

JOANNA WYRWA

**The supraregional  
cooperation as the way  
for the development of  
Western Poland**

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**1. Introduction**

The adoption of the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Macro-Region by the European Council initiated the process, which resulted in the implementation of the instrument of macro-regional strategies in response to the problems associated with the harmonious and sustainable development<sup>1</sup>.

It was in the years 2007-2013 that there were identified 13 Pan-European Macro-Regions and Poland belongs to two of them: The Macro-Region of the Baltic Sea States and the Macro-Region of the Central and Eastern Europe States.

Ph.D. Joanna Wyrwa  
University of Zielona Góra

A macro-region is a group of regions or of countries with shared crucial geographical

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1 The new form of the cooperation arose in the Baltic Sea region in 2008. The strategy for the Baltic Sea region covers only several states; however, it was entered into the European context as the first macro-regional strategy. This strategy consists of four thematic pillars: balanced approach to the environment, prosperity, availability and attractiveness and safety. It was in 2009 that the Committee of the Regions began the work on the strategy for the region of Donau. It suggested such measures as development of the transport infrastructure, cross-border cooperation in the flood control as well as shared concepts of sustainable tourism. In 2010, the Committee of the Regions supported the appeal for a strategy for the North Sea and the English Channel region and in spring 2011, it began the work on the opinion on the Adriatic-Ionic macro-region. The Committee of the Regions is convinced that macro-regions can provide innovative frameworks for cooperation of local and regional authorities of Member States and bodies of the EU (The Announcement of the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region 2012; Matuszewska 2010, pp. 9-10).

features. It can mean that they lie on the same coast or the nature of their landscapes is set by the same river or by the same mountain range. The shared geographical conditions are associated with the same challenges. For example, the countries being situated at the Baltic Sea are particularly interested in the improvement in the transport connections and in the protection of the natural environment in the entire region. While developing the European Strategy, the countries, the regions and the towns can agree on common priorities and concentrate available resources such as European or domestic funds.

A macro-region is an area, which arises as a result of the cooperation of lower level entities and uses their shared experience. However, the macro-region is not a consecutive institutional level in the European Union but a network, an operating method or rather a joint action involving various European units: domestic, regional and local ones as well as various policies and funding programmes. Therefore, it is desirable to combine all interested entities, instruments and initiatives into a flexible and unbureaucratic network (Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 2012, p. C 9/ 9).

The European Commission defines a macro-region as an area covering a territory of a few different states or regions, which share one or more common characteristics or challenges (Berkkan, Olsen, Tempel 2009, p. 10; Europe's Macro-Regions Integration through territorial co-operation Forum at the Committee of the Regions 2010, p. 3).

It is in *the conclusions of the fifth report on the social, territorial and economic cohesion* that the European Commission indicates that *"the further work on the new macro-regional strategies should be based on the meticulous inspection of the existing strategies and on the availability of funds. The macro-regional strategies should be integrated instruments with a strong professional basis concentrated on important challenges and being characterized by a developed transnational dimension with the reservation that the majority of the funding should come from national and regional programs co-financed as part of the cohesion policy from alternative domestic funds"* (The conclusions from the fifth report on the social, territorial and economic cohesion: the future of the cohesion policy 2010, pp. 8-9).

The regional policy in Poland is based on the model promoted by the OECD and based on the development paradigm. It diverges from the traditional redistribution of funds for strengthening and exploiting territorial potentials of all regions. It becomes a common policy of the government, self-government bodies and other public entities with reference to the given territory. It assumes multi-sectoral (*horizontal*) approach with a territorial focus towards development activities. It diverges from the dispersed intervention in favour of more selective

(concentrated) investments and from the strongly centralized administration (*top-down*) in favour of enhancing the multidimensional management system (*multi-level governance*); including increasing the role of the regional level in starting developmental processes (Polityka regionalna w Polsce 2011, pp. 7-8).

All experience at macro-regional programming in Poland in conditions of the membership in the European Union up to now refer only to the social and economic development strategy of Eastern Poland till 2020 and to the Operational Programme of the Development of Eastern Poland for the years 2007-2013. These documents were prepared for five voivodeships of Eastern Poland: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship. This project was a classic example for a top-down approach, since the mentioned documents were prepared on the initiative of the Ministry of the Regional Development with only a supporting role of the local self-government bodies. They were applied to the group of the five poorest regions on the NUTS 2<sup>2</sup> level before Bulgaria and Romania had accessed to the European Community. These documents were primarily aimed at the elementary social and economic stimulation of Eastern Poland through the introduction of the regions on the development path. The Ministry of the Regional Development financed as well as coordinated the entirety of these works (Dziemianowicz, Szlachta 2011b, p. 5).

