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Introduction

The Department of Regional Economy at the Faculty of Economics, Management and Tourism of Wrocław University of Economics organized yet another scientific conference entitled: “Local and regional economy in theory and practice”. It was already the 23rd conference held on 23-25th September 2015 in “Chata za wsią” hotel in Mysłakowice near Jelenia Góra.

The conference was attended by the representatives of national and international scientific circles, regional and local government structures, and also other entities representing business practice and interested in the problems of local and regional economy, as well as PhD students. Over 80 participants of the conference arrived from over 30 national and foreign scientific centres and institutions to present papers and posters.

The subject matter of the conference covered the following areas: local and regional development, local and regional governance, application of quantitative methods in regional studies, partnership in local and regional development, directions of research in local and regional development, cooperation between academic centres and local government units.

The conference contributed to establishing more extensive and stronger relationships, created within the framework of the constructed platform for the exchange of scientific and practical experiences (the conference has been held cyclically since 1992) at the local, regional, national and international forum. The discussions were focused on the dissemination of research results, the exchange of experiences and the establishment of a discussion forum covering both theoretical and practical aspects of local and regional development. They also resulted in more extensive cooperation between academic centres, local government units as well as research and development centres, including the cross-border ones.

The conference is cyclically attended by the representatives of science from Poland and abroad. So far we have hosted e.g. the research workers representing academic centres from Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Slovakia and also the representatives of business practice, e.g. city presidents and mayors, village heads, county governors, presidents of regional development agencies or of local enterprises, etc.

As a result of the organized conference, the hereby publication presents the collection of thematically selected articles in English covering the broadly understood problems of local and regional economy. Its authors represent the following scientific centres: Warsaw School of Economics, University of Łódź, Gdańsk University of Technology, Koszalin University of Technology, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn and Wrocław University of Economics.

We are most grateful to the conference participants for the joint meeting and we do hope for further cooperation.

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THE ASSESSMENT OF DZIERŻONIÓW CITY SELECTED FUNCTIONAL AREAS IN THE EYES OF ENTREPRENEURS – A RESEARCH REPORT

OCENA WYBRANYCH OBSZARÓW FUNKCJONALNYCH MIASTA DZIERŻONIÓW W OCZACH PRZEDSIĘBIORCÓW – RAPORT Z BADAŃ

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Summary: Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs themselves represent, beyond doubt, one of the crucial components affecting the functioning of Dzierżoniów. It should be emphasized that all surveyed entrepreneurs are in favour of the city development. This phenomenon is based on the principle of mutual relationships, i.e. the better the city functioning, the better the conditions for running a business experienced by entrepreneurs; on the other hand, the more active are the entrepreneurs, the more they support the city development (e.g. jobs, taxes). The study is based on surveys commissioned by the Town Hall in Dzierżoniów over the period of July-August 2013, which also covered entrepreneurs (48 entities). The above-mentioned research process remained one of the stages in developing the new Strategy of Local Sustainable Development for Dzierżoniów in the period 2014-2020. The purpose of the study is to present and assess the selected functional areas of Dzierżoniów City (geographic environment, economy, technical infrastructure, social infrastructure, city management) based on the opinions of entrepreneurs.

Keywords: local development, entrepreneurship, Dzierżoniów, the strategy of territorial development.

Streszczenie: Przedsiębiorczość i sami przedsiębiorcy są niewątpliwie jednym z ważniejszych elementów funkcjonowania Dzierżoniowa. Należy podkreślić, że wszystkim badanym przedsiębiorcom zależy na rozwoju miasta. Zjawisko to opiera się na zasadzie wzajemnych powiązań – im lepiej funkcjonuje miasto, tym lepsze warunki do prowadzenia biznesu mają przedsiębiorcy, z drugiej strony, im przedsiębiorcy są bardziej aktywni, tym bardziej wspierają rozwój miasta (m.in. miejsca pracy, podatki). Opracowanie powstało w oparciu o badania ankietowe, które przeprowadzone zostały na zlecenie Urzędu Miasta w Dzierżoniowie w okresie lipiec-sierpień 2013 r. i objęły swoim zasięgiem m.in. przedsiębiorców (48 podmiotów). Wspomniany proces badawczy był jednym z etapów tworzenia nowej Strategii Zrównoważonego Rozwoju Lokalnego Dzierżoniowa na lata 2014-2020. Celem niniejsze-

