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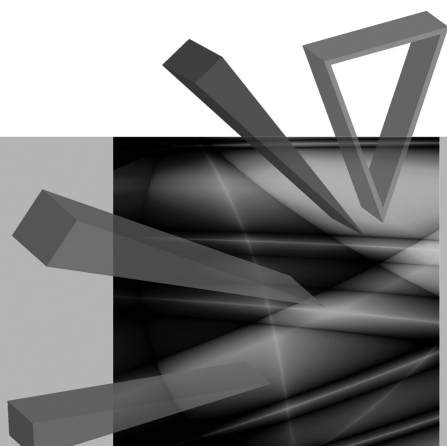
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Integracja i kryzysy na lokalnych i globalnych rynkach we współczesnym świecie

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Spis treści

Wstęp	11
Franciszek Adamczuk , Współpraca gospodarcza na pograniczu polsko-czeskim – aspekty przestrzenne i instytucjonalne.....	13
Marzena Adamczyk , Rola Rady Stabilności Finansowej w zapobieganiu kryzysom finansowym.....	24
Eric Ambukita , Bezpośrednie inwestycje zagraniczne w województwie wielkopolskim	33
Anna Barwińska-Małajowicz , Absolwenci szkół wyższych w kontekście (nie)dostosowania oferty edukacyjnej do potrzeb pracodawców. Analiza porównawcza na przykładzie wybranych regionów w Polsce i Niemczech	43
Zbigniew Bentyn , Kryzys polityczny i jego logistyczne konsekwencje dla międzynarodowej sieci dostaw	54
Zbigniew Binek , Minimalizacja kosztów wprowadzenia euro w Polsce – doświadczenia krajów wchodzących do Unii Europejskiej w 2004 roku oraz rozwiązania własne	64
Joanna Bogolębska , Doświadczenia gospodarki światowej ze stanami globalnych nierównowag płatniczych w kontekście ich kryzysogenności.....	74
Jarosław Brach , Pozycja polskich międzynarodowych drogowych przewoźników ładunków na europejskim rynku drogowego międzynarodowego transportu towarowego – przyczyny sukcesu	85
Magdalena Broszkiewicz , Kreowanie wartości dla akcjonariuszy jako instrument rozwoju i kształtowania atrakcyjności inwestycyjnej współczesnych rynków kapitałowych.....	105
Dominika Brzęczek-Nester , Pozycja konkurencyjna polskiego przetwórstwa przemysłowego w kontekście wyników handlu zagranicznego w latach 2006-2011	115
Katarzyna Brzozowska , Wpływ kryzysu finansowego na otoczenie regulacyjne biznesu we Włoszech	125
Katarzyna Bujan , <i>Cash pooling</i> jako instrument zarządzania płynnością finansową w transnarodowych korporacjach	135
Ignacy H. Chrzanowski , NAFTA jako alternatywna forma integracji gospodarczej. Z perspektywy krajów postkomunistycznych	144
Anna Chrzęściewska , Determinanty rozwoju bezpośrednich inwestycji zagranicznych w Indiach.....	157
Anna Czech , Kryzysy energetyczne we współczesnym świecie	167
Wioletta Czemieli-Grzybowska , Źródła finansowania małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw w Europie w warunkach kryzysu	175

