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THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN POLISH 2007–2013

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze the outflow of resources deriving from the European Union funds under the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland (OP DEP) 2007–2013 concerning the territory of five voivodships which are the part of the Eastern Poland Macroregion: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie. The authors of this analysis made an attempt to study the idea of implementation of projects related to investments in transport infrastructures under the Priority Axis III: Voivodship Growth Centres, especially with an indication of the development of urban transport.

The major objective to initiate The Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland as an instrument for implementing European Union cohesion policy was to equal development opportunities and improve the competitiveness in the poorest voivodships in Poland. Due to the fact that intensification of integration processes in Europe promotes the existence of evident regional disparities as well as disproportions between the particular Member States, it seemed to be essential to support the less economically developed regions, paying special attention to citizens having the lowest standard of living.

Report of the implementation of projects under the OP DEP 2007–2013 provides the basis for assessing the current outflow of resources, their effectiveness as well as creating recommendations for future under the ongoing Financial Framework 2014–2020.

JEL Classification Codes: **R11, R53.**

Keywords: European Union, competitiveness, cohesion policy, urban transport.

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Introduction

The Polish accession to the European Union in May 2004 revealed the problem of disparities in the level of economic growth not only in regards to the particular members of the Community but also concerning the development of the individual regions within countries. What is more, situation of Polish economy at the moment of joining the European Union was still a subject to systemic and political transformation processes interconnected with rapid changes in global economies. These significant changes indicated substantial increase in the intensity and the scope *ratione personae* of competitiveness. Beyond the traditional notion of competition between economic operators, there appeared the new forms of this particular concept, i.e. competition at the regional and local economies level (at the global economies level as well). It is crucial to stress the fact that, supporting the competitiveness of regions aims not only at their social and economic development, but also has an impact on the development of entire country. In turn, the essence of the promotion of the competitiveness is to reduce disparities between highly developed regions and those lagging behind in development, though it is not expressed in the effects of development, but in providing equal development opportunities (e.g. income level equalization) (Markowska-Przybylska 2005, p. 91–94). The varying level of social and economic development of regions, different dynamics of development processes as well as the diverse level of competitiveness proved to be common and normal phenomena, having the significant impact on the economic growth. Nevertheless, the excessive appearance of these particular phenomena may be the cause of considerable decline in the economic growth. Major development disparities between the various regions continue to affect economic flows and interregional links, generate social unrest, lead to inefficient use of resources in regard to demand production and consequently have negative effect on competitiveness of local economy as a whole (Kuciński 2005, p. 51). Taking into consideration European integration, the issues mentioned above are also the problem for the entire EU Community since they affect European Union competitiveness on the global economic stage. It is of particular importance in the strong competition context between Europe, The United States or China since the level of competitiveness is currently expressed in the innovative capacity. The high level of competitiveness of the Member States (increased by the constant growth and social and economic stability) happens to be a strategic element for increasing the competitiveness of European Union regions.

1. Objective

The aim of this research is to indicate the support mechanisms related to the notion of the competitiveness of regions by means of the particular instruments of the European Union cohesion policy. Moreover, it is also the comparative analysis of the value of investments in road and transport infrastructure in the area of the particular voivodships over the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013, and thereby the analysis of the effectiveness of the project implementation under this Programme.

The empirical basis for the analysis presented in this article are the data from the reports and documents dealing with planning and implementing the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013, reports and financial statements of the Ministry of Agriculture (note: the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development until December, 2015) and the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, as well as the reports submitted by the Programme beneficiaries. The analysis covers the territory of the Eastern Poland Macrorregion, in particular, the voivodship cities, i.e. Lublin, Rzeszów, Białystok, Kielce, Olsztyn, recognized as the centres of the implementation of projects under the Priority Axis III: „Voivodship growth centres” within the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013.

The analysis, carried out in this article, demonstrate: 1) high efficiency of the OP DEP 2007–2013 in the context of the competitiveness development in the territory of the Eastern Poland voivodships, 2) disparities in the effectiveness of the implementation of programmes in the particular areas covered by the Priority axis III, 3) the need of planning actions in the next financial perspective, taking into consideration the experiences from the process of implementing projects over the period 2007–2013.