go opracowania jest przedstawienie oraz ocena wybranych obszarów funkcjonalnych miasta Dzierżoniów (środowisko geograficzne, gospodarka, infrastruktura techniczna, infrastruktura społeczna, zarządzanie miastem) w opinii przedsiębiorców.

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój lokalny, przedsiębiorczość, Dzierżoniów, strategia rozwoju terytorialnego.

1. Introduction

The business sector, entrepreneurs, but also residents, NGOs, local authorities represent an important link and act as the creators of local development processes. The pro-developmental evaluations and suggestions, voiced by the above-mentioned communities, constitute a valuable source of information for the entities responsible and involved in the development of local space.

One of the key developmental scenarios for Dzierżoniów assumes an extensive implementation of the potential ingrained in local entrepreneurs. The scenario for the city of entrepreneurs seems a natural direction and a continuation of the development path which has been followed by Dzierżoniów so far [*Strategia... 2003; Strategia... 2009*]. The socio-economic growth, based on the developed service sector and SME sector activities should, to a great extent, minimize the diagnosed developmental problem, i.e. the relatively high level of unemployment in the city. Supporting entrepreneurs, cooperation and partnership shall result in a larger number of innovative projects and investments carried out in the city, which naturally ensure the competitive advantage against other territorial units. The perception of Dzierżoniów as the city of entrepreneurship will also influence its brand and facilitate the promotion processes of the city itself [Raszkowski 2014; Kotler et al. 1999] and the economic entities functioning in it. The continuous improvement of business customer service level and the quality of provided services in the area of local government administration remain the essential components of the discussed processes. Moreover, one of the strategic objectives, included in the city development strategy is supporting the sector of small and medium enterprises. Among the operational goals the following were listed: support for SME sector, support for the operations carried out by the business environment institutions, support for Dzierżoniów subzone of the Wałbrzych Special Economic Zone "INVEST-PARK", preparing and adapting investment areas, promoting the city investment offer.

The presented study was prepared based on the surveys commissioned by the Town Hall in Dzierżoniów in the period July-August 2013 and covered, based on a random selection, the following groups of respondents: city residents (442 persons), entrepreneurs (48 entities), NGO representatives (non-governmental organizations) (32 organizations), Town Hall employees, subordinate units and companies subsidized by Dzierżoniów City Municipality (203 persons). A survey questionnaire constituted the research tool. All interviewers participating in the

project were adequately trained in terms of organizational and substantial issues. The above-mentioned research process remained one on the stages in developing the new Sustainable Local Development Strategy of Dzierżoniów for the period 2014-2020 [Raszkowski 2013a]¹. The responses provided by Dzierżoniów's entrepreneurs will be analysed later in the study. Due to their limited scope the survey results will provide an illustrative material which can turn out helpful for the local authorities and other environments participating in the city development processes in order to undertake activities in response to the voiced demand and the existing problems. Furthermore, they can support establishing partnership relations, the consensus between local authorities and other local scene actors as a logical component of the local development strategy effective functioning [Blair, Carroll 2009; Klasik 2002].