This experience inspired also other regions of Poland. At present, there are being conducted works on the Development Strategy of Western Poland and on the Strategy for the Development of Southern Poland in the area of the Śląskie and Małopolskie Voivodeships. These initiatives are bottom-up actions of the self-government bodies of the voivodeships that allows for implementing the model of the multi-level governance and the strategic partnership of the domestic and regional system. These are the first cooperation projects amongst macro-regions in Poland initiated from the bottom up and voluntarily by self-government authorities, in which the voivodeships acknowledge that their development should take place through joint actions taken in the entire macro-region and creating the synergy effect. These are very innovative actions against

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2 NUTS is Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics. It is universal regionalization being applicable in the European Union. It takes five levels into account: NUTS 1: groups of voivodeships, NUTS 2: voivodeships, NUTS 3: subregions, NUTS 4 also called LAU 1 (Local Administration Units): districts and NUTS 5 that is LAU 2: individual towns and communes. All statistical information in the European Union is put together in this territorial system. The regions of the NUTS 2 type play the essential role in the European cohesion policy and the regions of the NUTS 3 type are supportive (Szlachta 2011, p. 11).

the background of the experience at programming the regional development in Poland. Both strategies will be supraregional strategies according to the provisions of the Art. 14 of the Act "On the principles of conducting the development policy" of the 6th December 2006 (Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 84, item 712, as amended), which determines the procedures for the preparation (by the minister competent for the regional development in consultation with self-government units and social and economic partners) and for the adoption (by the Council of Ministers by way of resolution) of the supraregional strategy.

The purpose of this article is to present the main issues associated with the creation of the supraregional strategy on the example of Western Poland. It is in the first part of the study that there were presented external conditions for the cooperation arising from the regulations of the most important European and Polish program documents of the time horizon up to 2020. The next part presents synthetic social and economic characterization of the macro-region of Western Poland. Subsequently, the concept and the objectives for the creation of the supraregional strategy were presented.

## **2. The cooperation of the voivodeships of Western Poland in the light of the records of the latest European and Polish strategic documents**

The strategic document on Western Poland will be the answer to the changing cohesion policy of the European Union and the new programming period 2014-2020<sup>3</sup>. The initiative is aimed at the determination of the common developmental priorities for the area of Western Poland, which should match the objectives of the cohesion policy of the EU as well as the objectives of the Polish regional policy. The Strategy for Western Poland will refer to the modern concept of the regional development promoted in the Strategy Europe 2020 and will present the vision of the development compatible with the concept of the regional policy in Poland outlined in the National Regional Development Strategy 2020: Regions, towns, rural areas.

It was at the Summit in Lisbon in 2000 that the European Community adopted the strategy supplemented with objectives concerning sustainable development at the Summit in Goeteborg in 2001, which assumed that the European Union would become the most competitive world economy within only ten years.

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3 Since the time of the reform of Jacques Delors in 1988, the European Union programmes its policies and budget in the long perspective, currently it applies to the years 2007-2013 and later it will apply to the years 2014-2020.

Therefore, such analytical categories were entered into the European cohesion policy as: the information society, the knowledge-based economy, the learning regions, information and communication technologies, diffusion of innovations etc. The fundamental assumption was to increase essentially the scale of research and development spending from about 1.9% up to at least 3% of the gross domestic product in the EU. Due to the lack of enough effective instruments for the implementation of the strategy, the Renewed Lisbon Strategy was adopted in 2005. It assumed subordinating all policies of the European Community and led to the preparation of the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Employment, which became the basis for the National Reform Programmes developed by all Member States of the Community (Szlachta 2011, p. 8).

Due to the need of the continuation of such actions of the European Union, it was at the Summit of the European Council in June 2010 that the strategy Europe 2020 was adopted, which constituted *“the new strategy for employment and the intelligent, sustainable economic growth supporting social inclusion”* (European Council Conclusions of the 17th June 2010, p. 1). The Strategy Europe 2020 is supposed to be a basis for shaping Community policies, including the European Cohesion Policy, in the nearest decade<sup>4</sup>. It is in this document that the following priorities were identified (Dziembała 2011, p. 138): (1) the intelligent development, in which the attention was paid to the promotion of the knowledge and innovation-based economy, which should constitute the “power” stimulating the development of the EU; (2) the sustainable development, which should be possible by providing appropriate and rational use of existing natural resources; (3) the development supporting social inclusion, promoting the social, economic and territorial cohesion as well as the appropriate employment level.

It was also in the strategy that there were formulated five measurable, long-term objectives of the EU, whose implementation should enable measuring the degree of the introduction of the outlined priorities (Dziemianowicz, Szlachta 2011b, p.17): (1) 75% of the employment rate for the age group 20-64, (2) 3% of the gross domestic product allocated for research and development, (3) 20/20/20 within the scope of climate and energetics, i.e. the participation of the renewable sources, the reduction of the CO<sub>2</sub> emission and the increase in the efficiency of energy use, (4) reduction of the share of young people finishing earlier education below 10% as well as the minimum of the 40% of persons at higher education

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4 Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, Communication from the Commission to the European Council, European Commission, Brussels, COM (2010) 2020; Europe 2020.

level at the age of 30-34; (5) the reduction in the number of persons living in poverty by 20 million.

