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## **PARTICIPATION OF ECONOMIC SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE PROCESS OF THE PROMOTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP – CASE STUDY OF POLAND, GERMANY AND SLOVAKIA \***

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**Summary:** The purpose of the article is not so much a comparison, as showing the actions undertaken by the economic self-government of different European countries. The actions taken by economic self-governments of Poland, Slovakia and Germany serve as an example. For authors of the article, the practical aspect of the knowledge and conclusions coming from the economic self-governments of all the countries are extremely important—concerning the present actions, directions of future actions, as well as the aspect of the cooperation of the economic self-governments of the Member States of the European Union. For this reason an attempt to compare the actions of the economic self-government in the model countries and their regions is the purpose of the article. For the achievement of this aim the method of the literature review and the interview were used. They allowed us to form conclusions for future self-government actions towards the promotion of entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly such actions are, and will be, part of the development strategies of regions, states and the entire Community.

**Keywords:** economic self-government, entrepreneurship, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, entrepreneurship supporting.

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## 1. Introduction

Economic self-government means recognising and affecting economic the existence of organizations consisting of entrepreneurs, at the same time giving these organizations the right to function.

The private-legal personality of the institution of economic self-government manifests itself in the possibility of acquiring the rights and contracting obligations, of suing and being sued. However the regulatory personality is becoming apparent of unilateral forming in possession of personal entitlements, for example the possibility of the rights and obligations of addressees of decisions [Jędrzejewski 1994].

The most appearing forms of economic self-government are features consisting of representatives of individual professions, farming chambers, chambers of commerce – being in Poland under the control of the Polish Chamber of Commerce – and/or craft chambers – in Poland under the supervisory body of the Polish Crafts Association.

In the majority of countries, economic self-government is actively representing entrepreneurs [Sztando 2002] and influences the shape of the provisions of the law and the economic climate of the state.

These are the reasons why the aim of the article is to compare the actions of self-governments in different countries and their regions. Three countries – Germany, Poland and Slovakia – were chosen for the research because of the differences in development, the period of membership in the European Union and the different level of their economy. From within those countries three regions were chosen which were then evaluated. Thanks to this research, it was possible to identify the self-government actions towards the promotion of entrepreneurship, their commitment to undertaking actions and comparing them.

## 2. History of economic self-government in Poland

In interwar Poland, the activity of the institutions and organizations of industry and entrepreneurs, then called industrialists, was regulated by the rulings of the President of the Republic of Poland. The Minister for Industry decided about creating the industry and trade chambers and the basis for its functioning, as well as supervising the activity of the chambers. “Permanent representatives of business interests of the industry and the trade” were entrusted to him [Matuszak 2005].

The territory of the state was divided to areas of competence of industry and trade chambers, composed of chosen advisers appointed by the Minister, the adviser chosen by entrepreneurs and their economic associations, and so-called co-opted advisers [Grabowski 2007].

In 1950, the chambers were dissolved and their place taken by the Chamber of the Foreign Trade promoting the export of state enterprises. This did not meet the expectations of reviving private enterprise which led the state to reinstate independent chambers of industry and trade chambers in 1989.



The revival of economic self-government took place in accordance with the Act of 30 May 1989 on chambers of commerce<sup>1</sup>. The first chambers of commerce started to come into existence, at first exclusively regional and trade chambers, and then also bilateral.

### 3. Self-government in Poland – financing rules and framework

According to the binding legal system – the Act on Chambers of Commerce – “the chamber of commerce is an organization of economic self-government, representing the economic interests of entities involved in manufacturing, commercial, building or service activity, particularly regarding state agencies”<sup>2</sup> and “is entitled to expressing opinions about completed projects referring to the functioning of the economy”<sup>3</sup>.

The chamber of commerce can also “make evaluations of implementing and functioning of the legal acts concerning the economic activity”<sup>4</sup>.

Besides the act about the chambers of commerce, there should also be mentioned the act on the crafts: the Act of 22 March 1989 on crafts<sup>5</sup>. Based on this craftsmen can form a union in three-level organizations of the craft self-government where the guild consisting of craftsmen is the base level. Trades from a given circle next form a union at craft chambers, and those – in the Polish Crafts Association.

It is worth underlining that membership in the economic self-government in Poland is voluntary and depends exclusively on the will of the entrepreneur.

#### The example of Opolskie Region

The Opole Region, the smallest region in Poland, stands out nationally due its large economic and investment potential and its quick rate of ownership transformation. Industry is characterised by a uniform distribution across the region and by its diversified structure.

