

THE REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION - TOWARDS A UNITED AND MORE COMPETITIVE EUROPE

Malgorzata Dziembala*

Abstract.** *The enlarged European Union encompasses regions characterized by a diversified level of socio-economic development and innovation. The Community cohesion policy contributes to a harmonious and balanced development of the European territory, and the assistance in support of cross-border cooperation, as well as transnational and interregional cooperation is offered through the Community Initiative INTERREG III. The article presents the innovation potential of the border regions of the Western and Southern Poland. It is not sufficient in the light of the presented indicators, and it is necessary to take up measures aiming at its development. The Polish accession to the EU has brought along new possibilities in terms of supporting cross-border cooperation, as well as transnational and interregional one, in the years 2004-2006. Also, in the new programming period for the years 2007-2013, emphasis has been given to the need for promoting this direction of activity, while pointing at the same time to the importance of innovation, since innovation constitutes a key factor of economic growth and of enhancing competitiveness of European regions.*

Key words: *Cohesion policy, INTERREG Initiative, European Territorial Cooperation, region, innovation*

INTRODUCTION

The process of European integration incorporating an ever growing number of states requires taking up of coordinated measures with a view of reducing the existing barriers and developing a cohesive EU territory. On the 1st of January, 2007, new member states have been welcomed, namely: Romania and Bulgaria. Moreover, there are other countries that also apply for membership. The Community takes action with a view of supporting cooperation between regions belonging to various

countries. This cooperation is particularly essential due to the benefits that are reaped from its fulfillment, including those that are felt by border regions of the new EU member states which aim at stimulating the regions' socio - economic development, inter alia, by assisting in the construction of modern and innovative economic structures. This direction of activity development has been reflected in the implementation of a set of instruments pertaining to the Community's cohesion policy.

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The aim of the article is to present, on the basis of selected indicators, the diversification in terms of innovation potential between the border areas of the Western and Southern Poland and the regions of neighbouring countries. In this context, attention has been drawn to the implementation in Poland of the Initiative INTERREG III, as it was done in the years 2004-2006, as well as to the main experiences that have been gained as a result of such implementation.

Moreover, the new objective of the European cohesion policy has been discussed, i.e. the European Territorial Cooperation, which is to take effect in the years 2007-2013. The programmes activated as part of this objective shall also support activities directed at the development of innovation and at bringing about the economy of knowledge.

The innovation potential of the border regions of Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia

Europe is formed by a mosaic of regions, characterized by diversified levels of socio-economic development, and as it is, by different growth dynamic. Several of these regions are struggling with problems ensuing from their distinct location with respect to the central regions i.e. these regions, where the greatest development potential (also in the sphere of innovation) is concentrated. By analogy, the border regions of the Western and Southern Poland¹, as well as the neighbouring regions of Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, all of them, encounter their own distinct problems. However, the greatest cross-border divergence in the sphere of innovation is encountered on the Polish-German border (see Table 1).

¹ The regions that qualify for receiving assistance from the EU funds as part of the cross-border cooperation programmes are, by and large, the NUTS 3 level regions. However, due to the lack of statistical data as regards innovation that may be relevant for this level of territorial units, the analysis has been conducted with respect to the border regions classified as the NUTS 2 units. In the case of Poland, the analysis relates to the regions classified as voivodeships.

Table 1 Selected indicators describing the potential in the scope of research & development and innovation of the Polish-German, Polish-Czech, and Polish-Slovak borderlands