Dzierżoniów City (urban commune) is located in south-eastern part of Lower Silesian region in Dzierżoniów County. The other territorial government units are as follows: Bielawa, Pieszyce, Piława Górna (urban commune), Niemcza (urban-rural commune), Dzierżoniów, Łagiewniki (rural commune). The city is situated in Dzierżoniów Valley, upon the Piława River, at the distance of approx. 60 km from Wrocław, the capital of Lower Silesia region. Nearby Dzierżoniów there are the Owl Mountains, Kiełczyńskie Hills and Ślęza Massif, which altogether result in higher tourist potential of the city. Dzierżoniów municipality is adjacent to the municipalities of Pieszyce, Bielawa and the rural commune of Dzierżoniów. The city covers the area of 20.07 km². In terms of its transport system it can be assumed that the city is relatively well connected with larger urban centres in the region (Wrocław, Wałbrzych, Świdnica) and with A4 motorway. Dzierżoniów is also the largest city in the county, the seat of the Town Hall, the Rural Commune Office of Dzierżoniów and the County Office. It plays the role of a natural administration and service centre in a local and sub-regional (county) scale. The number of recorded permanent residents, as at 1st January 2014, amounted to 33,372 residents [Raszkowski 2013b; Raszkowski 2013c].

The purpose of this study is to present and evaluate the selected functional areas of Dzierżoniów City (geographical environment, economy, technical infrastructure, social infrastructure, city governance) in the opinion of entrepreneurs. Additionally, the article provides both conclusions and recommendations.

2. The results and analysis of survey studies

The presented results remain the component of a report constituting an integral part of Sustainable Local Development Strategy of Dzierżoniów for the period 2014-2020. The information collected in the report, apart from providing support for the

¹ Detailed information regarding the analysis of respondents' structure in particular groups (residents, entrepreneurs, NGO representatives, Town Hall employees) and survey questionnaires are provided in the study: [Raszkowski 2013a].

process of the city strategy development, also presents the knowledge compendium about the developmental preferences and the assessment of the city condition in the eyes of e.g. entrepreneurs. In terms of methodological issues, if in some questions the responses do not sum up to 100%, it means that a part of respondents have not provided all answers. These cases are sporadic and do not have an impact on the overall results and conclusions to be put forward on their basis.

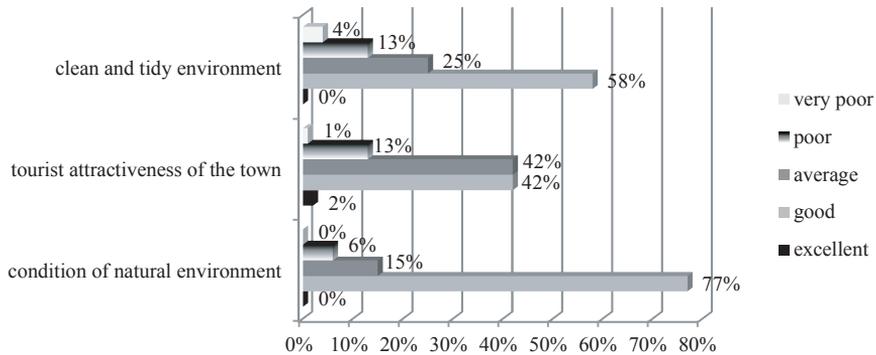


Figure 1. Geographical environment – evaluation of functional area

Source: author's compilation based on the conducted surveys.

