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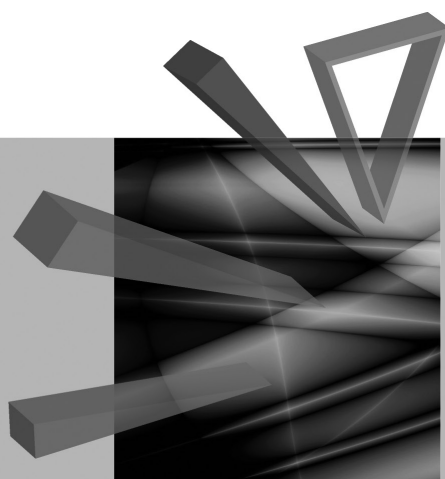
Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu

RESEARCH PAPERS

of Wrocław University of Economics

286

Regional Economy in Theory and Practice



edited by

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Publishing House of Wrocław University of Economics
Wrocław 2013

Copy-editing: Elżbieta Macauley, Tim Macauley, Marcin Orszulak

Layout: Barbara Łopusiewicz

Proof-reading: Barbara Łopusiewicz

Typesetting: Comp-rajt

Cover design: Beata Dębska

This publication is available at www.ibuk.pl, www.ebscohost.com,
and in The Central and Eastern European Online Library www.ceeol.com
as well as in the annotated bibliography of economic issues of BazEkon
http://kangur.uek.krakow.pl/bazy_ae/bazekon/nowy/index.php

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Wrocław 2013

ISSN 1899-3192

ISBN 978-83-7695-345-8

The original version: printed

Printing: Printing House TOTEM

Contents

Introduction	9
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Part 1. Theoretical aspects of regional economy

Ryszard Brol: Innovation vs. regional development	13
Ewa Glińska, Anna Kononiuk: The concept of regional strategy of smart specialization	27
Hanna Kruk: Resilience, competitiveness and sustainable development of the region – similarities and differences	35
Andrzej Sztando: Regional innovation strategy implementation – system model covering the results of the analysis of the Polish experiences	43
Andrzej Raszkowski: Creativity in the context of regional development – selected issues	52
Yuliya Melnyk: Regional peculiarities of the global art market	62
Elżbieta Załoga, Dariusz Milewski: The impact of transport on regional development	71
Alina Kulczyk-Dynowska: Diversified spatial neighbourhood – a metropolis and a national park	79

Part 2. The results of European regional space research and analyses

Malgorzata Markowska, Danuta Strahl: Polish regions against the background of European regional space with regard to smart growth – aggregate perspective	89
Beata Bal-Domańska: Does smart growth enhance economic cohesion? An analysis for the EU regions of new and old accession countries	100
Elżbieta Sobczak: Typology of European regions vs. effects of workforce changes by the level of research and development activities intensity ...	111
Malgorzata Karczewska: Gross domestic expenditures on research and development in GDP of European Union countries – changes in trends	121
Marzena Grzesiak, Anita Richert-Kaźmierska: Educational engagement of the elderly – the experiences of selected Baltic Sea Region countries	133
Ewa Coll: The classification of EU and Eastern Partnership countries regarding economic development level – a dynamic approach	144
Anetta Waśniewska: The potential of the population in the Baltic Sea Region in the years 2001–2011	157
Alla Melnyk: Modernization of regional structural policy mechanisms in Ukraine in the process of its EU integration	169

Part 3. Selected problems of Polish regions functioning and development

Dariusz Głuszczyk: Barriers to innovation activities in industrial enterprises by Polish regions in 2004–2006 and 2008–2010	181
Piotr Hajduga: Special economic zones as stimuli to regional development during a crisis	191
Adam Przybyłowski: Sustainable transport development prerequisites in selected Polish regions	199
Mariusz E. Sokołowicz: The impact of transnational corporations' activity on regional human capital. Case study of the Łódź metropolitan area ...	210
Anna Jasińska-Biliczak: Interregional cooperation as the stimulation of proinnovation actions – the casual analysis	222
Franciszek Adameczuk: Cross-border cooperation of Lower Silesia and Saxony – current results and prospects	230
Agnieszka Barczak: Managing the production process of a group of agricultural farms of the Pomorze and Mazury Region and their economic development	240
Tomasz Dorożyński, Wojciech Urbaniak: Experiences of county employment agencies in the use of EU structural funds to promote employment. The case of the Łódź voivodeship	249
Małgorzata Golińska-Pieszynska: Contemporary innovative practices in a regional context of the Łódź region	260