Katarzyna Czerewacz-Filipowicz , Polityka antykryzysowa Federacji Rosyjskiej na obszarze Euroazjatyckiej Wspólnoty Gospodarczej	184
Małgorzata Czermińska , Swobody rynku wewnętrznego oraz wspólna polityka konkurencji Unii Europejskiej a konkurencyjność przedsiębiorstw...	195
Małgorzata Domiter , Znaczenie globalnych reguł prowadzenia wymiany handlowej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem KNU dla krajów rozwijających się	208
Jerzy Dudziński , Uwagi o działalności inwestorów finansowych na rynkach towarowych.....	223
Bartosz Fortuński , Czy energetyka światowa integruje się z założeniami polityki energetycznej Unii Europejskiej?.....	234
Elżbieta Golemska , Nowe metody zarządzania logistyką międzynarodową w procesie umiędzynarodawiania polskich przedsiębiorstw	244
Eugeniusz Gostomski , Proces tworzenia unii bankowej w krajach Eurolandu	256
Małgorzata Graćik-Zajackowski , <i>Fair trade</i> : szansa czy zagrożenie dla rozwoju krajów Południa?	267
Tomasz Gutowski , Bezpośrednie inwestycje zagraniczne jako główny sposób inwestowania korporacji transnarodowych w Polsce	277
Marcin Haberla, Sebastian Bobowski , Od uniwersytetu średniowiecznego do uniwersytetu trzeciej generacji	287
Rafał Hryniewiecki , Dyplomacja energetyczna – pomiędzy teorią a praktyką	298
Małgorzata Janicka , Liberalizacja przepływów kapitałowych wobec ewolucji międzynarodowego systemu walutowego	308
Anna H. Jankowiak , Japoński model komunikacji biznesowej a otwarcie japońskiej gospodarki na globalizację	319
Dorota Jankowska, Agnieszka Majka , Zmiany na lokalnych rynkach pracy województwa podkarpackiego w aspekcie przeobrażeń trójsektorowej struktury zatrudnienia	327
Dorota Jarema , Odpowiedź ASEM na światowy kryzys finansowy	337
Bohdan Jeliński , Fundamentalne konsekwencje kryzysu gospodarki globalnej	346
Ewa Klima, Magdalena Rosińska-Bukowska , Kryzys finansowy 2008 – analiza percepcji kryzysu przez społeczeństwo europejskie	357
Barbara Klimas , Kryzys państwa opiekuńczego i trudności w ograniczaniu społecznych funkcji państwa	368
Artur Klimek , Napływ bezpośrednich inwestycji zagranicznych z krajów wschodzących do Polski	378
Karolina Klupś , Przepływy bezpośrednich inwestycji zagranicznych na Ukrainie oraz ukraińskich inwestycji zagranicznych w latach 2004-2013	388
Agnieszka Kłysik-Uryszek , Wpływ kryzysu na aktywność międzynarodową przedsiębiorstw polskich	400
Agnieszka Konopelko , Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec krajów regionu Kaukazu Południowego w kontekście globalnego kryzysu finansowego ..	410

Radosław Koszewski , Wykorzystanie zbiorów rozmytych w selekcji kandydatów do aliansu	421
Patrycja Krawczyk , Wpływ kryzysu rynków finansowych i bankowych w XXI wieku na ocenę ratingową wybranych państw	429
Anetta Kuna-Marszałek , Budowa powiązań nauki z biznesem – przegląd badań.....	439
Jarosław Kuśpit , Efekty ekonomiczne Europejskiej Polityki Sąsiedztwa Unii Europejskiej wobec państw Europy Wschodniej w okresie kryzysu gospodarczego	450
Aleksandra Kuźmińska-Haberla , Kraj pochodzenia produktu we współczesnej gospodarce.....	459
Małgorzata Stefania Lewandowska, Tomasz Gołębiowski , Innowacyjność a konkurencyjność międzynarodowa polskich przedsiębiorstw przemysłowych. Wyniki badań.....	469
Marek Maciejewski , Wiarygodność kredytowa państw w obliczu kryzysu finansów publicznych	480
Agnieszka Majka , Zróżnicowanie atrakcyjności inwestycyjnej powiatów województwa podkarpackiego.....	493
Dominika Malchar-Michalska , Międzynarodowy handel zbożem w krajach o niskim dochodzie i deficycie żywnościowym w obliczu światowego wzrostu cen żywności w latach 2006-2011	502
Arkadiusz Malkowski , Rola zarządzania strategicznego w budowaniu konkurencyjnego regionu transgranicznego na przykładzie Programu Operacyjnego Współpracy Transgranicznej Republika Czeska – Rzeczpospolita Polska 2007-2013	513
Arkadiusz Malkowski, Agnieszka Malkowska , Creating a competitive region on the example of Pomerania Euroregion	523
Witold Małachowski , Polityka antykryzysowa Niemiec a integracja europejska	533
Jakub Marszałek , Emisja obligacji zamiennych w warunkach światowego kryzysu finansowego	545
Grzegorz Mazur , Nowy kształt powszechnego systemu preferencji celnych Unii Europejskiej	555
Lidia Mesjasz , Doświadczenia historyczne w zakresie niewypłacalności państw – wnioski dla współczesnej polityki gospodarczej.....	566
Joanna Michalczyk , Główne przesłanki bezpieczeństwa żywnościowego Polski i próba jego pomiaru.....	577
Wawrzyniec Michalczyk , Znaczenie wymiany wewnątrzgałęziowej w polskim handlu zagranicznym towarami rolno-spożywczymi	592
Bartosz Michalski , Zaawansowanie technologiczne polskiego eksportu w pierwszej dekadzie XXI wieku	607