The tasks associated with the achievement of these objectives for individual states of the EU are diversified that means there are lower target indicators for Poland. The National Reform Programme indicates that it is 71% in case of the employment rate; 1.7% in case of research and development expenditure and 13.6% in case of savings in energetics.

The Strategy Europe 2020 will be implemented through seven main initiatives (Szlachta 2011, p. 9): (1) the innovative Europe, (2) young people on the move (3) the digital agenda for Europe (4) Europe saving resources, (5) industrial policy for the era of globalization, (6) agenda for new skills and jobs and (7) the European platform against poverty. The Strategy Europe 2020 is supposed to be a basis for the New Integrated Guidelines for growth and employment and to constitute the main premise to the determination of policies of the EU by the year 2020.

The evolution of the European cohesion policy means that the ability of implementing priorities of the Strategy Europe 2020 will be of key importance in the years 2014-2020. According to J. Szlachta (2011, p. 10) *“The voivodeships of Western Poland seem be prepared better than on average in Poland for the challenges associated with the introduction into the European cohesion policy of such categories as: the knowledge-based economy, the information society, the learning regions, and information and communication technologies. The threat to the weaker regions of the European Union covered by the convergence objective, and Western Poland is amongst them, is the sectorization of structural interventions of the EU. This is dues to the widespread belief that the objectives of the Strategy Europe 2020 can be implemented much easier in the system of sectoral policies”*.

In the years 2014-2020, the intervention of the EU will be aimed mainly at the convergence regions identified at the level of the NUTS 2 areas, in which the gross domestic product per capita according to the purchasing power parity does not exceed 75% of the EU average. It means that fifteen voivodeships in Poland, including all voivodeships of Western Poland, will remain beneficiaries of the funding available under the European cohesion policy as areas for the purpose “convergence”. However, the socioeconomic success of Poland after the accession to the European Union means that two voivodeships of Western Poland (Dolnośląskie and Wielkopolskie) will probably lose this status after 2020. Therefore, the years 2014-2020 are the last period, in which the entire West Poland will be able to use structural funds on the very significant scale (Szlachta 2011, p. 29).

After the accession of Poland to the European Union, the new generation of national and regional strategic documents was created. At present, after

having arranged the strategic programming, the second generation of these documents is being prepared. It is especially that the National Strategy for Regional Development 2010-2020 "Regions, Towns, Rural Areas" is of particular importance for shaping the regional development of Western Poland. Regions, Towns, Rural Areas (NSRD)<sup>5</sup>. It was accepted by the Council of Ministers on the 13th July 2010. The NSRD provides frames for the regional policy in Poland in the second decade of the 21st century. It is assumed that it is the support for the development of all regions, irrespective of the degree of their affluence that is the objective of the policy. The creation and the development of functional connections amongst the regions with the greatest development potential and the regions with barriers to the development were accepted as the essence of the regional policy. The strategic goal of the regional policy is the effective use of the potentials specific for the region and other territorial development potentials for achieving development goals of the country: the economic growth, the increase in employment and the long-term cohesion. The hierarchy of the objectives for the regional development of Poland was fundamentally changed in the relation "competitiveness - cohesion"<sup>6</sup>. It is as the first objective that the support for the

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5 The NSRD is one of 9 strategies prepared as part of organising the development management system in Poland, which will implement medium- and long-term development plans of the country. The NSRD is superior to other strategies, since it indicates objectives of the development policy in the spatial arrangement.

6 The purpose No. 1 is supporting the increase in the competitiveness of regions. The directions of actions set within the scope of the purpose include: strengthening the metropolitan functions of provincial centres and integration of their functional areas, creation of conditions for diffusion of development processes and increase in their absorptions beyond provincial centres and construction of the basis for competitiveness of voivodeships through thematic actions such as: development of social and human capital, support for external investments, especially the foreign ones, increasing possibilities for innovative solutions for businesses and institutions in the region, support for development of the business environment institutions, diversification of energy sources and effective use of the energy and responding to natural risks, use of advantages of the natural environment and the potential of the cultural heritage as well as international cooperation. The purpose No. 2 is building the territorial cohesion and counteracting marginalisation of problem areas. The directions of actions within the scope of this purpose cover: strengthening national cohesion, support for rural areas with the lowest access of the population to goods and services conditioning the development potential, restructuring and revitalization of towns and other areas losing their current socio-economic functions, overcoming disadvantages connected with the location of the border areas, particularly along the external borders of the EU and increasing the transport accessibility of provincial centres. The purpose No. 3 is the creation of conditions for effective and partner completion of the development activities aimed territorially. The recommended directions of actions are: strengthening the strategic dimension of the regional policy, improvement of the quality of managing the public policies, including their appropriate