Streszczenia

Część 1. Teoretyczne aspekty gospodarki regionalnej

Ryszard Broł: Innowacyjność a rozwój regionalny	26
Ewa Glińska, Anna Kononiuk: Koncepcja regionalnej strategii inteligentnej specjalizacji	34
Hanna Kruk: Rezyliencja, konkurencyjność i rozwój zrównoważony regionów – podobieństwa i różnice	42
Andrzej Sztando: Wdrażanie regionalnej strategii innowacji – model systemu stanowiący rezultat analizy polskich doświadczeń	51
Andrzej Raszkowski: Kreatywność w kontekście rozwoju regionalnego – wybrane zagadnienia	61
Yuliya Melnyk: Regionalna specyfika globalnego rynku sztuki	70
Elżbieta Załoga, Dariusz Milewski: Wpływ transport na rozwój regionalny	78
Alina Kulczyk-Dynowska: Zróżnicowane sąsiedztwo w przestrzeni – metropolie i park narodowy	86

Część 2. Rezultaty badań i analiz nad europejską przestrzenią regionalną

Małgorzata Markowska, Danuta Strahl: Polskie regiony na tle europejskiej przestrzeni regionalnej w kontekście inteligentnego rozwoju – ujęcie agregatowe	99
Beata Bal-Domańska: Czy inteligentny rozwój sprzyja spójności ekonomicznej? Analiza dla regionów państw Unii Europejskiej nowego i starego rozszerzenia	110
Elżbieta Sobczak: Typologia regionów europejskich a efekty zmian liczby pracujących według poziomu intensywności prac badawczo-rozwojowych	120
Małgorzata Karczewska: Udział nakładów na badania i rozwój w PKB krajów Unii Europejskiej – tendencje zmian	132
Marzena Grzesiak, Anita Richert-Kaźmierska: Zaangażowanie osób starszych w edukację – doświadczenia wybranych państw regionu Morza Bałtyckiego	143
Ewa Coll: Klasyfikacja państw UE i krajów Partnerstwa Wschodniego ze względu na poziom rozwoju gospodarczego – ujęcie dynamiczne	156
Anetta Waśniewska: Potencjał ludności regionu Morza Bałtyckiego w latach 2001-2011	168
Alla Melnyk: Modernizacja mechanizmów regionalnej polityki strukturalnej Ukrainy w procesie integracji z Unią Europejską	177

Część 3. Wybrane problem funkcjonowania i rozwoju polskich regionów

Dariusz Głuszczuk: Przeszkody działalności innowacyjnej przedsiębiorstw przemysłowych według regionów Polski w latach 2004–2006 i 2008–2010 .	189
Piotr Hajduga: Specjalne Strefy Ekonomiczne jako stymulator rozwoju regionalnego w dobie kryzysu	198
Adam Przybyłowski: Przesłanki zrównoważonego rozwoju transportu w wybranych polskich regionach	209
Mariusz E. Sokolowicz: Wpływ korporacji transnarodowych na rozwój kapitału ludzkiego w regionie. Przykład łódzkiego obszaru metropolitalnego	221
Anna Jasińska-Biliczak: Współpraca międzyregionalna stymulantem działań proinnowacyjnych – przykład województwa opolskiego	229
Franciszek Adamczuk: Współpraca transgraniczna Dolnego Śląska i Saksonii – aktualne wyniki i perspektywy	239
Agnieszka Barczak: Zarządzanie procesem produkcji grupy gospodarstw rolnych regionu Pomorze i Mazury z uwzględnieniem poziomu rozwoju gospodarczego	248

Tomasz Dorożyński, Wojciech Urbaniak: Doświadczenia powiatowych urzędów pracy w zakresie wykorzystywania funduszy strukturalnych UE w celu promocji zatrudnienia. Przykład województwa łódzkiego	259
Małgorzata Golińska-Pieszyńska: Współczesne praktyki innowacyjne w kontekście regionalnym w oparciu o region łódzki	267

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**REGIONAL INNOVATION STRATEGY
IMPLEMENTATION
– SYSTEM MODEL COVERING THE RESULTS
OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH EXPERIENCE**

Summary: The paper discusses problems referring to regional innovation strategies (RIS) implementation. Its introductory part presents the rationale for the construction of the RIS implementation system model and its project assumptions. The paper's main part illustrates the discussed model design. Its institutional components, their functions and mutual relations are described by the author. The paper concludes with suggestions for the discussed model's practical application.