Tomasz Michałowski , Kryzys zadłużeniowy w strefie euro a trwałość relacji kursowej euro/frank CFA.....	619
Ewa Mińska-Struzik , Bariery rozwoju eksportu w polskich przedsiębiorstwach wysokiej techniki – wyniki badań własnych	630

Summaries

Franciszek Adameczuk , Economic cooperation in Polish-Czech border – spatial and institutional aspects.....	23
Marzena Adamczyk , The role of Financial Stability Board in preventing financial crises	32
Eric Ambukita , Foreign direct investment in Wielkopolska Voivodeship	42
Anna Barwińska-Małajowicz , High schools graduates in the context of (not) adjusting of educational offer to the employer expectations. Comparative analysis on the example of chosen regions in Poland and Germany	53
Zbigniew Bentyn , The political crisis and its logistic implications for international supply network	63
Zbigniew Binek , Minimizing the costs of introduction of euro in Poland – experience of countries entering the European Union in 2004 and own solutions.....	72
Joanna Bogolebska , The experience of global economy with global imbalances as a crisis-breeding element.....	84
Jarosław Brach , The position of Polish international road freight carriers on the European market of international road freight hauling – reasons behind the success	104
Magdalena Broszkiewicz , Creating value for shareholders as an instrument of growth and development of the investment attractiveness of modern capital markets.....	114
Dominika Brzęczek-Nester , Competitive position of Polish manufacturing in the context of foreign trade performance in the period 2006-2011	124
Katarzyna Brzozowska , The impact of financial crisis on the regulation environment in Italy	134
Katarzyna Bujan , <i>Cash pooling</i> as a tool for liquidity management in transnational corporations	143
Ignacy H. Chrzanowski , NAFTA as an alternative form of economic integration. From the perspective of the post-communist countries.....	156
Anna Chrzęściewska , Determinants of foreign direct investment development in India.....	166
Anna Czech , Energy crises in contemporary world.....	174
Wioletta Czemieli-Grzybowska , Sources of financing small and medium enterprises in Europe during the crisis	183
Katarzyna Czerewacz-Filipowicz , Anti-crisis policy of the Russian Federation in the area of the Eurasian Economic Community	194

Małgorzata Czerwińska , Freedom of the internal market and the common EU competition policy and competitiveness of companies.....	207
Małgorzata Domiter , The importance of global trading rules with special regard to the Most Favoured Nation clause for developing countries.....	222
Jerzy Dudziński , Remarks on financial investors' engagement on commodity markets.....	233
Bartosz Fortuński , Is the global energy integrates with EU energy policy objectives?	243
Elżbieta Golemska , New methods of logistics management in the internationalization of Polish firms.....	255
Eugeniusz Gostomski , The process of creating the banking union in the eurozone	266
Małgorzata Grącik-Zajaczkowski , Fair trade: an opportunity or a threat for the development of the South?	276
Tomasz Gutowski , Foreign direct investments as the main way of transnational corporations' investments in Poland.....	286
Marcin Haberla, Sebastian Bobowski , From the medieval university to the university of the third generation.....	297
Rafał Hryniewiecki , Energy diplomacy – theoretical framework and practical applications	307
Małgorzata Janicka , The liberalization of capital flows in the presence of the evolution of the international monetary system.....	318
Anna H. Jankowiak , Japanese business communication model and the opening of the Japanese economy to the process of globalization	327
Dorota Jankowska, Agnieszka Majka , Changes on the local labor markets of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in terms of the transformation of the three-sector structure of employment.....	336
Dorota Jarema , ASEM response to the global financial crisis	345
Bohdan Jeliński , Main consequences of global economy crisis	356
Ewa Klima, Magdalena Rosińska-Bukowska , The crisis of 2008 – analysis of European society's perception of the phenomenon.....	367
Barbara Klimas , Crisis of the welfare state and difficulties in limiting the social functions of the state.....	377
Artur Klimek , Inflows of foreign direct investment from emerging economies to Poland.....	387
Karolina Klupś , Foreign direct investment in Ukraine and the Ukrainian foreign investment flows in the years 2004-2013	399
Agnieszka Kłysik-Uryszek , Impact of economic crisis on Polish outward FDI	409
Agnieszka Konopelko , The European Union policy towards the countries of the South Caucasus region in the context of the global financial crisis.....	420
Radosław Koszewski , The use of fuzzy sets in the selection of candidates to an alliance	428

