

SUMMARY

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Institutional conditions of absorption of structural funds for R&D by small and medium-sized enterprises on the example of the Pomeranian Voivodeship.

When analysing the propensity to absorb structural funds earmarked for research and development (R&D) by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it was assumed that every human activity can be understood as a transaction, in accordance with the theory of transaction costs. The transaction's success, on the other hand, is the minimization of costs related to it, not only in the financial sense, but also as a result of access to information or the presence of a reliable and trusted partner. Each type of transaction has an optimal model indicating the minimization of these costs, including through an appropriate management and coordination structure. In the case of structural funds supporting less affluent and innovative European enterprises, the choice of the appropriate structure of funds management can significantly mobilize SMEs to reach for these funds and reduce transaction costs.

Analysing the development of regional policy objectives from 1989 on the support of European regions, most funds under structural funds were allocated to the so-called Objective 1. The EU support mechanism for less developed areas has initiated changes in formal and informal institutions towards a more innovative view of the functioning of entities operating in the regional ecosystem. It was introduced in particular with the new perspective related to the absorption of funds for R&D. In many EU regions, it was an impulse for taking the first steps to implement innovation strategies or implement projects aimed at developing new technologies. Funds allocated for R&D can contribute to breakthrough changes in the economy. In accordance with the theory of the new institutional economy, these changes in consequence, cause a shift from the existing institutional balance to a higher level of development (innovative development path). Institution research can therefore be important for understanding the factors affecting the economic development and competitiveness of regions.

The subject of the dissertation is the analysis of institutional conditions for the absorption of structural funds dedicated to the R&D sector of SMEs in the selected EU regions characterized by low GDP per capita (in PPP). Institutional conditions are understood here as systems for implementation of structural funds, with particular emphasis on the coordination of activities dedicated to the development of innovations being an element of so-called regional innovation strategies (RIS).

Analysis of the selected regions is dynamic and made from the perspective of the process of the evolution of structural support intended for the SME sector for innovation-related activities. The process of implementation of structural funds is analysed in the following EU regions: Border, Midlands and Western (Ireland), West Wales and the Valleys (Great Britain) and Extremadura (Spain). The element of the study was to follow the process of changes that took place in the selected regions due to the evolution of support for companies, from the basic investment, infrastructure or consultancy, towards co-financing projects aimed at developing the R&D sphere. The analysed NUTS 2 level units, apart from low GDP per capita (in PPP), were characterized by low entrepreneurship and low innovation.

It allowed to identify barriers and point to "milestones" which regions have to face in striving to strengthen regional innovation. Selected areas constituted a background (benchmark) for observation and analysis of structural support dedicated to enterprises for R&D and a point of reference to describe the processes of entrepreneurial discovery related to the implementation of the RIS in the Pomeranian Voivodship.

Due to the subject of the research and the availability of data, the analysis was carried out at the level of NUTS 2 aggregation. The time range of studies of the three mentioned above EU regions covered five consecutive programming periods, i.e. (1). 1989-1993; (2). 1994-1999; (3). 2000-2006; (4). 2007-2013 and (5). 2014-2020. In the case of the Pomeranian Voivodship, the systems of implementing structural funds have been analysed since 2004, although support available for the SME sector in the so-called pre-accession period was also included.

The dissertation reviews the theoretical achievements in the field of institutionalism as the basis for the new institutional economy. Selected schools and theories have been analysed in the context of the functioning of enterprises. The role of formal and informal institutions in the efficient functioning of the economy was presented and the possible application of the institutional approach in practice was indicated. The territorial dimension of the region's growth and development in contemporary theoretical considerations has been described, among others e.g. new economic geography and integrated territorial approach. The above considerations were supplemented with the analysis of key factors from the point of view of implementing a policy based on an integrated territorial approach. The analysis of structural funds implementation systems in three selected EU regions with particular emphasis on support for innovations was made. The tools for effective management of EU funds (coordination, communication, experience, organization) have been summarized. The analysis of the issue of absorption of structural funds by the SME sector for innovations in the Pomeranian Voivodship was undertaken. The argument about the positive impact of structural funds on the increase of local and regional actors' competences was emphasized, on the example of the entrepreneurial discovery process and during the process of selecting Pomorskie Smart Specialisation. The final part of the dissertation are recommendations for the Pomeranian Voivodeship for the new programming period after 2020 in the field of SME innovation support tools.