Keywords: innovation, region, strategy, regional innovation strategy, Poland.

1. Introduction

Regional innovation strategies (RIS) represent planning documents aimed at both the determination and coordinated implementation of deliberately selected activities focused on raising the level of innovation in a particular region. They have been prepared by the regional authorities of different countries, mostly European, since the mid-1990s. In Poland this process began in 2003. Today, after eight years, and having gathered extensive experience in this matter, it is not only justified, but also desirable, to assess the selection of targets and tasks they define, the effectiveness and efficiency of the structures applied for their achievement and realization, as well as for the due implementation procedures. The reason for such an assessment is to improve the knowledge about the regional, strategic innovation's construction in order to take advantage of and apply it while working on subsequent RIS strategies, not limited only to Poland.

The Department of Regional Economy at the Wrocław University of Economics performed one such assessment in the period 2009–2011, within the framework of the research project entitled: "Innovation of the European regional

space vs. the dynamics of regional economic development”. One of its components was the assessment prepared by the author regarding Polish RIS implementation [details in: Sztando 2010a]. It points to the defects of these systems¹ and, in its final part, presents the hypothesis regarding the possibility of a model solution construction in the area under discussion which, after appropriate adaptation and taking into account regional conditions, could be applied in practice. This hypothesis constituted due guidelines for further investigation, the objective of which was to create and verify the practical usefulness of such a model. In order to meet the objective of its first part, the concept of such a model was developed by the author. In the process of its establishment, the systemic analysis and descriptive analysis application results used in the process of the above mentioned assessment, were taken advantage of along with logical and situational analysis. The primary building block of the discussed concept were the author’s experiences gained during several years of participation in the processes of local and regional development strategies’ construction and implementation for forty units of territorial self-governments, while its secondary component was made up of the European standards referring to RIS implementation, the analysis of which was carried out by the author as a separate topic of the research project mentioned above [details in: Sztando 2010b]. The purpose of this article is to present this concept. The author also wishes to emphasize that, due to the limited framework of this study, the presentation of the following model, as a result of the above-mentioned efforts, is purely schematic.

2. Assumptions

The model construction required a number of assumptions. The first of these refers to the core concept, i.e. the nature of RIS. According to the author, it should be perceived in two ways simultaneously, i.e. in terms of its functional and instrumental qualities. If observed from the functional point of view, it represents a long-term, complex and multi-faceted plan of regional self-government public intervention in market processes in order to raise the level of innovation applicable to the region. On the other hand, from an instrumental perspective, it is the concept of systemic activities focused on achieving the attainable goals related to regional innovation, through the execution of particular tasks, using measures that are, or will be, available to the actors involved in the implementation of this strategy. Following this provision, it was assumed that RIS is based on the classic, hierarchical internal structure, in which operational objectives are assigned to strategic ones and constitute their components or stages on the path leading to their

¹ The defects of Polish RIS were also identified by other research teams, see e.g. [Gorzelał et al. 2006].

achievement. Operational goals, on the other hand, are subordinated to specific interventions (strategic tasks), the implementation of which brings about the same effects as these resulting from accomplishing operational objectives and indirectly the strategic ones.

The second assumption refers to the subject matter of the RIS implementation concept. According to it, there is a defined set of operations for:

- the achievement of objectives put forward in it, in particular through the implementation of investment projects, services, financial, administrative, organizational and law-making activities it covers,
- coordination in space and time of the above projects' implementation,
- monitoring of the above projects' implementation and verification of its objectives level accomplishment,
- monitoring and correcting steps for the implementation arrangement,
- monitoring RIS current practical reference and performing its due corrections.