Foreign capital companies account for 26 percent, and almost 70 percent of Opole enterprises belong to the SME sector.

To maximise the benefits from foreign investment and trade, self-governments of the communes in the Opole Region allocate new sites for business and industrial development, modernize technical infrastructure, promote local business and create an investment-friendly climate for business in order to provide information, legal and business assistance to potential investors<sup>6</sup>.

In the Opolskie area, economic self-government is represented by the Opole Economic Chamber and the Crafts Chamber in Opole.

<sup>1</sup> Dz.U. nr 35, 1989, poz. 195 (z późn. zm.).

<sup>2</sup> Ustawa z dnia 30 maja 1989 r. o izbach gospodarczych, art. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, art. 4 ust. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, art. 4 ust. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Dz.U. nr 17, 1989, poz. 92 (z późn. zm.).

<sup>6</sup> Self-government of the Opolskie Voivodeship, <http://opolskie.pl/eng>, entry: 29.08.2013.

The following table depicts actions supporting entrepreneurs undertaken by the economic self-government of the Opole region.

**Table 1.** Actions supporting entrepreneurship undertaken by the economic self-government of Opolskie Region in Poland in 2008-2011

Year	2008		2009		2010		2011	
Number and kind of enterprises using the support								
Action	Micro	Small and medium	Micro	Small and medium	Small	Medium	Small	Medium
Information	203	77	936	43	746	52	739	48
Consulting at the pro-innovation character	358	247	218	535	439	347	513	353
Closed training courses	23	18	27	49	73	27	65	32
Open training courses	28	2	24	17	48	9	54	11

Source: own research based on the statistics of self-government in Opolskie Region.

The economic self-government of the Opole Province above all provides information services as well as consultation and training courses. Unfortunately since 2010 the principles of internal statistics were changed and micro enterprises are not being specified any longer, but, instead, medium enterprises were separated. In spite of this change it is possible to observe the growing interest of entrepreneurs in both kinds of training: open and closed. There is an increase of the number of entrepreneurs using the consulting service of pro-innovation character.

This means that in the region interest is growing in the knowledge which can find application in the development of enterprises.

#### 4. Self-government in Germany – financing rules and framework

The principle of membership in chambers of commerce is applicable in the Federal Republic of Germany based on the law. The compulsory character of self-government does not result in the consequences connected with the non-participation in it, because the ratio of the membership is rising automatically on account of conducting economy activities in accordance with the Act of 18 December 1956<sup>7</sup> and the regulation of 22 December 2011<sup>8</sup>. The above mentioned legal documents not only establish the legal basis of the membership in the economic self-government, but are also resolve the principles of financing these self-government bodies.

<sup>7</sup> Gesetz zur vorläufigen Regelung des Rechts der Industrie- und Handelskammern vom 18. Dezember 1956 (BGBl I S. 920),

<sup>8</sup> Abgabenordnung vom 22. Dezember 2011 (BGBl. I S. 3044).

The kind of the membership in an organization of this type is compulsory, also its financing is compulsory and established on a permanent percentage level, dependent on the income of the enterprise.

It is necessary to underline that representatives of the so-called free professions do not belong to economic self-government, but to professional self-government bodies from the legal viewpoint.

Irrespective of the structure formed by organizations of economic self-government in Germany, there are also functioning voluntary trade organizations of a self-help character comprising economic entities. The highest organization is the Trade and Economy Chambers Association representing the interests of German entrepreneurs to the government and the parliament. These representatives include all the enterprises equally.

### The example of Rhineland – Palatinate Region

Rhineland-Pfalz is a federal state in south-west Germany formed in 1947. There are 24 districts, 12 cities, 163 trade union communes and 2 258 ordinary communes. In the region there are developed chemical, building materials, leather, machine, metal and food (mainly wine) industry. The farming of this region is famous for wine growing (2/3 of the cultivated area of the country). Rhineland- Pfalz also has numerous tourist centres and spas.