2. The European Union cohesion policy vs. the competitiveness of regions

The competitiveness of regions may be understood as a set of characteristics which determinate the attractiveness of region, taking into account the amount of located investments and the reputation of the region as a potential place of living. In other words, the competitiveness of regions stands for the ability to attract capital and financial support measures as well as the ability to make use of the acquired factors of production (Wyszkowska, 2005 p. 105).

The differences in the level of social and economic development of regions arise from natural, historical and cultural considerations as well as hitherto participation of the regions in the division of tasks. As a result, some regions face the negative phenomena, such as: low social activity, low entrepreneurship level, and lower than in other regions standard of living.

Intensification of the inclusive processes in Europe enhance deepening of disparities within regions. Unfortunately, the dynamic development of the more prosperous regions increases the existing gap between the urbanized regions and those with lower development potential. In the long term, the persistent disparities in the scale of the development of regions shall constitute a serious threat not only to Polish social and economic cohesion policy, but also to stability of the entire European Union (the European Commission, 2008).

One of the major objectives of the European Union cohesion policy is counteracting the threats by providing financial support under the EU funds designed to enhance competitiveness and reduce disparities in development at the regional level. The support given under the cohesion policy is strictly directed at those regions which economic growth have lower than the Union average level of the GDP per capita. Taking Poland into account, the region considered the most problematic in the context of the economic growth is the Eastern Poland Macroregion covering five Polish voivodships: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie. The Eastern Poland voivodships are still characterised by the lowest level of economic growth and stand for one of the least developed areas in the European Union. Nowadays, low labour productivity and untapped employment resources constitute one of the key obstacles restricting the development of the Eastern Poland Macroregion. (the Ministry of Regional Development, 2015). The draft *Strategy for social and economic development of Eastern Poland by 2020*, approved by the Council of Ministers on 30 December 2008, emphasises the fact that, the lack of the well developed metropolitan regions directly contribute to the social and economic slowdown of the Macroregion. (the Ministry of Economic Development, 2008). The new phenomenon, that is observed while discussing the level of economic growth in relation to the tendencies in spatial dynamics, is the fact that the regions regarded as the most successful proved to be the ones which achieve their prosperity thanks to the close proximity to the agglomerations, i.e. large metropolis (advantages gained thanks to the partnership of different type of economic activities – „urbanization economies”) and so called territorial production systems (Pietrzyk, 2004, p. 14). The metropolis are becoming magnet for high quality human capital which is reflected in potential for production and assimilation of innovation in the political, cultural, economic and technological spheres. Since metropolis hold significant logistic functions, they have a considerable impact on the dynamics, directions and the level of the regional development. Nevertheless, they still compete with one another in the continental and transnational field (Wysocka, 2004, p. 57).

The projects implemented under Priority axis III of the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013 „Voivodship growth centres” were aimed at increasing the competitiveness of regions through the investments

in the public transport systems. The objectives of the projects are strictly connected with the development strategy reinforcing the metropolitan functions in the Eastern Poland territory. These particular actions were financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The aim of this article is to include the summary of the activities implemented under the Project in the area of five voivodship cities: Lublin, Białystok, Olsztyn, Kielce, Rzeszów. Finally, the article portrays the above mentioned cities as the „natural” candidates to gain the status of the metropolitan centres.

3. The Eastern Poland – characteristics of the region and the competitiveness factors

The Eastern Poland voivodships occupy a dense territory of an area of 99.045 km² (31.6% of the total territory of Poland), adjacent to the border with Russia, Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Slovakia, that constitute almost the whole external frontier of the European Union. What seems to be characteristic to this region is the comparable level of social and economic and territorial development. Due to its scope of the development challenges, The Eastern Poland Macroregion is considered „the strategic intervention of the regional policy” area that needs special support at the national level as well as the external intervention under the European Cohesion Policy (the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2014). The factors governing the level of the competitiveness of regions are, among others, diverse economic structure, the level of the social and economic endowment, and communication accessibility. The factors mentioned above relate directly to the scope of competitiveness of the region for the potential investors. According to the studies in the field of investment attractiveness of Polish voivodships, carried out in 1999 by the Institute for Market Economics, the regions which proved to be the least attractive for the potential investors are: the Podkarpackie, the Podlaskie, the Opolskie, the Lubelskie and the Świętokrzyskie Voivodships (Wyszkowska, 2005, pp. 107–108).