The next assumption refers to planning and implementing entities. It is based on the standpoint that regional self-government represents the main planning subject, i.e. voivodship self-government in the Polish case, which also serves as the RIS lead contractor, as well as the initiator, coordinator and the support source for a limited number of its partners responsible for co-creating and co-executing it. It is legally justified, it has due powers and resources and is also obliged to do so, both formally² and – under the new paradigm of regional development – expected by the regional community and supra-regional authorities (state government and international organizations authorities, e.g. the EU). The above mentioned partners are represented by entities which have formally undertaken to participate in the planning process and the co-realization of individual projects included in RIS. The primary responsibility for its construction and implementation is therefore taken by regional self-government. For this reason, due resolutions are passed by the regional parliament and carried out by the regional management board, using the available instruments. The implementation must, therefore, be primarily based on the legal and financial solutions at the disposition of the regional self-government.

The meaning of RIS implementation procedure and RIS system implementation concepts has also been assumed. It was decided that this procedure is represented by a variable algorithm, auto-adaptive and open to the interference of entities applying it, of activities involved in the implementation process. Together with these entities it creates the above-mentioned system.

² In accordance with Article. 11, paragraph 1, item 3 of the Law on regional self-government dated 5 June 1998, this self-government defines regional strategy development, in particular taking into account the objective of raising regional economy innovation level, while in accordance with Article 11, paragraph 2, item 6 of this Act, it follows such regional development policy which includes, among others, innovation fostering.

3. The system model and the functions performed by its components

Having assumed the above, the model of the Polish RIS implementation system was constructed based on two groups of elements. The first group is represented by the implementing entities. These are as follows: regional self-government (within its framework there are implementing and executive bodies), its organizational units and companies, as well as strategic cooperation partners, such as other territorial self-governments (understood as the systems of local authorities), businesses, institutions for science and education, government administration units, and NGOs. The second group is made up of connections between these entities and activities carried out by them within the framework of RIS implementation, in particular by the primary entity, namely the regional self-government.

The first of the two characteristic qualities of the system, is the fact that it works for the purposes of RIS direct beneficiaries, which may include economic entities, NGOs, territorial self-governments (understood as corporations of residents), scientific and educational institutions, as well as natural persons. Therefore, the beneficiaries represent clients of the system and the system does not work for its own sake, even though a situation is possible when a particular entity functions simultaneously as the implementing entities group member and as the beneficiary. The second characteristic quality is the identity of the beneficiaries' advantages resulting from the benefits offered to them by the system implementation, including – specified during the RIS construction phase as its goals – changes in the regional economy and regional community. In other words, while carrying out tasks for the benefit of the regional community and economy, the implementation system results in basic operational goals achievement, and indirectly, by means of them, also meeting the strategic objectives.

The roles played by different institutional actors of the system substance are discussed below. The regional self-government executive body is of crucial importance for it. This results from the functions it exercises, namely planning, cooperation, coordination, resources management, promotion, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Due to the complexity of the activities related to their execution it performs them mostly through the managing unit, i.e. the chosen organizational structure component of the marshal's office, or by means of another entity, such as a local government company, or even a financially and administratively independent business. Nevertheless, the largest share of responsibility for the RIS implementation system functioning, and especially for its effectiveness and efficiency, rests on the regional self-government executive body, just like some of the activities which make up the above functions.

The planning function consists in preparing, by the entity responsible for project management, the realization of particular activities (tasks), which are covered by RIS,

and commissioning them to self-government subsidiaries or to external contractors, with a comprehensive supervision of their preparation to follow.

The co-operative function should be understood as delegating tasks included in RIS to individual contractors and also an ongoing cooperation with them for the entire duration of such implementation. As in the case of the planning function, these may be regional units or companies, as well as independent entities. The latter, taking the role – usually by agreement – of implementing or co-implementing entities, are incorporated into the system as strategic cooperation partners. They include e.g. businesses, local self-governments or NGOs. Moreover, the cooperative function is based on working together with these entities which do not perform tasks but, in a different way, support or allow their implementation. The providers of financial resources may serve here as examples (e.g. entities distributing EU funds), information resources (e.g. entities providing public statistics) and information distribution systems (e.g. the media). Despite their participation in RIS implementation, they are not referred to as the discussed system components and therefore they retain the title of entities against the outside ones. The function under analysis also covers the identification of potential partners and the assessment of any proposals for co-operation put forward by the system outsiders.