**Table 2.** Actions supporting entrepreneurship undertaken by the economic self-government of Rheinland-Pfalz in Germany in 2007-2011

Number in year:	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Actions supporting entrepreneurship					
Training (participants)	2 837	2 676	2 311	2 487	3 271
“Open days” for entrepreneurs (participants)	395	395	430	378	623
Advice for entrepreneurship	712	882	818	562	739
Explanation and interpretation	1 066	1 279	1 331	1 368	1 259
Individual advice	3 151	2 377	2 415	2 484	2 318
Start-up packages	3 602	3 846	4 032	3 954	3 618
Telephone and written information	16 195	13 555	13 435	13 498	14 515

Source: own research based on information from IHK für Rheinhessen: *Jahresbilanz der Starterzentren Rheinland-Pfalz*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Handwerkskammer Rheinland-Pfalz, 2012; *Jahresbilanz der Starterzentren Rheinland-Pfalz*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Handwerkskammer Rheinland-Pfalz, 2011; *Jahresbilanz der Starterzentren Rheinland-Pfalz*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Handwerkskammer Rheinland-Pfalz, 2010; *Jahresbilanz der Starterzentren Rheinland-Pfalz*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Handwerkskammer Rheinland-Pfalz, 2009; *Jahresbilanz der Starterzentren Rheinland-Pfalz*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Handwerkskammer Rheinland-Pfalz, 2008.

In Rhineland-Pfalz function industrial and trade as well as craft chambers, by which, with the purpose of the promotion of entrepreneurship, 30 start-up centres were formed. Their aims are facilitating economic activity for private individuals and offering them comprehensive support.

The following table depicts the actions supporting entrepreneurs undertaken by the economic self-government of the Rheinland-Pfalz region.

As it appears from the data, actions are concentrated on the practical aspect of the given support from the range, to ensure its greatest effectiveness and appropriateness. It is possible to notice, since 2007, the reduction in the interest of the beneficiaries in advice, open days and open training. 2009 brought the greatest interest in start-up packages, which allows us to draw the conclusion that interest in conducting own economic activity in the region grew. With time, the self-government gave less explanation and interpretation, favouring the growing interest with phone and mail contact.

This fact attests to the need for obtaining specific, individual information for each given case and for specifying and directing expectations of entrepreneurs.

## **5. Self-government in Slovakia – financing rules and framework**

The stimulus for the spontaneous transformation of the former socialist regime of Czechoslovakia was the student manifestation in November 1989, known as the Velvet Revolution. On 29 March 1990, the Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic passed a law to change its name to the Czechoslovak Federal Republic (until then Czechoslovakia was officially a socialist state) [Krejčí 1998, p. 224].

Transforming society through democratic institutions began almost simultaneously in December 1989, but the transformation of the economy only started in March 1990. The profound social changes after 1989 necessitated the constitution of local government. Political representation opted for a dual model, followed by the creation of local government and the constitution of territorial self-government and its authorities [Měchýř 1999, p. 236]. This happened in 1990 with the adoption of Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on municipalities. The Act does not define the exact rules for municipal finance, and this, due to lack of local resources became dependent on the central government. Municipal revenue can be divided into two groups:

1. Own income, which according to the Law on Municipalities should be primarily used for financing the needs of the municipality. Among the own revenue three subgroups can be recognized: local taxes and fees and revenue from municipal property; proportionate taxes; and other income/loans.

2. Subsidies from the state budget, which is intended primarily to reduce vertical fiscal imbalances, as well as to neutralize externalities. In many small and eco-

nominally weak municipalities they represent the only significant source of funding for their own activities [Mura and Gašparíková 2010, p. 157].

After the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993, the creation of a new administrative organization of the state began. In 1996, the existence of eight counties as a territorial and administrative division of the Slovak Republic was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic (the Act No.221/1996 Coll.). On July 4th, 2001 Parliament passed the Act. 302/2001 Coll. z. (The law of self-government of higher territorial units), which laid the foundations for the creation of the present eight self-governing regions.

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic (Act No. 460/1992 Coll.) was adopted on September 1st, 1992; and in November of the same year the Constitutional Act on the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (No. 542/1992 Coll.) was adopted. A new Constitution through the freedom of association guaranteed the existence of interest self-governance (the right to the self-determination of its own affairs, therefore it can also be entrusted to bodies which combine a common interest) [Mura et al. 2013, p. 43].

The National Agency for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (NARMSP) was founded in 1993 by a joint initiative of the European Union and the Government of the Slovak Republic [Kubrická 2012, p. 302]. The Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bratislava was established by the Act No. 9/1992 Coll. on the Chamber of Commerce, and created eight regional chambers in the higher territorial units of the Slovak Republic.