Country/ NUTS 2 level region	Total intramural expenditure on R&D in 2003, expressed in Euros (million)	Total intramural expenditure on R&D as a % of GDP in 2003	Personnel in the research and development sector as a % of active population in 2003	Personnel in the research and development sector as a % of total employment in 2003	Human resources in science and technology as a % of labour force in 2005	Number of patent applications submitted to EPO in 2002 ²
<i>EU-25</i>	188681,31	1,9	1,36	1,5	:	:
<i>Poland</i>	1036,07	0,5	0,7	0,9	32,	179,3515
Polish Western border						
Zachodniopomorskie	13,11	0,1	0,4	0,6	32,	2,7504
Lubuskie	7,4	0,1	0,2	0,3	27,	3,641
Dolnoslaskie	58,68	0,3	0,7	1,0	32,	16,5876
<i>Germany</i>	54538,5	2,5	1,6	1,8	48,	24513,826
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	392,77	1,2	0,8	1,1	45,	65,589
Brandenburg- Nordost	117,63	0,5	:	:	:	74,8688
Brandenburg- Südwest	430,66	1,	:	:	:	155,6018
Berlin	3096,14	3,9	2,3	2,8	62,	690,924
Dresden	1045,0	3,	1,9	2,	53,	308,7047
Polish Southern border						
Dolnoslaskie	58,68	0,3	0,7	1,0	32,	16,5876
Opolskie	6,43	0,1	0,3	0,4	27,	2,9338
Slaskie	85,21	0,3	0,6	0,8	31,	13,9354
Malopolskie	118,28	0,8	1,1	1,	30,	18,1315
Podkarpackie	26,2	0,3	0,3	0,4	29,	4,4007
<i>Czech Republic</i>	1012,57	1,2	1,0	1,1	37,	122,4312
Severovýchod	89,98	0,8	0,7	0,	33,	19,8446
Strední Morava	56,98	0,7	0,6	0,	33,	11,404
Moravskoslezsko	75,86	0,9	0,	0,	32,	7,0279
<i>Slovakia</i>	169,10	0,5	0,	0,9	32,	41,3357
Stredné Slovensko	20,02	0,3	0,4	0,6	32,	5,6364
Východné Slovensko	17,7	0,2	0,4	0,6	26,	4,7824

Explanations: Eurostat estimates

The study also involves the Berlin region, despite the fact that it is not a border region in itself.

Source: own study based on data of: Eurosta data base, European Commission

(http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

&screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=EU_MASTER_regions&depth=2, 15.01.2007).

² The regional distribution of patent applications to the EPO is based on the inventor's place of residents. If one application has more than one inventor, the application is divided equally among all of them and subsequently among their regions. Quotation after: *Regions: statistical yearbook 2006. Data 2000-2004, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2006, p. 98.*

By considering the magnitude of expenditure on research and development (R&D) in relation to GDP in the individual countries covered by the 2003 study³, it should be pointed out, that the lowest result has been observed in Poland - 0,54% of GDP; for Slovakia it was 0,58%, for the Czech Republic - 1,25% of GDP, whereas for Germany - 2,52% of GDP⁴. However, when considering this expenditure in absolute terms, then, it can be seen that Germany came first, and then, in the second place - Poland.

Among the analyzed border regions of Poland, it was the Southern borderland that benefited from the greatest R&D outlays: namely, the Małopolskie voivodeship, whereas the least was gained by the Opolskie voivodeship (2003 figures). On the Western borderland of Poland, the lowest outlays were observed in the Lubuskie voivodeship. When considering the indicator: number of personnel in the research and development sector as a percentage of active population, it should be pointed out that in Poland this indicator was at its lowest (from among the countries under scrutiny). In 2003, 0,75% of active population was employed in this sector; this indicator was similarly low for Slovakia (0,8%), whereas for the EU it equaled 1,36%. Among the Polish border regions, such low percentage of employed in this sector has been observed in the voivodeships: Lubuskie, Opolskie, Podkarpackie, where it failed to exceed the mark of 0,4% of active population (2003 figures). On the other

hand, for the border regions of the remaining countries covered by the analysis, the indicator was substantially higher. Similarly, the indicator relating to the share of R&D personnel in the total of persons employed, points to a low standing of the Polish borderland voivodeships in this respect, with the exception of the Dolnoslaskie and Małopolskie voivodeships, for which this factor was observed to be the highest from amongst all the border regions of Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

In a similar vein, another factor, namely: the number of science and technology personnel as a percentage of the labour force indicates that Poland, by virtue of the results it has obtained does is not far out from Slovakia and its regions. On the Polish Western border, in the border regions, the share of scientific and technical personnel fluctuated between 32,4% and 27,7% of the labour force, reaching its peak in the Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship. Also, on the Southern border of Poland, a similar differential was observed, with the highest share of scientific staff recorded in the Dolnoslaskie voivodeship constituting some 32,4% of employees. On the other hand, in case of the German border regions, this factor was significantly more favourable.

