Well developed and balanced higher education and R&D market

This provides a background for the development of industries based on new technologies and organizational innovations, not to mention an impact on the quality of human resources. Owing to the research and educational institutions economic structures of the area may have a better competitive position and, on the other hand, the agglomerations may react to the changes in their surroundings in a more flexible way.
9. Good educational background of the population

High level of educational background and a wide range of specialists are among the factors that decide about the location of the knowledge-demanding and innovative types of industries.
10. The area of the bipolar zone constitutes the biggest and the most wealthy consumption goods and investment market in the country. This is another factor of its attractiveness.
11. Special Economic Zones: the Katowice Zone and the Kraków Zone (with the Centre of High Technologies). It is expected that in the zones

modern and dynamic economic potentials will be developed to have a positive impact on the area far beyond the two agglomerations.

The integration of the two agglomerations depends to the same extent on their characteristics and on the type of space between and around them. In the case of Kraków and Katowice one of the main factors in favour of the bipolar structure is a small distance between the cities and excellent communication connections. Also, certain features of the areas between the agglomerations may have an impact on the integration processes. The areas are characterized by troubles connected with economic collapse and instability of the labour market. Quite often, the problems are related to the changes in the agglomerations, which used to be a partner centres (for co-operation networks) and a source of job opportunities for the people from the surrounding area.

The areas between the agglomerations have been forced to compete with stronger and bigger centres. A bipolar structure could help to activate the endogenous potential of the areas and speed up their development. Foremost, it is an opportunity to rebuild co-operation networks and make the situation on the job market more stable. The opportunities offered by the bipolar arrangement should appeal to the local authorities and make them well-disposed to the integration plans.

The analyses of two different bipolar areas of South-West Poland show that the main condition of shaping a bipolar structure should be an openness of the centres to challenges connected with globalisation and European integration. This is a signal that it is about time to forget about administrative boundaries in the planning process. In order to integrate centres it is necessary:

- to adopt the rule that planning is a tool designed to meet specific goals, also those relating to the integration of a bipolar structure and to comply with the rule constantly;
- to use appropriate information tools in order to facilitate the spread of information on the development policies between different territorial units (a basis for co-operation and co-ordination and an important way of avoiding conflicts of interests);
- to incorporate units of different levels – from communes through regions to central administration – in the development planning process; the character of the bipolar structures (transregional area) calls for instruments and measures beyond control of a particular region (e.g. the level of shaping and implementing of the state spatial policy); nonetheless substantial results may be also expected owing to co-ordination of planning at the lower levels (synergy

effects between independent actions undertaken by communes and regions);

- to prepare development plans beyond administrative boundaries, which refers mainly to infrastructural arrangements and solving ecological problems in accord with the bipolar structure needs; an example of such investments may be communication arrangements or multimodal centres, which are not necessary in each agglomeration and may be situated between two major cities (the problem of multimodal centres is particularly important for the bipolar area development since many of its functions are connected with trade);
- to promote competition between regions and major centres through stimulating their specialisation. Regional and local authorities tend to define too many various development goals for their areas and – quite often – are also prone to imitate solutions inappropriate for the conditions within their territory. This results in the dispersion of efforts and measures and poses a threat for the competitiveness of the areas on the national and European levels. The specialisation could contribute to reinforcing the development processes. Moreover, it could be conducive to openness for co-operation with other regions and centres, thus increasing the synergy effect, for example in bipolar structures.