Barriers in development, which are not easy to overcome, arise to a large extent from considerations related to history. Varying development conditions in particular parts of Poland in the period of lost statehood, connected with its partition among three powers: Russia, Prussia and Austria, as well as new borders of the territory of Poland in the twentieth century caused significant disparities between particular regions of Poland. In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century on areas which are presently the western voivodships of Poland an intense development was taking place in industry, technical infrastructure and modern methods of farming, and at the same time economy in the eastern part of Poland remained mainly based on traditional agriculture, which fails to generate necessary stimuli for intense economic development. The existence of marked

internal disparities in the level of social and economic development in Eastern Poland should nevertheless be sought in the first place in the already mentioned historical reasons, associated with the former belonging of particular areas of this region to three different countries. Furthermore, in the interwar period areas of the present Eastern Poland – divided by a state border, which separated Poland from Germany – were subject of much diversified economic policy. In the southern part of this area industrialization processes had been launched in connection with starting of the establishment of the Central Industrial Zone. On the other hand, an effect of economic policy implemented by Germany on the area of the present Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship is the relatively high level of infrastructure development.

Unfortunately, the peripheral location of the discussed region, in relation to the European space, limits its economic growth opportunities. As a consequence, one of the prerequisites for shortening development distance with relation to other regions is improving region's accessibility by the means of the sustainable development of transport infrastructure. In accordance with the European Commission „Regional Competitiveness Index”, limited transport accessibility concerning the territory of Eastern Poland affects its competitiveness (the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2014).

At the time of Poland's accession to the European Union, the average GDP per capita value amounted in Eastern Poland Macroregion only to 40% of the European average, which placed it in the group of the poorest regions not only in Poland, but also in the European Union.

4. The Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013 as an instrument of The European Cohesion Policy

The Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and national public means. The financial allocations for the implementation of Programme by the ERDF amounted to EUR 2.38 mld in total. In December 2005 the European Commission granted EUR 992 million of total amount to the five poorest voivodships (EUR 120 per one inhabitant). The remaining sum of EUR 1.3 million was granted to this region by the Polish Government Authorities, who gained the funds from the ERDF.

The Programme involves the implementation of the projects essential for the social and economic development of the five most disadvantaged regions: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie. The operations realized under the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland include the investments in infrastructure supporting research and scientific activity, concern the modernization of urban and regional transport

systems as well as reconstruction of the municipal public transport system. Another objective of the Programme is increasing the tourist attractiveness of the region as well as providing access to the broadband Internet to the great number of the inhabitants of Eastern Poland regions. The amount of EUR 2.7 mld was earmarked for projects implemented under the OP DEP (the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2016).

The Objective of Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland is: „Hastening the pace of social and economic development in Eastern Poland pursuant to the sustainable development principle”. The main objective of the Programme will be achieved through implementation of specific objectives, and namely (The Ministry of Economic Development, 2016):

- stimulating development of knowledge based competitive economy,
 - improving access to broadband Internet in Eastern Poland,
 - development of selected metropolitan functions of voivodship cities,
 - improving accessibility and standard of transport links in voivodships of Eastern Poland,
 - enhancing the role of sustainable tourism in the economic development of the macroregion,
 - optimising the implementation process of OP Development of Eastern Poland.
- The objectives mentioned above will be pursued in the six Priority Axes.

The structure of the Priority Axes in the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland	
Priority axis I: Modern Economy	Measure I.1 Infrastructure of universities Measure I.2 Supporting the establishment and co-financing of financial engineering instruments Measure I.3 Supporting innovativeness Measure I.4 Promotion and cooperation
Priority axis II: Infrastructure of the Information Society	Measure II.1 Broadband network of Eastern Poland
Priority axis III: Voivodship Growth Centres	Measure III.1 Systems of municipal public transport Measure III.2 Infrastructure of congress and fair travel
Priority axis IV: Transport Infrastructure	Measure IV.1 Road infrastructure
Priority axis V: Sustainable Development of Tourist Potential Based on Natural Conditions	Measure V.1 Promoting sustainable tourism development Measure V.2 Bicycle routes
Priority axis VI: Technical Assistance	Measure VI.1 Support for the process of implementation and promotion of the Programme

5. Municipal public transport system (Measure III.1)

For the effective implementation of the programme, the Managing Authority has elaborated a list of individual projects, covering key investments which implementation will contribute best to the achievement of Programme's objectives.