Poland's standing is no more favourable in comparison with the other countries under scrutiny when examined in the light of another innovation-related factor, i.e. the number of submitted patent applications to the EPO (European Patent

³The cited statistical data is derived from the Eurostat data base of the EU Commission: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=EU_MASTER_regions&depth=2, as at January 2007.

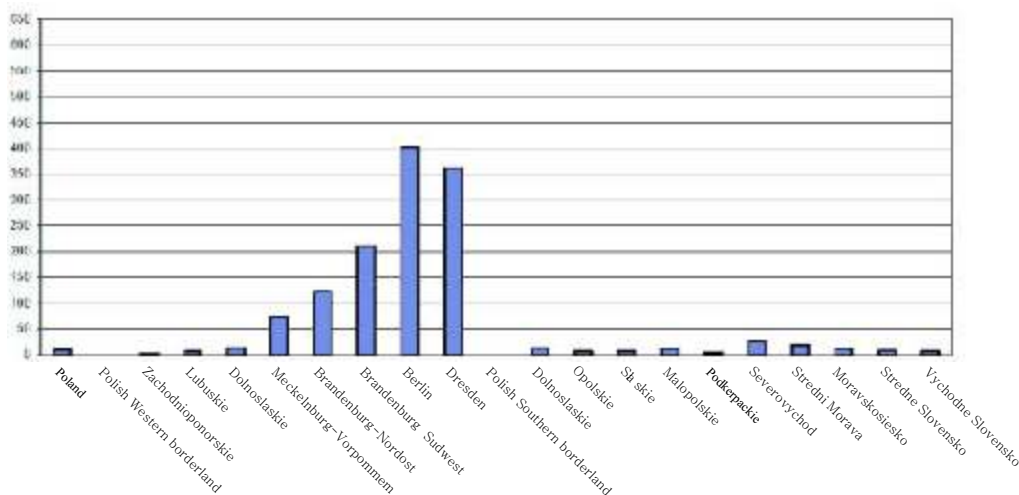
⁴ However, it can be observed that despite very low expenditure on R&D (with respect to GDP) in Poland, in the following years, this share tends to increase somewhat: in 2004 it already constituted 0,56%, and in 2005 0,57% of GDP. In Slovakia, this factor deteriorates, since in 2004 and in 2005, outlays on R&D constituted just 0,51% of this country's GDP. On the other hand, in the Czech Republic, there is increased expenditure on R&D in 2004: 1,26% of GDP, and in 2005 as much as 1,42% of GDP.

Office) per million of the labour force. The highest score was observed for Germany: 618 patent applications per million of the labour force, next being the Czech Republic (24), Slovakia (16), and only then, Poland (10) 2002 year figures. Similarly, when examining this indicator in the regional aspect, it should be emphasized that the border regions of Poland in comparison with both, German, and Czech regions, failed to achieve good results in this respect in the year 2002 (figure 1).

border regions. As regards Poland's border regions, the marked leaders are two voivodeships: Dolnoslaskie and Małopolskie.

As the conducted analysis shows, from amongst the Polish border regions, the Dolnoslaskie voivodeship stood out, both, in terms of the number of staff employed in the research and development sector (as a percentage of active population), and the number of science and technology personnel as a percentage of the total labour

Figure 1 Number of submitted patent applications to the EPO per million of labour force in the border regions of Poland in 2002



Source: own study based on data of: Eurostat data base, European Commission (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&Screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=EU_MASTER_regions&depth=2, 15.01.2007).

The „leading” regions (from among those under scrutiny) in the aspect of innovation potential are the German regions situated on the Polish-German borderland, this being both, in terms of the number of the submitted patent applications, as well as their magnitude per million of the labour force. The greatest number of the submitted patent applications per million of the labour force came from Germany and the German

force. The unquestioned leader is also the Małopolskie voivodeship, which results from this region hosting research centres and significant university education centres. Moreover, both of these voivodeships stand out in terms of the number of submitted patent applications.