The consequence and extension of the former is the coordination function. It covers the ongoing monitoring and documentation of activities carried out by all the remaining actors involved in the implementation, passing on instructions and information resulting from this monitoring and the issuance of due dispositions – if there occurs any corresponding legal relationship with the discussed, central body of the system. The effectiveness and efficiency maximization of the implementation oriented activities, by coordinating them in temporal, spatial and institutional dimension, becomes the prerequisite for this function fulfilment.

Another function, referring to resources, applies exclusively to the executive body and consists in transferring to the managing entity and the involved regional self-government units, companies and also to the strategic cooperation partners, the indispensable material resources, including financial means in particular, to perform the due tasks. Obtaining such resources in various ways, e.g. in the form of grants, credits, or public-private partnership also represents an integral component of this function.

Another function, the promotional one, consists in efforts to disseminate information about RIS content and taking up activities carried out within the course of its implementation where entrepreneurs, individuals considering undertaking business activities, innovation creators and owners of intellectual property become its primary addressees. The reason for performing this function is the desire to enlarge the group of strategic tasks beneficiaries. Promotion also means the transmission of information streams addressed to the broadly understood public

opinion and designed to induce their impression that the system is working effectively on their behalf by means of pro-innovative regional economic development stimulation.

The monitoring and evaluation function refers to activities aimed at finding out about the results and determinants of RIS implementation. In consequence it means correcting the regional self-government executive body and its managing entity performance, as well as correcting activities and the composition of the implementation system remaining entities, their function and mutual relations. In this part, the purpose of this function refers to the high efficiency and effectiveness of RIS implementation. In addition to the above, this function also includes regional innovation level observation, the state of the associated internal regional structures, external determinants of regional innovation and the construction of these components' changes foresight, resulting in the preparation of draft revisions or overhaul RIS changes, even before the end of its timeframe. This part is therefore focused on assigning the feedback quality to the implementation system which links the regional system of pro-innovation planning with the effects of its pro-innovative intervention. In both areas, this function may be carried out by the above-mentioned executive body and management entity directly, meaning independently, or indirectly, i.e. in the form of an audit performed by an external entity.

The self-government legislative body not only makes decisions that significantly affect the ability of the executive body to fulfil obligations contained in RIS, but also independently decides on the actions serving this purpose. On the other hand, as the controlling body at the same time, it is involved in the evaluation of implementation efforts undertaken by the executive body. More specifically, the role of the local parliament in the implementation system is as follows: expedient making of resolutions to ensure legal and financial conditions for the implementation, presenting opinions and influencing planning documents by making their content more detailed, ensuring its compliance with other resolutions and participation in its promotion and evaluation.

Organizational units and regional self-government companies play, in the discussed system, mainly the role of particular strategic tasks executors. It should be emphasized that this realization in practice can mean self-contained, comprehensive carrying out due task, or acting as their co-executors performing any of the related activities. It may also consist in playing the function – against the other tasks' executors – of a financing source, professional or personnel support, informational, legal or non-financial resources. Apart from this they also conduct promotional activities regarding benefits provided to direct beneficiaries, however, this takes place mostly when they act as the exclusive tasks' executors. The discussed units and companies may also become information sources applied in the above illustrated monitoring and evaluation process, as well as function as centres performing advisory or controlling functions in relation to the remaining

institutional components of the system. It should be emphasized that the implementation system can be based on units and companies already in operation before it was initiated, but also on the newly established ones, appointed to carry out projects it covers.

Strategic cooperation partners are responsible for similar roles. While remaining formally and legally independent from the managing entity, they may act as co-authors of the newly appointed RIS bodies, representing the regional self-government ownership (e.g. companies, foundations), the sources of information and professional support to other entities of the system implementation, as well as – based on adequate agreements – function as co-executors or independent contractors of the tasks under implementation.