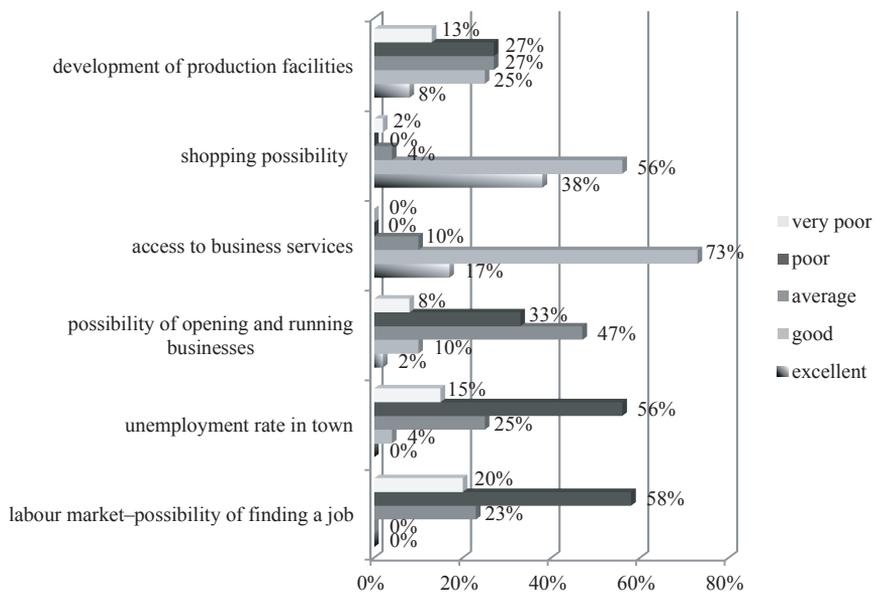


Figure 2. Economy – evaluation of functional area

Source: author's compilation based on the conducted surveys.

Supporting entrepreneurship is a part of an effective local space management process. Local authorities frequently emphasize the significance of this sphere for the city functioning and its development. In this context it is absolutely clear that all surveyed entrepreneurs do care about the city development. This phenomenon can be based on the principle of mutual relationships. Better functioning and development of the city is manifested by better conditions for running a business. In turn, active entrepreneurs support the city development (e.g. jobs offered, taxes paid). Furthermore, high percentage of entrepreneurs claims that Dzierżoniów has developed in the recent years.

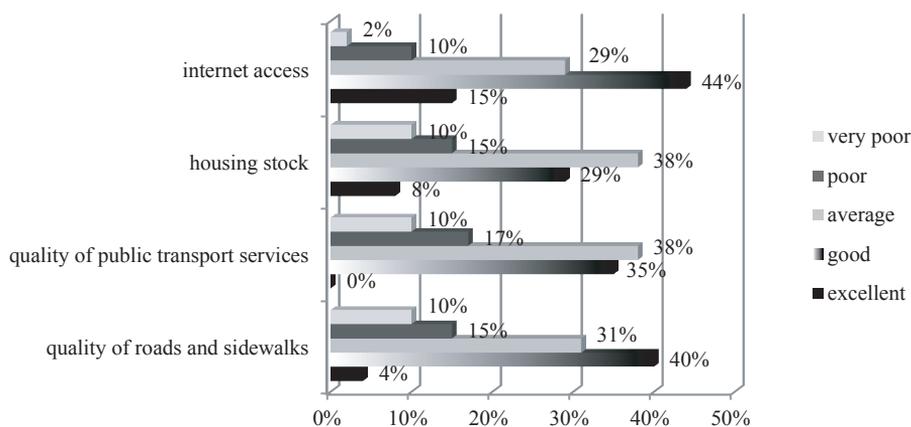


Figure 3. Technical infrastructure – evaluation of functional area

Source: author's compilation based on the conducted surveys.

In terms of the geographical environment functional area the entrepreneurs evaluated the condition of natural environment as best (77% positive indications) and also cleanliness and order in the city (58%). Tourism oriented values offered by the city also received a relatively positive evaluation from the entrepreneurs (44% positive indications against 14% negative ones).

In the context of the city economy assessment, so important for entrepreneurs, the possibilities for doing shopping were very highly evaluated (94% positive indications), as well as the access to useful services in the city (90%). Local job market and unemployment rate, 78% and 71% negative indications respectively, were evaluated by the business sphere representatives as definitely the worst. It is quite interesting since these are the entrepreneurs themselves who co-create such indicators. The development of manufacturing plants in the city received 33% positive indications against 40% negative ones. As far as the possibility of opening and running a business is concerned, the respective indications were 12% and 41%.

The strongest component of the city technical infrastructure in the opinion of entrepreneurs, which is an important information, was the Internet access (59% positive indications) and, equally important, the quality of roads and sidewalks (44%). In general terms, in case of each category positive responses outweighed the negative ones, the majority of which were provided with reference to the city transport functioning (27%).