Patrycja Krawczyk , Impact of the crisis on financial and banking markets in the 21 st century on the rating of selected countries.....	438
Anetta Kuna-Marszałek , Building cooperation between science and business – literature review	449
Jarosław Kuśpit , Economic effects of the European Neighborhood Policy of the European Union towards the countries of Eastern Europe during the economic crisis	458
Aleksandra Kuźmińska-Haberla , Country of origin of a product in the modern economy	468
Małgorzata Stefania Lewandowska, Tomasz Gołębiowski , Innovativeness and international competitiveness of Polish industry. Research outcomes	479
Marek Maciejewski , The reliability of the states in the face of public finance crisis	492
Agnieszka Majka , Diversification of investment attractiveness of counties in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship.....	501
Dominika Malchar-Michalska , International cereal trade in Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries in the context of the world food price surge 2006-2011 ..	512
Arkadiusz Malkowski , Strategic management in building the competitive region on the example of Cross-border Co-operation Operational Programme of the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic 2007-2013....	522
Arkadiusz Malkowski, Agnieszka Malkowska , Budowa konkurencyjnego regionu na przykładzie Euroregionu Pomerania.....	532
Witold Malachowski , Anti-crisis policy of Germany and European integration	544
Jakub Marszałek , Convertible bonds issuance in the time of world financial crisis	554
Grzegorz Mazur , A new shape of the Generalised System of Preferences of the European Union	565
Lidia Mesjasz , State insolvency – historical experience and lessons for current economic policy.....	576
Joanna Michalczyk , Main determinants of Poland’s food security and an attempt of its measuring	591
Wawrzyniec Michalczyk , The importance of intra-industry exchange in Polish foreign trade in agri-food products	606
Bartosz Michalski , Technological advancement of Polish exports in the first decade of the 21 st century	618
Tomasz Michalowski , Debt crisis in the eurozone and the sustainability of the euro/CFA franc rate.....	629
Ewa Mińska-Struzik , Barriers for exporting activities in Polish high-tech enterprises – own study results	640

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CREATING A COMPETITIVE REGION ON THE EXAMPLE OF POMERANIA EUROREGION

Summary: Considerations presented in this paper are a contribution to the discussion on the conception of creating a competitive euroregion and the assessment of the strategies implemented to create competitiveness of Pomerania Euroregion. Pomerania Euroregion, as a competitive cross-border region, is a spatial unit based on the potential of three regions that form it. The euroregion's competitive product is a combination of material and human resources, structural and infrastructural factors, responding to the needs of the internal and external consumer. Creating such a product in the border areas requires strategic planning and consistency in the implementation of the objectives.

Keywords: local development, euroregion, competitiveness.

1. Introduction

Processes connected with globalization and regional integration create new challenges for the border regions. This is due to the fact that the integration processes in the contemporary economy have an increasing influence on the competition between border regions.

The border regions, for years treated as peripheral and declining, are currently becoming areas of a more and more robust economic growth. This does not, however, apply to each and every border region. Cross-border location, communication routes and proximity of foreign markets do not always constitute factors of accelerated development. Acquisition of new investors or development of the infrastructure conducive to investments result from actions undertaken within particular strategic programs realized by the border regions.

In a globalizing world, it is essential to indicate the actions of local governments which support local development and create a positive image of the border regions. This change in perception of the border regions should indicate that these regions can be competitive and innovative. Observation of the development of the border

regions show that in these actions, tools are used which are provided by territorial marketing. Marketing is understood as the totality of coordinated actions undertaken by local, regional or national subjects, aiming at creating exchange and interaction processes through recognition, formation and fulfillment of the needs and desires of the residents.¹ It is also crucial that those actions should form a part of the strategies of local development.

The literature devoted to the issues of local and regional development is exceptionally rich. The concept of regional development is frequently defined. According to R. Broł², three definitions authored by J. Szlachta³, T. Kudłacz⁴ and A. Klasik⁵ deserve special recognition. According to the aforementioned authors, regional development should be defined as:

- Systematic improvement of competitiveness of business operators and of the welfare of the inhabitants, as well as the increase in economic potential of the regions, contributing to the socio-economic development of the state;
- Permanent increase in the standard of living of the inhabitants and of the economic potential at the level of a given territorial unit;
- Permanent growth of three elements: the economic potential of the regions, their competitive power, and the welfare and standard of living of the residents in the context of permanent growth contributing to the development of the entire community.