increase in the competitiveness of regions was adopted ("competitiveness"); the second objective is to build the territorial cohesion and to counteract the marginalisation of the disadvantaged areas ("cohesion"); the third objective is to create conditions for the successful, effective and partner completion of the actions aimed at territorial development ("efficiency"). The directions of actions aimed at the increase in the competitiveness of regions are clearly connected with the directions of the interventions proposed in the Strategy Europe 2020. The NSRD assumes that it will be in the years 2014-2020 that there will be allocated funds for actions within individual objectives respectively: 63%, 30% and 7% of the funds available within the frames of the regional policy which indicates their fundamental shift towards the competitiveness. This document promotes further decentralization of the model of the regional policy in Poland that is reflected in proposals of moving the development-oriented public funds from the central level to the regional level (Dziemianowicz, Szlachta 2011b, p. 18-19).

There are direct references to Western Poland in the NSRD<sup>7</sup>. These records determine very accurately the character of the developmental problems of Western Poland seen from the perspective of the entire country and, at the same time, constitute the legitimization for the development by the government in partnership with local governments of the medium-term development strategy. It is according to the NSRD that the central authorities, besides supporting problem areas, should also take strategic interventions in the areas of the high chance, to which Western Poland belongs. The NSRD assumes that the main instrument of financing the regional policy in the years 2014-2020 will consist of the multifund regional operational programmes. It is also written in this document that it will be in the years 2014-2020 that the seventeenth operational programme managed by the Ministry of Regional Development will be launched and the macro-regional operational programme for Eastern Poland will be continued.

### **3. The synthetic socio-economic characteristics of Western Poland**

It is in the natural geographical understanding that Western Poland consists of the river Oder and its basin stretching out amongst the Sudeten mountains in the South and the Baltic Sea in the North of the country. From the administrative

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territorial orientation, reconstruction and strengthening of the system of the horizontal and multi-level coordination as well as creating social capital for the regional development on the basis of cooperation amongst different participants in these policies (National Strategy for Regional Development 2010-2020. Regions, Towns, Rural Areas, p. 1464).

7 More in Szlachta, Dziemianowicz, Nowicka 2012, pp. 8-10.

point of view, the macro-region is created by five voivodeships located in the western part of the country: Opolskie, Dolnośląskie, Wielkopolskie, Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeships<sup>8</sup>. The river Oder is the link integrating the socio-economic space of the macro-region and sets an essential developmental axis of this area<sup>9</sup>. Due to the regulated channel of the river, Oder is the longest inland waterway in Poland used also by the Central-European countries, which have no access to the sea.

The total area of Western Poland is 96 065 km<sup>2</sup> and represents nearly 31% of the total area of Poland. There are 339 towns, i.e. 38% of the total number of Polish towns, in the area of Western Poland; including large urban agglomerations (and the capital cities of voivodeships at the same time): Szczecin, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Zielona Góra, Poznań, Wrocław and Opole. According to the state for the year 2009, the population of this area was 10 019.2 thousand, which accounted for over 26% of the country's population. The vast majority of the population consists of residents of towns; this indicator hunts within the range from 52% (in the Opolskie Voivodeship) up to 70% (in the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship) depending on the voivodeship. The number of working persons for the area of Western Poland in 2009 was 3 418.4 thousand, i.e. 34.11% of the population of Western Poland and 25.41% of the total number of working people in Poland (Mogila, Zaleski, Zathay 2011, p. 5). The CSO (Central Statistical Office) population projections till 2035 show that there are significant differences in the dynamics of the population change in Western Poland. It is in the Dolnośląskie, Opolskie and Zachodniopomorskie voivodeships that the population drop will be slightly higher than the average in the country. The Lubuskie voivodeship will also reduce the number of its residents; however, the projection places it below the average population loss in the country. The only voivodeship, which can count on the increase in the population at present, is the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (Dziemianowicz, Szlachta 2011b, p. 12-13).

Western Poland consists also of the borderland. It is from the west that Western Poland borders with eastern Lands of the Federal Republic of Germany:

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8 It is in Poland that there are two areas of the NUTS 1 type (north-western and south-west), and five areas of the NUTS 2 type, which are voivodeships and 19 regional units of the NUTS 3 type: Gorzowski, Jeleniogórski, Kaliski, Koński, Koszaliński, Legnicko-Głogowski, Leszczyński, Nyski, Opolski, Pilski, Poznański, the town Poznań, Stargardzki, Szczeciński, the town Szczecin, Wałbrzyski, Wrocławski, the town Wrocław and Zielonogórski (Szlachta 2011, p. 11).

9 The Oder River is an important component of the European system of environmental protection. It is particularly applicable to the areas of Nature 2000, which are located practically on the entire stretch of the Oder valley.