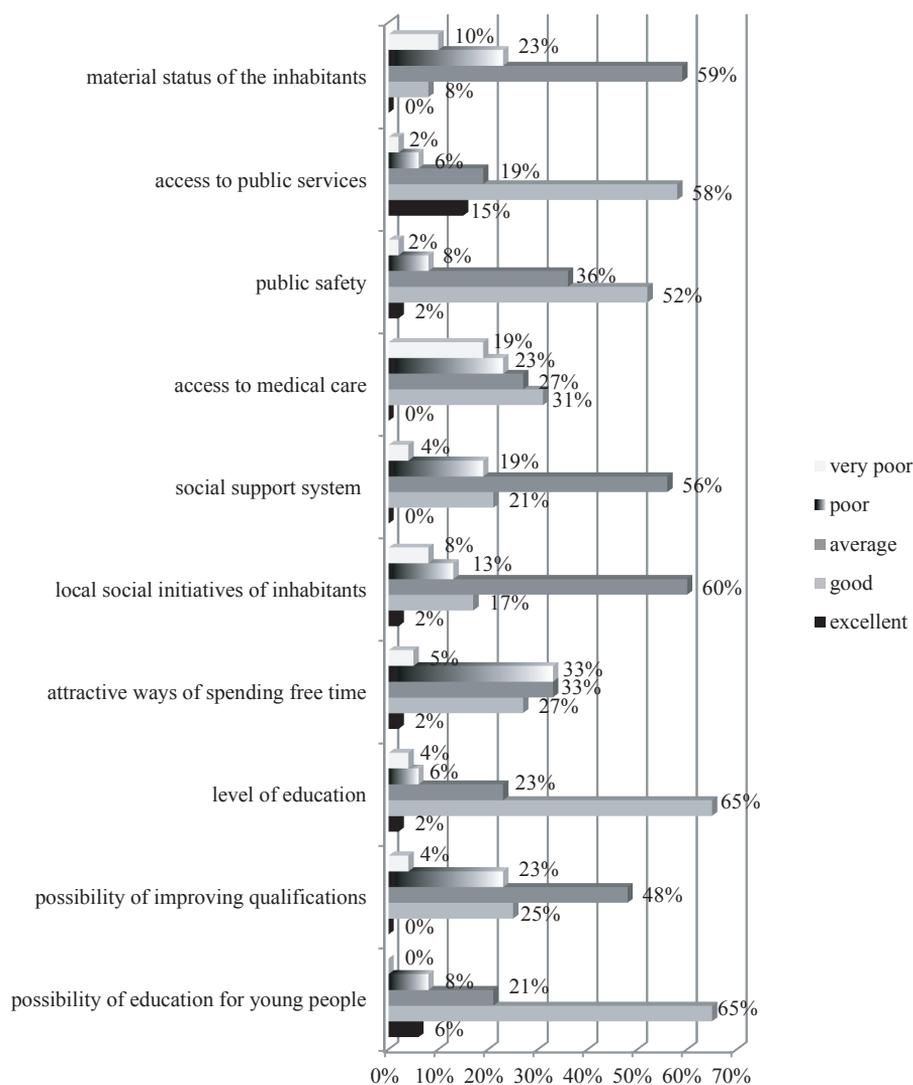


Figure 4. Social infrastructure – evaluation of functional area

Source: author's compilation based on the conducted surveys.

In case of social infrastructure assessment the best results were recorded for public services, educational opportunities for children and teenagers and the level of education, 73%, 71% and 67% respectively. The worst evaluated spheres were: access to medical services in the city (42% negative indications) and the possibilities of spending free time in an attractive way (38%). The functional area of city governance received favourable opinions. High levels of positive responses were recorded in case of the Town Hall functioning (69%) and the activities performed by the city authorities (63%).