Strategic planning within the regions is the result of competition between regions. It can be defined as systemic activity promoting long-term development of the region through a rational allocation of resources, or as a document specifying the procedures that need to be implemented in order to achieve common goals.⁶ Development based on strategic plans has a substantial impact on the quality of regional management, which results in the economic growth and competitiveness of the regions.

The aim of the following study is to indicate the changes in perception of the border regions in the context of globalization and the ever-growing interregional

¹ A. Szromik, *Marketing terytorialny – geneza, rynki docelowe i podmioty oddziaływania*, [in:] *Marketing terytorialny. Strategiczne wyzwania dla miast i regionów*, ed. T. Domański, Centrum Badań i Studiów Francuskich, Instytut Studiów Międzynarodowych, Uniwersytet Łódzki, Łódź 1997, p. 36.

² R. Broł, *Rozwój regionalny jako kategoria ekonomiczna*, [in:] *Metody oceny rozwoju regionalnego*, ed. D. Strahl, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej im. O. Langego, Wrocław 2006.

³ J. Szlachta, *Główne problemy polityki rozwoju regionalnego Polski na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, [in:] *Strategiczne wyzwania dla polityki rozwoju regionalnego Polski*, Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, Warszawa 1996.

⁴ T. Kudłacz, *Programowanie rozwoju regionalnego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1999.

⁵ A. Klasik, *Koncepcje rozwoju regionalnego Polski na tle zróżnicowań regionalnych*, Transcript of the seminar titled "Rozwój regionalny jako element integracji europejskiej" [Regional development as an element of European integration], Sejm RP, 22 April 1997.

⁶ M. Kozak, A. Pyszkowski, R. Szewczyk, *Słownik Rozwoju Regionalnego*, Polska Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego, Warszawa 2001, p. 56.

competitiveness. The creation of a competitive euroregion is possible due to strategic planning, aimed at creating conditions for the development of innovative economic ventures and for improvement in the quality of life of the inhabitants. The article contains the author's reflections on creating a competitive border region on the example of Pomerania Euroregion.

2. The peripherality of the border region

Most of the currently functioning borders are formations artificially separating territorial units and local communities. They are usually created as a result of disputes and disagreements between countries, which has not been conducive to the development of the border regions. To this day, it is far easier to indicate those borders which are sources of conflicts and not areas of cooperation and regional development. At the same time, it should be mentioned that thanks to decisions made at various levels and aimed at stimulating the competitiveness of the region, the peripheral region – including the border region – may become a region which is economically developed.⁷ It is reflected in the results of questionnaire surveys conducted among the inhabitants of the Polish-German border region. The research conducted by the author indicates that 80% of the respondents believe that euroregions should contribute to the increase in competitiveness of the border region. At the same time, less than 30% state that the border region is a competitive region. 46% of the interviewees describe the border region's competitiveness as low. The respondents believe that creating strategic plans of developing the regions' competitiveness is a very important element of regional management.⁸

The problem of peripherality derives from the fact that the appearance of certain regional inequalities is an immanent feature of every economic system.⁹ The peripheries are defined as areas located away from economic centers and not easily accessible in terms of communication.¹⁰ The problem of peripherality of border regions was noticed and included in The Lisbon Strategy, which envisages the initiation of actions with a view to stimulating the economically lagging regions and minimizing their peripherality.

⁷ More on this topic can be found in A. Malkowski, A. Malkowska, *Konkurencyjność obszarów peryferyjnych na przykładzie pogranicza polsko-niemieckiego*, "Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development" 2011, no. 2 (20), p. 55-63.

⁸ The research was conducted in 2012 on a group of one hundred randomly selected persons, inhabitants of the Polish-German border region.

⁹ A. Olechnicka, *Regiony peryferyjne w gospodarce informacyjnej*, Centrum Europejskich Studiów Regionalnych i Lokalnych UW, Wydawnictwo Naukowe "Scholar", Warszawa 2004, p. 54. See also: A. Malkowski, *Regiony przygraniczne, jako terytoria peryferyjne na przykładzie wschodniego i zachodniego pogranicza*, [in:] *Problemy regionalizacji i globalizacji*, eds. J. Rymarczyk, M. Domiter, W. Michalczyk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego, Wrocław 2011, p. 364-372.