Brandenburg, Mecklenburg and Saxony. Simultaneously, it is in the immediate vicinity of the macro-region that there is Berlin; a capital city and a megametropolis in the ESPON classification. It is from the south that Western Poland borders with Czechs. It is from the north, through the Baltic Sea that it borders with Scandinavia and from the east with Polish voivodeships: Śląskie, Łódzkie, Kujawsko-pomorskie and Pomorskie Voivodeships. Due to the developed port services of Szczecin and Świnoujście, it connects Poland and other countries with ports of world and through channels Odra-Sprewa and Odra-Hawela with the West-European waterway system.

Western Poland has a very favourable geopolitical location. The fact that the neighbours of Western Poland are active in establishing interrelations is essential for the development processes. In the case of Germany, this activity is particularly high. Over the last twenty years, the asymmetry of the development initiatives between Poland and Germany is significant<sup>10</sup>. The most important initiatives of the German side over the two decades include: the Stolpe plan (1991), the study of the spatial development for the area along the Polish-German border (1995), Viadrina University (nineties of the 20th century), International Committee for Protection of Oder against Pollutants (1997), Szczecin Initiative/the Odra Region (1997/2001/2007), Future and safety for the river basin of Oder (2000), the concept of spatial development (2002, updated study from 1995), The Declaration on the Polish-German Oder Region (2004), the Partnership for Oder (since 2006), the initiative to establish a new European Macro-region on the basis of East Germany (2010). It is on the Polish side that there are mainly reactive actions (Dziemianowicz, Szlachta 2011a, p.13). The asymmetry of the development is also present in the relations of Polish and Czech regions, although its scale is much lower.

The actions implemented in the Euroregions: Pomerania, Pro Europa Viadrina, Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr, Nysa, Glacensis, Pradziad and Silesia are an important factor intensifying and strengthening the cross-border cooperation of self-government bodies in Western Poland. The initiatives taken by local governments are concentrated among others on education, culture, sport, communication and infrastructure.

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10 The borders of countries, which are major determinants for the development of Western Poland cause also asymmetries at points of contact of Western Poland with German and Czech regions. The overview of main asymmetries in the areas of economic potential, transport infrastructure, demographics, level of the EU support as well as competence of regional authorities was presented in the study entitled "The use of the border location of the land in Western Poland for the socio-economic development" (Mogila, Zaleski, Zathy 2011, pp. 119-129).

Western Poland borders with areas, which are better developed both on the German as well as on Czech side. Simultaneously, it was in the most western Polish voivodeships in the years 2000-2007 that there was faster economic growth than in German Lands (Dziemianowicz, Szlachta 2011a, p. 14).

For the last few years, there has been systematic progress in the convergence of Poland with UE-27 countries measured by the reduction of the distance to the average EU GDP level per capita. The GDP in current prices per capita in Poland was 9.3 thousand Euro in 2010 that accounted for 38% of the EU average, i.e. about 14 p.p. more than before the accession. The same data expressed in PPS<sup>11</sup> for 2010 (15.3 thousand PPS) indicate that the relation of the GDP per capita in Poland to the rate for the UE-27 has increased from a little more than half of the EU average in 2004 to 62% in 2010. This progress should be considered as significant. The indicator of the GDP per capita in PPS assumed in the National Development Strategy 2007-2015 on the level of 58% of the UE-25 average was exceeded in 2009 (Raport Polska 2011, pp.12-13).

It was in Western Poland in the years 2007-2010 that there appeared intense development processes stimulated largely by the possibilities offered by the cohesion policy as well as adaptation processes to the new economic situation triggered with the consequences of the crisis. The development processes of regions in Western Poland proceeded in different ways. While taking into account the average pace of the increase in GDP per capita in the voivodeships from the years 2007-2010 and the relation between GDP per capita and the domestic average, these were the Dolnośląskie and Wielkopolskie Voivodeship that were in the group of the voivodeships with the highest growth dynamics and with the GDP per capita above the domestic average. Significantly lower rate of growth characterized the Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuskie Voivodeships. The Opolskie Voivodeship is a region with growth rates above the domestic average and the level of the GDP per capita lower than the domestic average (Raport Polska 2011, p.18).

The highest level of the gross domestic product per capita in 2010 was recorded in the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship in the macro-region of Western Poland (40.5 thousand PLN in 2010 that was 109% of the domestic average) and in the

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11 PPS (Purchasing Power Standards): is based on the theory of one price, consisting in the fact that it is possible to buy the same number of goods for the determined number of units of the given currency in every country at the same time. The exchange rate for the currency of the country is calculated according to the purchasing power. This solution enables comparisons of international GDP.

Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (39.1 thousand PLN, 106% of the domestic average) (Raport Polska 2011, p.18).