In the light of the selected innovation indicators, Polish border regions do not score too high, this is also a by-product of

low results being achieved by Poland, nationwide.

When analyzing the regions on either side of border, it should be emphasized, that they concern partners with diversified level of development, inclusive of the innovation-specific one. This is clearly portrayed on the Polish Western borderland, as there is observed significant asymmetry in disfavour of the Polish border regions. In this context, the case of supporting innovation should become an integral target for measures being taken in the border regions, along with other endeavours aiming at supporting the socio-economic development of these areas. This should be reflected in the devised strategies for development of these regions. Without any doubt, this poses some difficulty, since in the border regions; it is mainly the infrastructural investment projects that are in the prime.

The supporting of innovation is promoted by the EU as part of the Lisbon strategy, in particular, through the development of network connections. This is also a result of a change of approach to the question of innovation, since a region also constitutes environment, in which innovation absorption and diffusion take place.

The implementation of the Initiative INTERREG III in Poland

The programmes in the regions and cofinanced from the EU funds are directed at the implementation of many

priority tasks in the new EU member states. As early on as shortly after two years of Polish membership in the EU and of availing of this aid, the effects of running the Community Initiative INTERREG III programmes aiming at the promotion of harmonious and balanced Community development can be seen. The Initiative INTERREG III as supported by the funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was being effectively implemented also in Poland in the years 2004-2006⁵.

The „A” component of this Initiative⁶ is directed at promoting development of cross-border cooperation, and it promotes, most of all, the cooperation of self-government bodies (public authorities) and of the local communities inhabiting the border regions. The land on either side of border differs in social and cultural aspect, and through cross-border cooperation programmes and through the common projects being run as part of these programmes, there exists a possibility for initiating a lasting cooperation, and as it goes, the breaking down of the existing barriers (in a number of ways) that are marked out by the political frontier. As part of the INTERREG IIIA, there has been conducted cross-border cooperation on all Polish frontiers. In Poland, there are being realized 7 INTERREG III A programmes, inclusive of 3 programmes conducted on the Western border of Poland, and 2 on the Southern border. As per end of October 2006 figures, the number of projects being approved for running amounted to 756, which means that the volume of

⁵ This paragraph of text relating to the Initiative INTERREG III and its execution has been written on the basis of the publication: *„Inicjatywa Wspólnotowa INTERREG III. Polskie doświadczenia w latach 2004-2006. Ministerstwo Rozwoju Regionalnego, Warszawa 2006”*. There has been also made use of the presentations and information available on the site of the Ministry of Regional Development:

<http://www.funduszeStrukturalne.gov.pl/Wiadomosci/Interreg+III/konferencja+od+interreg+do+ewt.htm> . The above constitute information and speeches given during the international conference: *„Od Inicjatywy Wspólnotowej INTERREG do Europejskiej Współpracy Terytorialnej”*, which has taken place on the 9th of November, 2006, in Warsaw.

⁶ These are both, bilateral, as well as three-party programmes.

funding that was assigned to them constituted some 93% of the total allocation for the Polish party, i.e. the overall volume of funding out of the ERDF for these projects constituted over EUROS 164,30 million. It must be observed that these amounts concern projects that involved Poland. The effected projects relate, predominantly, to the development of road infrastructure, they are directed at promoting entrepreneurship; there are also undertakings being implemented in relation to the protection of the natural environment. Also assistance is being offered out of the Small Projects Fund, having been established for the so-called people-to-people projects.