¹⁰ B. Goodball, *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, Penguin, London 1987, quoted in: T.G. Grosse, *Wybrane koncepcje teoretyczne i doświadczenia praktyczne dotyczące rozwoju regionów peryferyjnych*, "Studia Regionalne i Lokalne" 2007, 1 (27), p. 27.

The new concept of strategic development of the EU – Europe 2020 – also points to efforts made to achieve a higher economic growth and creating new workplaces by overcoming the barriers in cross-border activity, as well as increasing network connections within these areas. In accordance with this approach, overcoming peripherality is to be achieved through using the endogenic potential of the region and thanks to the possibilities offered by a thoughtful regional policy at the level of the entire European Community. Numerous problems which have accumulated in the border regions are causing the cross-border cooperation to encounter many obstacles. The change in thinking about the border regions requires distinguishing those problems and taking joint action against them. Only in the case of joint action is there a chance for effective and quick overcoming of the peripherality of border regions. This cross-border cooperation may be realized in the following areas:

- economic cooperation,
- political cooperation,
- cultural cooperation,
- social cooperation.

The multifaceted nature of the cooperation indicates that it is often essential to give a more formal nature to the spontaneous manifestations of cross-border contacts. This enables a strategic approach to managing the development of border regions. It allows for a better use of the potential of these areas and leads to the emergence of synergy in actions undertaken on both sides of the border. One of the possible forms of such cooperation which contributes to creating competitiveness of a border region is a euroregion.

3. Euroregional competitiveness

The analysis of contemporary conceptions of regional cooperation shows that cooperation is more and more often perceived as an important element in the strategy of creating the competitiveness of regions, not only on a regional, but also on an international scale. The idea of cooperation between local and regional communities, transgressing the borders of one state, was born in Western Europe in the 1950s. It was facilitated by the political changes taking place in Europe, including especially the processes of political and economic integration. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the process was initiated after 1989. After a 50-year period of political and economic isolation, in the early 1990s a dynamic development of cross-border cooperation was initiated on the Western border of Poland. The experience and results of this cooperation were subsequently implemented in other border regions, although the forms of cooperation differed in their nature. In Poland, the increased intensity of cooperation between regions divided by a border was possible thanks to an ongoing process of the regions' transition to independence and the development of the civil society. In the initial period, the cooperation often took a form of spontaneous civil initiatives, which was clearly regulated by the law. It was only

the administrative reform that permanently introduced cooperation with foreign partners into the canon of actions undertaken by the local governments. Since 1999, it is the responsibility of Marshal offices to prepare and adopt “the priorities in the foreign policy of the province.”¹¹

The development of international cooperation of the Polish region has been very dynamic in the last years, and an accelerated process of institutionalizing that cooperation can also be observed. The idea of creating euroregions in Europe as a form of most advanced cross-border cooperation emerged along with the rise of the integration tendencies in Europe after WWII.¹² The name “euroregion” derives from “Euro-regio,” the oldest initiative of cross-border cooperation. It was established in 1958 within the area of the Dutch-German border, between the rivers Rhine, Ems and IJssel. It is difficult to conclude unambiguously what the euroregion is. According to one definition, it is a geographical area encompassing bordering parts of two or more countries which are willing to cooperate and to coordinate the actions of local communities in various areas of activity.¹³ It is often noted that euroregions are institutions which, in a practical manner, prepare societies divided by borders for entering into a dialogue and cooperation in many areas. The aim of the functioning euroregions is the development of economic cooperation, expansion of the cross-border infrastructure, cultural activity, cooperation in the field of ecology. Their primary goal is strengthening of neighborly relation between the border communities. Euroregions are characterized by a relatively high level of institutionalization which consists in establishing bodies and cross-border structures of cooperation in the form of councils, secretariats and working groups. They may be formed on the initiative of associations of municipalities and are then called local government euroregions, or they can be initiated by representative bodies of state authority at the provincial level, in cooperation with the central government.¹⁴ Euroregions have played a substantial role in the transformation of the border areas. Thanks to this form of cooperation, it was possible to develop joint businesses in the borderlands. The standards of living of the inhabitants are improving, the economy is growing, and new, solid foundations for the development of regional competitiveness are created.