The Eurostat Data on the GDP created in the regions, expressed in PPS, show that the Dolnośląskie and Opolskie Voivodeships made great progress in the years 2004-2008 reducing the development distance towards the EU member states by 10 p.p. The progress achieved by other three regions of Western Poland was much smaller (the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship: 5 p.p., the Lubuskie Voivodeship: 6 p.p., the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship: 8 p.p.) (Raport Polska 2011, p.19). According to the estimated data of the Office of Investments and Economic Cycles concerning the GDP level per capita in PPS in the years 2009-2010<sup>12</sup>, it was in 2010 that the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship achieved 66% of the EU average; the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship achieved 63% of the EU average; the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship achieved 52% of the EU average and the Lubuskie Voivodeship slightly exceeded the half of the EU average. Whereas the Opolskie Voivodeship reported the level of this ratio slightly below 50% of the EU average (Raport Polska 2011, p. 20).

The macro-region of Western Poland is a strongly diversified part of the country. It is characterized by high investment attractiveness, entrepreneurship of residents, high productivity of farming and industry, developed service sector and natural and cultural as well as tourist diversity. On the other hand, it is a problem area threatened with emigration of the human and intellectual capital, with the diversified level of development, quality of life and existing areas of poverty and unemployment, with low internal communication cohesion and weak external availability. A significant barrier to the development of the region is the neglected transport infrastructure, which limits its potential and consequently weakens the competitiveness of the entire country.

#### **4. The Development Strategy for Western Poland: the concept and the assumptions for the creation of the supraregional strategy**

The cooperation on the creation of the Development Strategy for Western Poland was initiated by three voivodeships (the Dolnośląskie, Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship) at the beginning of 2010, which were later

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12 The years, for which there are no statistical data of Eurostat. The last data of the Eurostat concerning the GDP per capita for the NUTS 2 regions are available for 2008.

joined by the Wielkopolskie and Opolskie Voivodeship. However, the formal work within the initiative of Western Poland was started upon signing "*The agreement on starting joint work on the strategy and on the operational development programme for Western Poland*" by the five marshals of the macro-region in Szczecin on the 26th August 2010. The main premise to enter into the agreement was the need of creating the supraregional Development Strategy for Western Poland, constituting an essential document in the programming process of the European cohesion policy in Poland in the years 2014-2020. It was assumed that the Operational Development Programme for Western Poland 2014-2020 should be the result of the joint work (The agreement on starting joint work on the strategy and on the operational development programme for Western Poland 2010, p. 3).

It is according to the agreement that the strategy is supposed to determine priority support areas, which should cover the development of the transport infrastructure, both interregional (air, road, train and water transport: the Oder waterway), as well as strengthening external communication connections (completion of the initiative of the Central European Transport Corridor CETC), scientific cooperation, particularly within implementation of innovative solutions in the economy and energy security (transmission grids, renewable energy), water resources and flood control, strengthening tourism competitiveness, and sustainable urban development. The initiators of the agreement also noticed the need for counteracting negative demographic trends especially on the labour market. It will be also a common goal for the macro-region of Western Poland to strengthen the position of western voivodeships against the adjacent German Lands in such a way that it will result in boosting the cross-border cooperation as well as in the coordination and effective control over investment plans in the area of the borderland.

It was on the basis of the provisions of the agreement that a steering group was created, which consisted of: the key expert: Assoc. Prof. Jacek Szlachta from the Warsaw School of Economics and the scientific secretary: PhD Senior Lecturer Wojciech Dziemianowicz from the Warsaw University and regional experts (one from every voivodeship) as well as representatives of marshals responsible in the given voivodeship for the regional policy.

The work of the steering group and the regional experts brought as a result regional reports showing the socio-economic situation of each of the five voivodeships and 19 expert opinions on problems concerning the main development challenges for Western Poland. The substantive scope of the expert opinions covers above all: functional relations of urban areas of Western

Poland, the labour market and growth trends of the occupational activity of the population on the area of the western voivodeships of Poland, the information society in Western Poland, the transport availability, the energy security and the economic and scientific potential of Western Poland. As part of the works, the analysis of five regional strategies and spatial development plans of the voivodeships of western Poland was carried out.

It was also the Ministry of Regional Development that joined the process of the creation of the Development Strategy for Western Poland. The multilevel governance formula is the best solution in case of such a project. The partnership of the government and self-government bodies of the voivodeships is the essential condition for a success<sup>13</sup>. It is according to the Polish law that a project of a supraregional strategy can be put before the Council of Ministers only by the minister competent for the regional development.

According to the provisions of the agreement of the voivodeships, it was agreed that the scope of the Development Strategy for Western Poland should be complementary to the regional and sectoral documents. It was agreed that the Development Strategy for Western Poland could not be a sum of five strategies of the voivodeships. The strategy should be focused on supraregional problems, which cannot be solved within one voivodeship and the specificity of the problem does not allow for granting it the universal domestic rank. Therefore, it is in the Assumptions of the Development Strategy for Western Poland that the problems and challenges of the regional scope and nature are omitted and the strategy is concentrated on supraregional and interprovincial problems, including the problems concerning relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Denmark; the countries, whose regions create direct territorial surroundings of Western Poland. The Development Strategy for Western Poland should be an element of eliminating the asymmetry of the socio-economic development being especially apparent in the case of the cross-border cooperation on the Polish-German border (Szlachta, Dziemianowicz, Nowicka 2012, p. 5).