As part of the Initiative INTERREG III, there is also supported transnational cooperation, this being interlinked with the other programme component, i.e. INTERREG III "B". As part of this component, Poland is involved in 2 programmes: Baltic Sea Region programme (BSR), and Central Adriatic Danubian South-Eastern European Space (CADSES) programme. As part of the BSR, the following states cooperate together: Poland, Sweden, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Russia, Belarus, and Norway. On the other hand, the CADSES programme involves a network of 18 states. What's more, the latter brings together not only the EU-27 member states, but also Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

The projects involve strategies, planistic studies, development of TransEuropean infrastructure, the promotion of spatial development strategy, development of cooperation network, etc. If

the volume of funds awarded out of the ERDF for the running of tasks being part of the B component was to be examined, then, the figure for the Polish side would be EUROS 18,25 million, and the number of Polish beneficiaries would be counted 97 (CADSES), and 253 (BSR).

On the other hand, a separate component constitutes the interregional cooperation programme, the so-called "C" component, which is divided into four programme zones, Northern, Southern, Western, and Eastern⁷. Poland belongs to two programme zones: the Eastern one and the Northern one. As regards this component, there are 126 beneficiaries on the Polish side running the approved projects, and the volume of the assigned ERDF funds equals EUROS 13 million. As part of the conducted interregional cooperation, there are projects being supported relating to cooperation and the sharing of experience, also in the sphere of regional policy and the promotion of good practice.

The implementation of undertakings of various nature being cofinanced as part of the Initiative INTERREG III had a positive effect on initiating contacts with partners from other countries' regions, since the effected cooperation entailed the involvement of at least two partners coming from different countries, which were to come together for the purpose of preparing operational programme, and also on several occasions, were to cooperate at the stage of running of the project itself.

Cross-border cooperation programmes should be paid special attention. As part of the effected cross-border cooperation, the implementation of the Small Projects Fund has made possible

⁷ As part of the „C” component, there are also featured: ESPON European Spatial Planning Observation Network, and INTERACT - programme relating to technical assistance.

the implementation of projects of “people-to-people” type, i.e. Small projects.

The development of cross-border cooperation has resulted in a common strategy for the development of border area having been prepared. This was incorporated in the operational programme (the programme being a strategic document with regards to the availing of the EU funds) along with the priorities setting the path and the areas in need of assistance. Thus, the document also constitutes a common strategy aiming at developing the cross-border cooperation. Moreover, it has become essential to pay attention to the cross-border effect of the implemented projects. As part of the effected cross-border operational programme, it has also become necessary to develop common structures for the purpose of managing this programme, and to develop applicable mechanisms⁸. This is also an essential aspect of the implemented undertakings, as they made it possible to recognize the needs of entities on the other side of the border. The concept of the leading partner also is to be paid attention to, i.e. the subject that coordinates the projects and that is also responsible for the implementation, management, and coordination of the implemented tasks.

The endeavours being undertaken facilitate in initiating and in the developing contacts, which also favours the breaking

down of barriers. A continued realization of plans in the new period of programming of the cohesion policy should facilitate in their consolidation and in the formation of network of cooperating together entities. Also, the endeavours that are realized in the regions also in the border regions should be directed at assisting innovation development. Nowadays, the necessity for incorporating this path into the European programmes, which shall be implemented as part of the new objective - European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), is highly promoted in the new period of cohesion policy execution.

European Territorial Cooperation programmes for the years 2007-2013

Besides such objectives as: convergence, regional competitiveness and employment, a new objective shall be set: European Territorial Cooperation, thus addressing the positive experiences from the implementation of the Initiative INTERREG III, and following on the paths being traced out by the tasks that have been supported up until now. For the programmes having been activated as part of that objective, there has been assigned 2,52% of the total EU funds allocation for the years 2007-2013, i.e. EUROS 7 750 million⁹ (in the 2004 prices).

⁸ For more information on the Initiative INTERREG see: *Communication from the Commission to the Member States of 2 September 2004 laying down guidelines for a Community initiative concerning trans-European cooperation intended to encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory (2004/C 226/02)*. Brodecki Z. (ed.) (2005), *Regiony, LexisNexis, Warszawa*, pp. 163-169, ISBN 83-7334 422-5, Batchler J, Taylor S. *Współpraca międzyregionalna w Unii Europejskiej: pozytywki z przeszłości i perspektywy na przyszłość*. In: G. Gorzelak, J. Bachtler, M. Kasprzyk (ed.) (2004), *Współpraca transgraniczna Unii Europejskiej. Doświadczenia polsko-niemieckie*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Scholar”, Warszawa, pp. 344-365, ISBN: 83-7383-121-5.