Euroregional competitiveness is a feature of a given cross-border unit which defines its ability to constantly create conditions for permanent and balanced socio-economic development in a competitive environment. Interpreted in this way, competitiveness comes down to offering – on a regional level – a better product than the

¹¹ Act dated 5 June 1998 on provincial government (Journal of Laws no. 91, 1998, item 576 as amended).

¹² M. Greta, *Euroregiony a integracja europejska. Wnioski dla Polski*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2003, p. 73-74.

¹³ *Mały słownik stosunków międzynarodowych*, Warszawa 1996, p. 37.

¹⁴ G. Ślusarz, *Czynniki rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego – aspekty teoretyczne*, [in:] *Regionalne uwarunkowania rozwoju wiejskich obszarów przygranicznych Polski i Ukrainy*, eds. A. Czudec, G. Ślusarz, PAUCI, Państwowy Uniwersytet Rolniczy we Lwowie-Dublanach, Rzeszów 2003, p. 21.

one offered by another region. Competitive euroregions are created via a network of connections between companies, research institutions, and public and local administration from different countries. Euroregional competitiveness is created on the basis of comparative advantage. This advantage comes from the possession of concrete and very often unique resources, such as: natural resources, human resources, knowledge resources, innovativeness, the level of development of the social and technical infrastructure.

The resulting product of the euroregion's competitiveness can be a combination of its resources and a system of relations or network of connections applying to this area, with particular emphasis on the cross-border connections. It is special and complex in character. It consists of many singular elements which are complementary to one another. So understood, competitiveness is coherent with the basic definition of a product, suggested by P. Kotler: "a product is defined as anything that can be found on the market, attract attention, be purchased, used or consumed, while fulfilling needs and desires."¹⁵ A competitive product of the euroregion can be described as a combination of many factors, among which the following should be mentioned: innovative culture, the level of education at all levels, infrastructure, technological environment, the quality of business environment, the efficiency of government and self-government institutions, social structure and the job market, macro- and micro-economic conditions, the effectiveness of market solutions on regional level, natural environment. All these factors need to be considered within the cross-border context. The evaluation of the attractiveness of a given region's offer will be dependent on their quality and interactions between one another. The quality and potential of the product will condition the position of the territorial units forming the euroregion in the globalized and highly competitive economy.

4. The strategy of creating the competitiveness of Pomerania Euroregion

Transformation of border regions from peripheral into competitive requires strategic planning at the level of the entire European Union and the nation states, as well as on the various levels of territorial self-governments. Creating a competitive product of Pomerania Euroregion is a very essential task in a globalizing world. Therefore, while talking about competitive economy one should at the same time point to the complementary competitive economic environment. Euroregion may only be considered successful as long as it offers an attractive competitive product.

Creating a competitive product of Pomerania Euroregion in the internal and external environment is one of the most difficult tasks that need to be realized within the strategic management of the euroregion. The process is determined by many

¹⁵ P. Kotler, *Marketing. Analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie, kontrola*, Gebethner i Ska, Warszawa 1994, p. 399.

factors which need to be taken into account in the long run, and which will result in creating a more competitive regional product.

One of the elements of creating the competitive product of Pomerania Euroregion is the cross-border development strategy for Pomerania Euroregion 2007-2013. The strategic objectives for cross-border cooperation are oriented towards strengthening of competitiveness through supporting the transfer of knowledge and know-how, development of the cross-border enterprise, educational and vocational training and potentials of healthcare, integration of the cross-border job market, joint environmental management and reacting to common threats.¹⁶ Creators of the strategy assumed that the activity of the region should aim at opening the region to the world, further expansion of its functions and tasks in the southern Baltic Sea basin.

Constructing the competitiveness of the euroregion is based on the conscious use of its specificity. The area of activity included in the euroregion's strategy contains:

1. Development and modernization of the economy with particular emphasis on SME – development of tourism as a trademark of the region.

2. Support of science, technology, education and qualification improvement while intensifying multidisciplinary cooperation between the economy and the research facilities.

3. Cross-border development of the communication infrastructure and improvement in the regional transport links.

4. Preservation and restoration of natural wealth in the euroregion, improvement of environmental protection.

5. Diversification of rural development.

6. Further development of transnational coordination and regional cooperation in the social, cultural and technical domain.

