

## INTRODUCTION

The European Union may be one of the richest parts of the world. However, firstly big internal disparities of income and opportunity between its regions have to be eliminated. Better prosperity in the EU countries requires transfer of resources from affluent to poorer members. Regional policy is aimed to modernise backward regions, so that they can catch up with the rest of the Union. Regional policy is an instrument of financial solidarity and a powerful force for cohesion and economic integration.

In the period from 2007 to 2013, regional spending will account for 36% of the EU budget. In cash terms, this represents spending over the seven years of nearly €350 billion. The effort focuses on three objectives: convergence, competitiveness, and cooperation which are grouped together in what is now termed Cohesion Policy.

The money comes from three different sources, according to the nature of the assistance and the type of beneficiary.

The idea for regional policy is to dovetail with the EU's so-called Lisbon agenda to promote growth and jobs by:

- making countries and regions more attractive for investments;
- encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship, and the knowledge economy;
- creating more and better jobs.

A gradual European Union's broadening brings about a number of consequences, both for the rich as well as for the poor countries. Identification of integration processes, especially entrepreneurship development and jobs creation seem to be extremely interesting.

This publication presents the results of the researches conducted in the scope of the European Union integration process. Presented issues comprise, among others, comparative studies of sectors of economies in Member States of the EU. Papers as well covered the subject of the entrepreneurship development on the competitive European Single Market. Majority of written works are attempts to quantitative analysis and assessments of economic results of integration in different fields of an economy.

The main objective of this publication is to present socio-economic changes and functioning of enterprises in Poland and in other EU countries.

This journal entitled *Impact of European integration on socio-economic changes and entrepreneurship development in Poland* consists of two chapters:

Chapter I. *Economic and social development in the EU Member States – international comparisons,*

Chapter II. *Entrepreneurship development in Poland and in the EU – functioning of the SME sector.*

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