The main objectives of the individual projects under Measure III.1 arise from the priorities formulated in a medium-term perspective in the National Development Strategy 2007–2015, including especially the priority „Regional development and the improvement of territorial cohesion”, as well as the assumptions of The OP DEP 2007–2013 Priority Axis III „Voivodship growth centres”. At the same time, the implementation of the individual projects contribute to the achieving the objectives of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013 – „Increase of the competitiveness of Polish regions and preventing their social, economic and territorial marginalization”.

The main objective of the Measure was to improve spatial mobility of the inhabitants by enhancing metropolitan development of the Eastern Poland voivodship cities. The implementation of Measure comprises the comprehensive projects aimed at construction and extension of the clean public transport system. The projects stem from the integrated plans for public transport development. Preference will be given to projects which combine diverse forms of transport in the areas recognized as „potential metropolitan areas” (e.g. tramway, trolleybus, busses, railways, airports, individual transport) as well so called „eco-compatible chains” that take into account public transport links with the movement on foot and by bicycle (The Ministry of Economic Development, 2015).

Below there is a presentation of the projects implemented under Priority axis III „Voivodship growth centres”, Municipal public transport system, Measure III.1.

Table 1. Projects implemented under Measure III.1 OP DEP 2007–2013 (mln EUR)

Name of the project	Beneficiary	Project value	EU grant value
Lubelskie Voivodship			
Integrated municipal transport system in Lublin	Lublin Municipality	112.6	80.0
Construction of the municipal public transport corridor in the vicinity of The Integrated Intermodal Metropolitan Station in Lublin – 80 Lubelskiego Lipca Street	Lublin Municipality	7.8	6.0
Total Lubelskie Voivodship		120.4	86.0

Table 1 continued.

Name of the project	Beneficiary	Project value	EU grant value
Podkarpackie Voivodship			
Establishment of a system integrating public transport in the city of Rzeszów and its surroundings	The Town and the Municipality of Rzeszów	79.3	59.7
Improving public transport system in the centre of Rzeszów by imposing restrictions on transit traffic and introduction of paid parking zone	The Town and the Municipality of Rzeszów	44.9	37.0
Total Podkarpackie Voivodship		124.2	96.7
Podlaskie Voivodship			
Improving public transport system in the City of Białystok – Phase II	The City of Białystok	37.3	27.9
Improving public transport system in the City of Białystok – Phase III	The City of Białystok	46.7	32.9
Total Podlaskie Voivodship		84.0	60.8
Świętokrzyskie Voivodship			
Development of municipal transport system in the Kielce Metropolitan Area	Kielce Municipality	81.3	54.2
Total Świętokrzyskie Voivodship		81.3	54.2
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship			
Modernisation and development of the Integrated municipal transport system in Olsztyn	Olsztyn Municipality	154.8	91.6
Total Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship		154.8	91.8

Table 2. Value of the projects implemented under the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013, Priority Axis III, Measure III.1, Municipal transport system: Voivodship Growth Centres

Value of the projects implemented under the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013, Priority Axis III, Measure III.1, Municipal transport system: Voivodship Growth Centres				
Voivodship	Number of projects	Project value (mln EUR)	EU grant value (mln EUR)	EU funds value (%)
Lubelskie	2	120.4	86.0	71,4
Podkarpackie	2	124.2	96.7	77,8
Podlaskie	2	84.0	60.8	72,4
Świętokrzyskie	1	81.3	52.2	66,7
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	1	154.8	91.8	59,2
Total	8	564.7	387.5	68,2

Source: <http://www.mapadotacji.gov.pl/>, The Ministry of Economic Development, data acquired from the IT Central System (SL 2014) at the end of June 2016.

6. Implementation of the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013

The implementation of the projects aimed at transport infrastructure in the territory of Eastern Poland voivodship resulted in the increase in public transport fleet to 423 units, construction or reconstruction of 350 national and voivodship roads, construction of 23 bypasses and 2 bridges on the Vistula River, as well as installing 12 Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) (The Ministry of Economic Development, 2016).