An important component of creating regional competitiveness is expansion of the common economic area of the Oder, the region of the coast and the Bay of Szczecin while accounting for the metropolitan character of Berlin and Szczecin. Demographic development is of special importance for the sustainable development of the euroregion. Unfortunately, demographic changes affect the entire cross-border region. A drastic decline in population has an impact on performance and on the ability to function of many branches of the infrastructure, which influences the competitiveness. Forecasts for the West Pomerania Voivodeship say about population decline. In 2020, the voivodeship will have about 40,000 fewer inhabitants. The population of Szczecin is to be reduced by as much as 100,000 citizens. Consequently, there is an urgent need for action and for creating new, innovative solutions for the future dealing with the consequences of demographic changes. It is especially important due to the fact that the Szczecin agglomeration is considered to be the economic growth pole of the entire euroregion. Results of opinion polls show that

¹⁶ *Transgraniczna koncepcja działań rozwoju Euroregionu POMERANIA na lata 2007-2013 (EHK)*, online at: http://www.pomerania.net/download/EHK_POMERANIA_2007-13_Endfassung_PL, accessed: 01 March 2013.

the residents of the borderland notice the issue of their community's ageing. 73% of respondents rated the problem as "important" and "very important". At the same time, 47% said that the border region was not an attractive place for young people; only 12% said it was attractive.

The strategy of the entire cross-border region is based on the seaport, service and innovation potentials of Szczecin. The development of the food sector is also a vital element of the region's competitiveness; agriculture and food processing are still crucial to the euroregion's economy, also from the point of view of the region's tourism development. With very pronounced differences in the standards of living of the region's inhabitants, it is important to strive to equalize the level of this standard, and to achieve a higher level of social integration. It is possible in the case of combating social exclusion and poverty, and ensuring high participation of the residents in the functioning of the euroregion.

Sustainable development of the technical infrastructure is also a key element to the competitiveness of the border region. The infrastructure contributes to economic growth and has an important impact on the region's job market. The existing technical infrastructure is not adjusted to the potential of the region, which is located in the center of the European common market at the crossroads of the key European communication routes. The assessment of the quality of the technical infrastructure in the area showed that 68% of the respondents rated it is bad or passable, and only 24% gave it a good rating. This indicates that actions undertaken within the strategy should be considered as adequate.

5. Conclusions

Considerations presented in this paper are merely a contribution to the discussion on the conception of creating a competitive euroregion and the assessment of the strategies implemented to create competitiveness of Pomerania Euroregion. Overview of the literature indicates that the creation of competitiveness on the regional scale is a very important issue both domestically and in the European Union. The future of the regions in the globalized world economy is to a large extent dependent on the ability to create an integrated competitive product. Creating a competitive euroregion consists in achieving the set objectives by the border regions. In the case of Pomerania Euroregion, it is possible thanks to the use of unique resources, chances and opportunities, which helps to satisfy the existing and forthcoming needs of the inhabitants of this region.

Pomerania Euroregion, as a competitive cross-border region, is a spatial unit based on the potential of three regions that form it. The euroregion's competitive product is a combination of material and human resources, structural and infrastructural factors, responding to the needs of the internal and external consumer. Creating such a product in the border areas requires strategic planning and consistency in the implementation of the objectives. Beside the end results assumed within a strategy,

a change in perception of the borderline regions, which are now seen as declining, is equally important. The development of the euroregion's competitiveness is only possible once the potential investors and the region's inhabitants are convinced of high cross-border competitiveness. Creating competitiveness on the cross-border level is one of the priorities of strategic planning in Europe. Euroregions, including the Pomerania Euroregion, must use this opportunity to create conditions for creating internally coherent and externally integrated regional competitive products.

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BUDOWA KONKURENCYJNEGO REGIONU NA PRZYKŁADZIE EUROREGIONU POMERANIA

Streszczenie: Zaprezentowane w artykule rozważania są jedynie przyczynkiem do dyskusji nad koncepcją budowy konkurencyjnego euroregionu oraz oceny realizacji strategii budowy konkurencyjności Euroregionu Pomerania. Euroregion Pomerania jako transgraniczny region konkurencyjny to jednostka przestrzenna oparta na potencjale trzech regionów ją tworzących. Produkt konkurencyjny euroregionu jest kombinacją zasobów rzeczowych i ludzkich, czynników strukturalnych i infrastrukturalnych, odpowiadającą oczekiwaniom wewnętrznego i zewnętrznego odbiorcy. Stworzenie takiego produktu konkurencyjnego w obszarach przygranicznych wymaga strategicznego planowania i konsekwencji w realizacji przyjętych celów.

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój lokalny, euroregion, konkurencyjność.