⁹ This amount assigned for ETC is reduced by EUROS 200 million (it is a sum assigned for Northern Ireland for the PEACE programme which shall be implemented as cross-border cooperation programme), and then, the funds are shared out between the individual programmes. See the Enclosure II, sect. 22, to the Council Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) no 1260/1999.

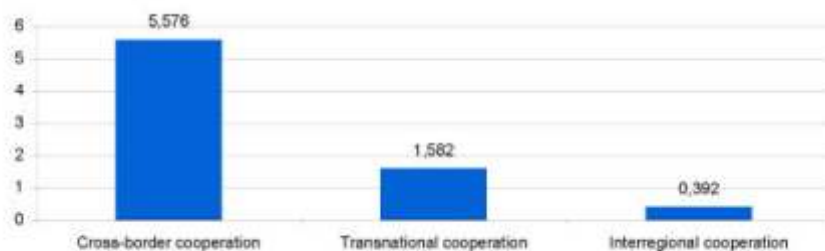
The supporting of cooperation between the European regions belonging to different countries has become an integral element of the new cohesion policy that shall take effect in the years 2007-2013 (incorporated into the policy mainstream).

ERDF funds shall support various cooperation programmes: cross-border cooperation programmes, transnational cooperation programmes, as well as those, which concern interregional cooperation.

The supporting of cross-border cooperation obtained the highest allocation of funds out of the ETC (fig. 2).

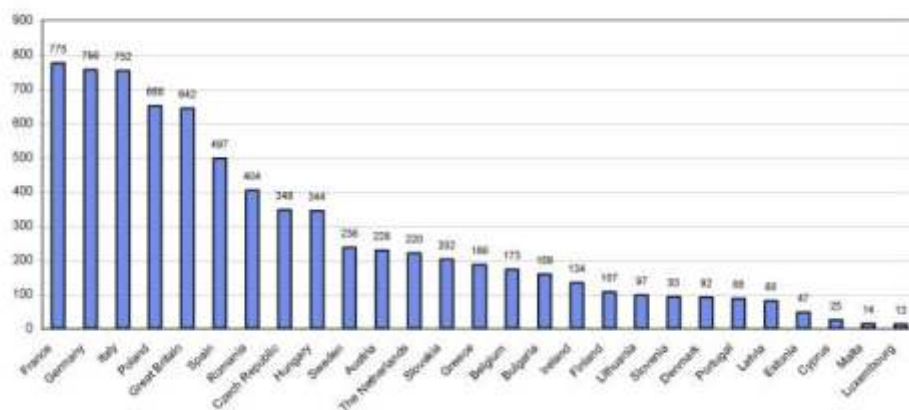
The majority of resources shall be assigned for cross-border cooperation programmes, constituting 73,86% of the total allocation for this objective, and then, 20,95% of allocation shall be assigned for transnational cooperation programmes. The main beneficiaries are: France, Germany, Italy, and then, Poland (fig. 3).

Figure 2 The allocation of funds for the individual components implemented as part of the ETC, in the years 2007-2013 (2004 prices, in EUROS billion)



Source: Council Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006, art. 21.

Figure 3 The volume of ERDF allocation for the individual states of the EU-27 as part of the objective: European Territorial Cooperation for the years 2007-2013 (in EUROS million, 2004 prices)



* the volume of funds that has not been allocated amongst the countries equals EUROS 392 million, in the 2004 prices.

Source: *Regions and cities for growth and jobs: an overview of Regulations 2007-2013 on Cohesion and Regional Policy*. Inforegio, factsheet, European Union, 2006.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/publications/memo_pl.pdf.

In the new programming period, certain modifications have been introduced as regards the preparation and implementation of programmes. It should be emphasized that the cross-border nature of the effected tasks is to be maintained, namely: completing of at least 2 out of 4 formulated cooperation criteria. This holds, in particular, for the cross-border programmes and for those in the sphere of transnational cooperation. The above boils down to the cooperation of at least two partners in at least two ways: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing¹⁰.