As mentioned earlier, the system is made up of not only its components and tasks they perform, but also of mutual interaction entered into by these elements. Having applied the criterion of related entities participation in the implementation system, they may be divided into internal and external ones. The group of internal links consists of three kinds. The first represents task oriented relations resulting from an extremely desirable, formalized and transparent assignment of each RIS project to at least one of the system covered entities. There is no unique definition of responsibility, and thus resources' allocation or activities' monitoring, since this could result in the failure of many of these projects, or their suboptimal realization. Instructions or agreements represent a certain legal expression of these relations. They primarily combine the regional self-government executive body and its managing entity with the local self-government units and companies as well as strategic cooperation partners.

Material relations represent the second type of internal links. They are the consequence of task oriented relationships manifested by financial liabilities and the obligations to provide or make available the necessary material resources in order to implement the assigned tasks. They are group links, the value of which determines the possibilities for RIS objectives accomplishment. As for their subjective dimension, they combine the system entities in a similar manner as the previous relationships.

Information streams constitute the third category of internal links. They contain all data for the implementation process' proper organization. As opposed to the previous two, they cover all system actors by means of bilateral connections or even multilateral ones, however, it is also here that the relations between an executive and managing body and the remaining implementation procedure participants are the dominating ones.

The external links of the implementation system can also be divided into three groups. The first combines organizational entities and regional self-government companies constituting its part, as well as the strategic cooperation partners with direct beneficiaries. It manifests itself in the form of agreements with beneficiaries

and services carried out for their benefit. Therefore these relations act as the derivative of particular benefits and so they are of e.g. a financial, informational, personnel or material oriented nature.

The second group is of a financial nature and involves two sub-groups of links. These are relations with entities providing direct funding sources for tasks carried out within the framework of RIS (e.g. banks, foundations, equity investors or state authorities and their agencies responsible for state budget means distribution) and also the relations with public governance and implementation institutions participating in the distribution of means used in RIS implementation and constituting the component of financing programs, mainly from the EU budget [for details see: Sztando 2010c]. All of the system entities may be involved in each of these links, except for interactions with state authorities and its agencies, which applies to the regional self-government executive body and is typical for the regional contract.³

Finally, the third group covers information oriented links connecting each implementation system actor with the media. They are applied to RIS activities promotion addressed to direct beneficiaries, for influencing public relations covering the system participants and mainly including regional self-government authorities, as well as for obtaining favourable RIS publicity.

4. Final remarks

The author is convinced that the presented model can become one of the starting points, initiating work on the construction of subsequent, not only Polish, RIS. According to his concept, the implementation of such a strategy is not necessarily narrowed down to the area of regional self-government structure, since it takes advantage of independent units potential as crucial for the development of a regional innovation system and for the diffusion of innovation oriented processes in the region. At the same time, the regional, self-government leader is visible in the overall system and its responsibility for RIS implementation. Taking into account the so far gained implementation experiences of all Polish regions, as well as the author's research results and experience in the area of different development strategies implementation for dozens of territorial self-government units, the above presented solution seems the optimum one. In addition, the conducted literature studies indicate that it follows the current stream of models adopted for the purposes of RIS in other European Union countries [see e.g. Morgan, Nauwelaers (eds.) 2003; Cooke, Heidenreich, Braczyk (eds.) 2004; Cooke, Morgan 2003].

³ This is an agreement between Polish government and regional self-government which aims at the state support for certain projects resulting from regional strategies and programs.

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WDRAŻANIE REGIONALNEJ STRATEGII INNOWACJI – MODEL SYSTEMU STANOWIĄCY REZULTAT ANALIZY POLSKICH DOŚWIADCZEŃ

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony jest zagadnieniom wdrażania regionalnych strategii innowacji (RSI). Jego wprowadzająca część prezentuje przesłanki stworzenia modelu systemu wdrażania takiej strategii oraz jego założenia. Główna część artykułu zawiera opis projektu takiego modelu. Autor opisuje jego instytucjonalne komponenty, ich funkcje oraz wzajemne relacje. Końcowa część pracy zawiera sugestie dotyczące praktycznej aplikacji tego modelu.

Słowa kluczowe: innowacje, region, strategia, regionalna strategia innowacji, Polska.