*The Assumptions of the Development Strategy for Western Poland* constitute a new generation programming document on the macro-regional level identifying development potentials and the most important barriers to the development of this area. It is in the Assumptions of the Strategy that a vision of a macro-region was created, according to which Western Poland as a region of the Oder

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13 The act of the 6th December 2006 On principles of conducting the development policy, Art. 14a (Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 84, item 712, as amended).

river basin should be an opened, attractive, mobilizing, creative and cooperating region<sup>14</sup>.

*The Assumptions of the Strategy* formulate the strategic objective and specific objectives for the development of Western Poland till 2020. It was agreed that *"The Objective of the Development Strategy for Western Poland is the use of the interprovincial cooperation potential for the creation of the conditions for the increase in the competitiveness of the regions of Western Poland and counteracting marginalisation of some areas of the macro-region in such a way that it will be possible to support the long-term economic development, social and territorial economic cohesion and integration with the European Union"* (Szlachta, Dziemianowicz, Nowicka 2012, p. 24).

It was in the Assumptions of the Strategy that a list of specific objectives was presented. These objectives include<sup>15</sup>: (1) improvement of the energy and environmental security, in particular flood safety; (2) improvement of the level of the territorial integrity and availability within the interregional system in the Western Poland; (3) creation of conditions for the development of the information society in the whole macro-region; (4) supporting the development of cooperation networks of scientific-technological and academic centres in Western Poland and the development of other elements of the knowledge-based economy; (5) stimulation of the comprehensive development of the Oder axis; (6) development and linking of the metropolitan functions at regional centres of Western Poland; (7) creation of the shared tourist product

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14 It is in the perspective till 2020 that Western Poland should become an open region: the openness means communication availability but also tolerance for various cultures. It is especially in the near future that it will be necessary to open up to different ideas, innovations and knowledge; attractive - for three main subjects making choices in the space. These subjects are entrepreneurs, residents and tourists. It is for them that Western Poland must build its location predominances presenting favourable dynamics of changes in comparison with neighbours and with other regions in Europe; stimulating - especially endogenic potential. Nowadays, it is being passive that moves individuals and social groups away from leaders. The cooperation of the five voivodeships from Western Poland should be aimed at positive stimulation of people and institutions for the implementation of the objectives. It will require the promotion of entrepreneurship, the stimulation of the social activity and freeing positive features of the social capital; creative - in as many areas of socio-economic activity as it is possible. Well organized education and science should support creativity of people. Simultaneously, the environment for creative people is created by cultural institutions and high quality of life: cooperating - above all in search for synergy effects. Domestic and foreign neighbours create a lot of possibilities of achieving benefits; it also set requirements and the cooperation should support the integration, exchange of experience and mutual inspiration. A modern region is a region involved in valuable cooperation networks created by the civil service, entrepreneurs (clusters) or science (Szlachta, Dziemianowicz, Nowicka 2012, pp. 23-24).

15 the presented order does not result from the hierarchy of importance.

of Western Poland; (8) achievement of the new quality of the cross-border cooperation.

The authors of the study entitled *“The Assumptions of the Development Strategy for Western Poland”* indicate that *“this list is not exhaustive and it does not cover all areas of the effective interprovincial cooperation within Western Poland including the most important jointly identified specific objectives of the macro-regional nature. This list is consistent with priority support areas, which were determined in the agreement of the voivodeships of the 26th August 2010 ”* (Szlachta, Dziemianowicz, Nowicka 2012, p. 26).

It was amongst the interprovincial and supraregional projects agreed and put down in the Assumptions of the Strategy that there were originally 25 key projects<sup>16</sup>. Finally, the list of 7 priority projects was created, i.e. of interregional projects essential for the socio-economic development of western regions, which was arranged according to the category of importance: (1) Oder: modernization of the Oder waterway to the IV class of the navigability along the entire length of the river; inclusion of the Oder river to the network TEN-T; (2) the S-3 road: completion of the S-3 express-way Świnoujście-Lubawka; (3) the rail transport and its infrastructure: modernization of railway lines in the Central European Transport Corridor CETC-ROUTE 65; (4) the S-5 road; (5) the S-11 road; (6) health: construction of the Centre for highly specialized proton radiotherapy services; (7) energy networks: construction of the 400 kV transmission line on the course Czarna-Polkowice-Zielona Góra-Plewiska Bis-Gubin-Baczyna-Krajnik-Pomorzany-Glinki-Reclaw.

