

INTRODUCTION

Poland's eastern borderland is an area facing exceptional challenges associated with regional development. The course of the development processes in the region seems to indicate the inefficiency of the cohesion policies implemented so far. They have failed to narrow the development gap between the regions situated along the eastern border of Poland and the country's other dynamically growing provinces. A similar development inadequacy affecting borderland regions can be observed on the other side of Poland's eastern border. This symmetry proves that there exists a great potential for fruitful trans-border cooperation.

A number of factors seem conducive to the development of transboundary cooperation of Poland and its eastern neighbours: cultural, mental and linguistic similarities; long-standing socio-cultural collaboration; family and personal bonds; mutual familiarity with economic realities and legislation, as well as with economic policy instruments and mechanisms; dynamic development of regular trade, gradually replacing cross-border unregistered trade; eagerness – on both sides of the border – to institutionalise cooperation; and numerous eco-systems of high natural value. The main obstacles to cross-border cooperation include: the strict border-crossing regime regarding the external border of the European Union, the differences between the legal and institutional systems, underdeveloped transport and transboundary infrastructure, mutual acknowledgement of product certificates, problems concerning environmental pollution in borderland areas, and recently also the challenges associated with the war in Ukraine and the immigrant crisis.

The present review of research into transboundary cooperation confirms the tremendous attractiveness of the topic of the relationship between public authorities and the implemented cooperation projects in the social, infrastructural and environmental spheres. As regards the current condition of actual cooperation among small and medium enterprises on both sides of the border, there exists a substantial deficiency of knowledge. If it is decreased, the development of cross-border cooperation may be far more efficiently coordinated¹.

The first chapter of this volume is concerned with the conditions of transboundary cooperation in eastern Poland and contains analyses of the institutional bac-

¹ *Współpraca transgraniczna małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw jako czynnik rozwoju regionalnego na przykładzie Podregionu białostocko-suwałskiego i Podregionu krośnieńsko-przemyskiego w Polsce, Obwodu zakarpackiego na Ukrainie oraz Obwodu grodzieńskiego na Białorusi*, B. Pławgo (ed.), BFKK, Białystok 2015.

kground and the characteristic traits of the borderland areas. The second chapter is devoted to an assessment of the potential of cross-border cooperation in fields of: innovation, information society and entrepreneurship. The third chapter discusses practical experiences of cross-border collaboration, including those from regions other than Eastern Poland. Chapter four comprises papers which investigate the cultural and environmental aspects of transboundary cooperation. The final chapter discusses the most important issues connected with the development of cooperation, including the problems of transborder crime and local border traffic.

The science editor and the authors believe that this collection will make a significant contribution to the body of research on transborder cooperation and the accompanying scientific debate.

Jerzy Grabowiecki