The programme brings together at least two states, and the country that hosts managing authorities is liable for its execution. The Managing Authority assumes the responsibility for the programme management and implementation. In the structure of programme implementation, attention should be paid to the common technical secretariat¹¹.

It is also necessary to consider in the programmes the leading partner as coordinator of the realized operations¹².

The overall volume of Community funds assigned to Poland for the new period of the cohesion policy 2007-2013 amounted to EUROS 67,3 billion (in the current prices). The volume of funds that shall be assigned for implementing programmes within the ETC is EUROS 557,8 million (in the current prices). As part of this amount, the Community funds shall be

distributed for cross-border cooperation (EUROS 374,44 million), EUROS 43,05 million shall constitute funds marked out in Annex II of the Council Regulation no. 1083/2006, whereas EUROS 140,27 million shall be assigned for transnational cooperation. Moreover, in addition to this, EUROS 173,3 million shall be granted from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument for cross-border cooperation programmes. Henceforth, the overall volume of funds from the ERDF as part of the operational programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation for the years 2007-2013 for Poland shall sum up at EUROS 731,1 million^{13,14}.

In the light of the held discussions on the role of the regions in implementing the decisions of the Lisbon Strategy it must be said that the Strategy implementation is to come into effect through the ETC programmes. This is also rooted in the priority areas that benefit from the assistance granted as part of the ETC. In relation to the programmes concerning cross-border cooperation, the granted assistance shall be directed, among others, at promoting entrepreneurship, cooperation, common usage of infrastructure (inter alia educational infrastructure), as well as the needs of research and technological development. The transnational cooperation programmes should also take into account the innovation-specific priority, as assistance is directed at supporting the development and formation of scientific and technology networks, and it

¹⁰ Regulation (EC) no. 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999, art. 19, sect. 1.

¹¹ National Strategic Reference Framework in support of economic growth and employment. Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw, November 2006, pp. 99-101, where has also been shown the system of execution for the objective European Territorial Cooperation in Poland.

¹² Regulation (EC) no. 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999, art. 20.

¹³ Inicjatywa Wspólnotowa INTERREG III. Polskie doświadczenia w latach 2004-2006..., op.cit., p. 20.

¹⁴ National Strategic Reference Framework .., op.cit., pp. 103-104, p. 108, where the allocation of funds for Poland as part of the ETC has been presented.

shall also concern the improvement of innovation-related capacity in the regions, supporting the formation of networks between individual units of third level education, as well as research centres, SMEs, i.e. networks with the access to scientific knowledge, also in the sphere of technological transfer (concerning the transfer between BRT centres and international centres for best practice, covering twinning cooperation of these institutions being involved in the transfer of technology)¹⁵. Thus, as it can be concluded from the presented area of support, the promotion of innovation in the regions comes through the promotion of network connections and through the formation of cooperation networks.

The development of connections and contacts between regions and cities is promoted. A newly introduced initiative of the European Commission, Regions for Economic Change¹⁶ is to serve this purpose, this being part of the ETC, availing of the solutions of interregional cooperation and of the URBACT programme. For the purpose of implementation of this initiative, there have been assigned the ERDF funds in the sum of EUROS 375 million (for the years 2007-2013). This amount has been assigned

in support of the development of innovative ideas. There shall be developed cooperation networks involving regions and urban areas, where participation shall be voluntary. This initiative brings together the programmes of interregional cooperation and the programme concerning the development of urban network. The developed networks are to cover cities and regions, as well as the member states¹⁷, and are to support certain issues, while observing the Lisbon agenda. They are directed at promoting economic modernization and competitiveness. The worked out innovation-specific solutions (ideas), through the use of regional and urban networks, are to be incorporated into the programmes being executed as part of the mainstream of the cohesion policy.