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16 It is in the crucial projects of the interprovincial and interregional type that there were 25 investments: (1) energy networks of Western Poland; (2) accessibility of the energy infrastructure of Western Poland; (3) flood safety of Western Poland; (4) integration of modern forms of waste management; (5) ecological corridors of Western Poland; (6) effective transport connections amongst capital cities of voivodeships of Western Poland; (7) completion of the construction of the S-3 road in the CETC- ROUTE 65; (8) road connections of Western Poland; (9) modernization of national and provincial roads of supraregional importance; (10) the railway network of Western Poland; (11) modernization of railway lines in CETC- ROUTE 65; (12) airports of Western Poland; (13) the international waterway MDW E70; (14) the Oder waterway; (15) the program of the promotion of the cultural heritage; (16) cluster initiatives of Western Poland; (17) macro-regional network of creative sectors; (18) the cooperation of centres of higher education in Western Poland; (19) the cooperation of province capitals; (20) the development of cross-border metropolitan functions; (21) Supraregional specialized medical service centres; (22) macro-regional tourist products; (23) The tourist product ODER; (24) the tourist promotion of Western Poland and (25) the regional labour markets of Western Poland in the cross-border cooperation with regions of Germany and the Czech Republic (Szlachta, Dziemianowicz, Nowicka 2012, p. 53-54).

## 5. Conclusion

The Supraregional Strategy for Western Poland is supposed to refer to the modern concept of the regional development promoted in the strategy Europe 2020 and to present the vision of the development of Western Poland, which is compatible with the concept of the regional policy in Poland, which was outlined in the National Strategy for Regional Development 2010-2020.

The strategy is primarily intended to stimulate synergetic actions generating development processes. The creation of the strategy is aimed at indication of the development potentials of the macro-region of Western Poland; at determination of the model for the integrated development management for building prosperity of residents, including the determination of the type of the state intervention. The Development Strategy for Western Poland should become an element of the national system of the strategic planning and a document implemented both through sectoral programmes as well as integrated regional schemes.

The achievement of the success by Western Poland requires application of modern instruments of the regional policy, cooperation of different partners, development of the endogenous development potential and use of the possibilities, which arise from the membership of our country in the European Union. The Development Strategy for Western Poland is an innovative project against the background of the past experience of the regional development programming. However, there is no doubt that it should become a permanent part of the national system of the strategic planning.

## Summary

### **The supraregional cooperation as the way for the development of Western Poland**

The purpose of this article is to present the main issues associated with the creation of the supraregional strategy on the example of Western Poland. It is in the first part of the study that there were presented external conditions for the cooperation arising from the regulations of the most important European and Polish program documents of the time horizon up to 2020. The next part presents synthetic social and economic characterization of the macro-region of Western Poland. Subsequently, the concept and the objectives for the creation of the supraregional strategy were presented.

It is at present that the Development Strategy for Western Poland and the Development Strategy for Southern Poland for the Śląskie

and Małopolskie Voivodeships are being created. These initiatives are bottom-up actions of the self-government bodies of the voivodeships that allows for implementing the model of the multi-level governance and the strategic partnership of the domestic and regional system. These are the first cooperation projects amongst macro-regions in Poland initiated from the bottom up and voluntarily by self-government authorities, in which the voivodeships acknowledge that their development should take place through joint actions taken in the entire macro-region and creating the synergy effect. These are very innovative actions against the background of the experience at programming the regional development in Poland.

**Keywords:** *strategy, macro-region, Western Poland.*

### **Streszczenie**

#### **Ponadregionalna współpraca drogą do rozwoju Polski zachodniej**

Artykuł przedstawia podstawowe zagadnienia związane z tworzeniem strategii ponadregionalnej na przykładzie Polski zachodniej. W pierwszej części opracowania omówiono zewnętrzne uwarunkowania współpracy wynikające z zapisów najważniejszych europejskich i polskich dokumentów programowych o horyzoncie czasowym do 2020 roku. W dalszej części zaprezentowano syntetyczną charakterystykę społeczno-gospodarczą makroregionu Polski zachodniej. Następnie przedstawiono koncepcję i założenia budowy strategii ponadregionalnej.

Obecnie w Polsce trwają prace nad Strategią Rozwoju Polski Zachodniej oraz Strategią dla Rozwoju Polski Południowej w obszarze województwa śląskiego i małopolskiego. Inicjatywy te są oddolnym działaniem samorządów województw, co pozwala zastosować model wieloszczeblowego zarządzania publicznego i strategicznego partnerstwa układu krajowego i regionalnego. To pierwsze w Polsce przedsięwzięcia współpracy w ramach makroregionów zainicjowane oddolnie i dobrowolnie przez władze samorządowe, w których województwa uznają, że ich rozwój powinien następować poprzez wspólne działania podejmowane w ramach całego makroregionu kreując efekt synergii. Na tle dotychczasowych doświadczeń programowania rozwoju regionalnego w Polsce są to innowacyjne przedsięwzięcia.

## **Słowa**

**kluczowe:** *strategia, makroregion, Polska zachodnia.*

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