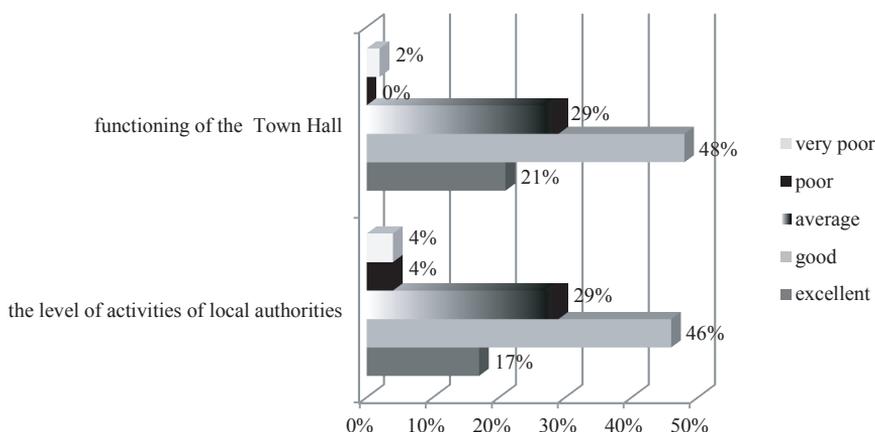


Figure 5. City management – evaluation of functional area

Source: author's compilation based on the conducted surveys.

Within the framework of the conducted research entrepreneurs were also asked about the most important tasks to be carried out in Dzierżoniów within the time span till 2020. In their opinion it should be the city priority to provide new jobs, with particular emphasis on active forms for counteracting unemployment. Next in line was the improvement of road infrastructure (a city ring road). The subsequent tasks to be implemented are related to better management of urban parks and playgrounds. The need for better support to be provided for the entire SME sector (subsidies) was indicated and also for the entrepreneurs functioning within the framework of Wałbrzych Special Economic Zone “INVEST-PARK” (subzone of Dzierżoniów, Lower Silesia region). The surveyed entrepreneurs also identified the need for renovating some of the buildings in the city.

3. Final remarks and conclusions

Within the framework of final remarks an attempt can be taken to provide selected conclusions and recommendations based on the presented research results covering Dzierżoniów:

- local authorities should strengthen their cooperation with entrepreneurs in the coming years. Among the areas of potential cooperation the following can be listed: joint investment projects, adjusting the city educational offer to the existing demand and job market requirements, the system of trainings offered for the potential employees [Grossman, Holzer 2016], projects within the framework of complex revitalization activities (in the social, economic, spatial and functional, environmental and also technical spheres) [Wytyczne... 2015];
- effective realization of developmental goals in cooperation with entrepreneurs depends on the broad spectrum of factors, which include e.g. an effective governance process [Cohen et al. 2008], a partnership oriented dialogue, the selection of adequate tasks in the defined period of time, precise monitoring, the availability of financing sources, participation of all city communities, working out a public consensus (based on consultations and education) for the benefit of the city development directions;
- business environment representatives notice many strengths of Dzierżoniów, such as: public safety, sport and recreation offer, housing resources, cultural and entertainment offer or the city tourist potential. Moreover, they have indicated the developed commercial network and the diversified local market of entrepreneurship;
- among the existing weaknesses entrepreneurs point to the unemployment rate, opportunities for professional development, the network of access roads to the city. The big number of large retail stores and difficulties in the development of small trade are problematic in the opinion of entrepreneurs;
- the evaluation process of the city development strategy, covered by the conducted research and constituting its supplementary component should be performed effectively and periodically. Based on the subsequent evaluation reports it will be possible to decide, with a relatively high degree of probability, whether the problems identified by the surveyed entrepreneurs were solved or minimized. Furthermore, it is essential to assess the situation of the business sector in the city and in this respect the following factors can be subject to evaluation: the number of companies, the approach of the closed companies to the newly opened ones, financial situation, employment level, average remuneration value, expenditure on research and development, the number of filed patents for inventions, utility model, trade mark and industrial design.

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