However, it should be observed that the Commission has indicated the issues, which shall become focal points for these topical networks, presenting some 30 topics¹⁸. There has been also suggested the so-called "quick path". There shall be identified a group of 10-20 regions forming a network around a given topic (a priority issue). The Commission shall formulate such network, acting as its driving force, later on, it shall support the development of a given idea, coordinate it (providing additional

¹⁵ D. Hübner, *The importance of the territorial cooperation of regions for achieving the Lisbon Strategy objectives*. Speech given by prof. Danuta Hubner, the commissioner for regional policy during the conference „Od Inicjatywy Wspólnotowej INTEREG do Europejskiej Współpracy Terytorialnej”, Warszawa, 9th of November, 2006.;

(<http://www.mrr.gov.pl/Aktualnosci/konferencja+od+interreg+do+ewt.htm>); Regulation (EC) no. 1080/2006, art. 6. There are plans to activate 81 programmes as part of the ETC. See: D. Hübner, *The importance of the territorial cooperation of regions...*, op.cit.

¹⁶ further information with respect to the new initiative on the basis of: D.Hübner, *The importance of the territorial cooperation of regions...*, op.cit. p. 4., also: Commission from the Commission: *Regions for Economic Change, Commission of the European Communities*, Brussels, dated 8.11.2006, COM (2006) 675 final; *Regions for Economic Change European Commission strengthens exchange of best practices in innovation among European regions*. IP/06/1526, Brussels, the 8th of November, 2006; *Information note on regions for economic change* (January 2007)

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/doc/infoimplementation01.pdf

¹⁷ The main driving force behind such network formation is either region or city.

¹⁸ The topics have been indicated in the document: Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission: *Regions for Economic Change, Commission of the European Communities*, Brussels, 8.11.2006, SEC (2006) 1432.

support in the sphere of specialist knowledge and administration), and then, the Commission shall take action with a view of including it into the mainstream, i.e. into the basic programmes. Also, as part of this new initiative, there shall be promoted the concept of the so-called: two-way bridge the solution that is to link the networks with the programmes being run as part of the main objectives. Within its scope, there shall be provided a possibility for a "bridge" solution the concepts (good practice) as worked out by the regions are to be evaluated as part of the initiative in the light of their execution as part of the mainstream programmes. In a similar vein, the entities (states, cities, regions) are to demonstrate that the conducted works are in connection with the mainstream programmes. There shall be also improvements in the sphere of communication¹⁹.

It is this very cooperation between the European regions that may constitute a significant step forward, both in the direction of promoting the own identity and culture of the territories involved, as well as in the direction of developing new forms of cooperation. It is worth stressing that through these programmes experience exchange shall take place, just as well as the economic growth in specific areas.

CONCLUSION

The conducted cooperation, also encompassing cross-border cooperation is currently gaining momentum. The experience gained in the course of implementing the Initiative INTERREG III may be of help in making effective

use of the European funds assigned for developing community cooperation and for developing network connections favouring the transfer of knowledge. It should be pointed out that the experience gained by Poland at the time of implementation of the Initiative INTERREG III may be transferred out and availed of, in various ways, by the new member states, or else, by these countries that apply for EU membership. This concerns, in particular, the building of strategies of regional development as part of the cross-border cooperation programmes, which should reflect the development priorities, while at the same time, mark out the main line of support out of the EU funding. In the face of scarcity of European funds, it is important to formulate priorities and present projects that take into account the needs and the possibilities of regional development and that bring in into the Community some added value. There may be also of some help, the experience gained from planning of actions and undertakings, and from the implementation of programmes (execution of projects).

It should not be forgotten that conducting such cooperation is hindered by the existence in various countries of different institutional and administration structures, as well as legal and administrative disparities, which bring about certain problems in managing the programmes²⁰.

The new programmes of territorial cooperation that are prepared by Poland for the years 2007-2013 and the ensuing undertakings should reflect the mainstream of the major policies as indicated at the European level. The programmes should plan their actions so as to follow the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy.

¹⁹ Moreover, with a view of promoting good practice in the regions, as a complement to this initiative, there shall be organized annual conferences. There shall be also prizes awarded for the best ideas.

²⁰ The third report on economic and social cohesion, p. 156 and p. 158. The European Commission 2004 (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion3/cohesion3_pl.htm).