### **The example of the Košice Self-governing Region of the Slovak Republic**

The Košice Self-governing Region is located in the south-eastern part of the Slovak Republic and is considered to be its second largest region. Despite the successful economic transformation and its comparative advantages, the region still has one of the highest unemployment rates in the Slovak Republic. The SME sector in the region represents over 99% of all enterprises (micro enterprises 88,5%; small enterprises 9,5%; and medium enterprises 0,4%). When counting the total regional number of SMEs, the Košice Self-governing Region reached 5th (out of 8) position only. The region is also characterized by the lowest number of freelancers (physical entities) in Slovakia [KSK 2013].

Over 80% of the enterprises are private domestic property, most enterprises with foreign investment were created in new industrial parks or industrial zones.

A significant part of the economic activity and support in the area, except the support from the self-governing region itself, is represented by the Košice Regional Chamber of the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SOPK), and the numerous non-profit organizations with interest of self-government, including the support and annual reports of the National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises.

The last decade was characterised by changes in the economic structure for the benefit of services, automotive, electro-technical, chemical and IT businesses, including those with higher demand for technology and quality of human resources and significant internationalization, resulting in the present state containing 37,7% of legal entities focused on trade activities, 22,2% in trade services and 9,6% in industry.

**Table 3.** Entrepreneurial support in the Košice Self-governing Region in the Slovak Republic in 2008-2012

Number in year:	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Actions supporting					
Seminars / Participants <sup>a</sup>	-	25	31	29	25
	-	440	567	538	459
Supporting Projects <sup>a</sup>	4	1	3	3	2
Publications and Reports <sup>a</sup>	16	16	17	16	17
Meetings and Missions <sup>a</sup>	10	3	7	6	7
Expositions <sup>a</sup>	5	4	2	2	1
Number of business entities <sup>b</sup>	56.696	56.155	57.501	57.014	56.683
Information <sup>c</sup>	79	113	69	18	-
Consultation <sup>c</sup>	82	45	9	4	-
Business Plans <sup>c</sup>	11	3	0	17	-
Training (participants) <sup>c</sup>	29	201	196	73	-

Source: own processing based on the data from <sup>a</sup>“Annual Reports of the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry“ (2009-2012); <sup>b</sup>data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2008-2012); and <sup>c</sup>“Reports on the state of SMEs and their support in Slovakia“ of the National Agency for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (2008-2011).

In 2008, the city of Košice, as the first one in Slovakia, was awarded the prestigious title of European Capital of Culture 2013, with a positive impact on the transformation of its cultural, social and economic environment.

## 6. Summary

In spite of the differences in the basis of their functioning, especially on legal grounds and the underlying principles of financing, the expectations of entrepreneurs towards the self-government bodies, to which they belong are undoubtedly similar. They expect individual support, adapted for the industry and the profile of the enterprise, and information based on the knowledge given by competent persons in an accessible manner.

The aim of the economic self-government is also shared – whether it in Poland, whether it in Germany or Slovakia – i.e. active supporting of the enterprises development.

Undoubtedly, the compulsory financing of economic self-government which we can observe in Germany, facilitates undertaking actions by this self-government. The prospect of a regular income allows planning long-term actions as well as ensuring their continuity. However, the experiences such countries as Poland or Slovakia show that the discontinuity of financing does not create an obstacle to the functioning of self-government. Actions directed to the cooperation, partnership and independent finding of external financing certainly require a bigger effort from the self-government but also greater commitment to the conducted actions. Above all, the results achieved by countries which joined the European Union in 2004 should aim at reaching the level of good practices of partners from Western Europe, directed at the actual needs of entrepreneurs' actions.

Projects advantageous for all countries are those in which both the knowledge and the experience of one, as well as of the other self-government bodies, are being used for passing on the tried and tested ways of acting in order to raise the effectiveness of the action taken, and hence for showing entrepreneurs ways to become really known on the market.

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## **PARTYCYPACJA SAMORZĄDU GOSPODARCZEGO W PROCESIE WSPIERANIA PRZEDSIĘBIORCZOŚCI – ANALIZA PRZYPADKU POLSKI, NIEMIEC I SŁOWACJI**

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wniosków dla przyszłych działań samorządowych w zakresie wspierania przedsiębiorczości, ponieważ działania takie wpisują się i wpisywać będą w strategię rozwoju regionów, państw oraz całej Wspólnoty.

**Słowa kluczowe:** samorząd gospodarczy, przedsiębiorczość, Polska, Niemcy, Słowacja, wspieranie przedsiębiorczości.