Table 3. Value of the projects implemented under the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013, Priority Axis III and IV

Voivodship	Number of projects	Project value (mln EUR)	EU grant value (mln EUR)	EU funds value (%)
Lubelskie	13	407.2	286.9	71,4
Podkarpackie	11	442.5	298.9	77,8
Podlaskie	11	368.3	227.0	72,4
Świętokrzyskie	6	222.1	136.8	66,7
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	4	260.1	167.7	59,2
Total	8	1 700.2	1 117.3	68,2

Source: <http://www.mapadotacji.gov.pl/>, The Ministry of Economic Development, data acquired from the IT Central System (SL 2014) at the end of June 2016.

The analysis of the reports on the implementation of the OP DEP 2007–2013 allows drawing a conclusion to the implementation of projects at the voivodship level as well as presents the existing results of that implementation. An initial implementation stage of the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland coincides with the reporting period of 2007–2008 thus it is hard to notice any significant implementation progress in the sphere of transport infrastructure projects, as well as to evaluate the financial indices. What has to be mentioned with the reference to the implementation of the Programme is the significance of the institutional system introduced in order to promote proper planning, implementation, control and evaluation of the Programme objectives. Additional aspect which has to be emphasised is the need to ensure training for beneficiaries (people and institutions) responsible for the implementation of the Programme. The allocation of funds in the analysed period is 19,91% which constitute the sum of EUR 450 million, and in subsequent years: 2010 – 23% (over EUR 103 million), 2011 – 55% (EUR 230 million), 2012 – 99% (EUR 420 million), 2013 – 97% (over EUR 423 million) (Stepaniuk, Orzeł, 2015).

Table 4. Financial information related to Priority Axis III „Voivodship growth centres”

	Beneficiary expenditure included in the payment claims (mln Eur)	Corresponding public contribution (mln Eur)	Private expenditure	Expenditure granted to beneficiaries (mln Eur)	Allocation utilisation level (%)	Total payments received from the Commission (mln Eur)
2007	0,00	0,00	–	0,00	0	–
2008	0,00	0,00	–	0,00	0	–
2009	27.2	27.2	–	27.2	16,01	16.5
2010	103.7	103.7	–	103.7	23	450.8
2011	230.0	230.0	–	230.0	55	418.2
2012	423.8	423.8	–	423.8	99	428.1
2013	423.8	423.8	–	423.8	97	437.0

Source: own study on the basis (Stepaniuk, Orzeł 2015) in accordance with Euro average annual rate of exchange of the National Bank of Poland (source: www.nbp.pl).

What may be observed, owing to the implementation of the projects under The Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007–2013 Priority Axis III, is the radical improvement in accessibility and internal road and public transport systems, comprising the territory of 5 voivodship cities. In particular, these projects had considerable impact on increasing safety and the comfort of commuters, shortening travel times and removing the obstacles to fluid traffic flow. The Eastern Poland Voivodship cities (Lublin, Olsztyn, Rzeszów) were the main beneficiaries of three out of six large projects aimed at development of public transport system in Polish agglomerations. The projects were financed by EU funds.

Conclusion

While comparing the data concerning public transport passenger service in the area of the Eastern Poland Macroregion, one shall observe its growth by almost 5% during the period 2010–2013. Taking into account the development of public transport passenger service among the Eastern Poland voivodships in particular, one has to notice the major growth by almost 35% with regard to the Lubelskie Voivodship, and less significant growth in the Podlaskie and Świętokrzyskie voivodships. The presented phenomenon is of particular importance in the context the overall fall in the Polish public transport passenger service growth ratio by 7% (the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2014).

One has to emphasize the significance of the EU financing in the transport infrastructure enhancement process, that undoubtedly would not be achieved without this kind of financial incentive. As previously mentioned, at the time of Poland's accession to the European Union, the average GDP per capita value amounted in Eastern Poland Macroregion only to 40% of the European average.

However, GDP per capita growth dynamics in 2004–2011 proved to be higher than the EU average, which had an impact on the considerable hastening of processes which were to help achieve convergence with other regions and member states of the Community.

In the period of 2004–2011, the GDP per capita value has risen in Eastern Poland Voivodships to 10 percentage points, which determined shortening The Eastern Poland Macroregion development convergence with relation to other European regions by 7 percentage points on average. Since 2004, one may observe the constant increase in the GDP absolute value, which in 2011 was higher by 58% than the one from 2004 (the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, 2014).

Additionally, in 2013 the value of competitiveness index for the Macroregion reached the level equal to the one attained by the majority of the Polish voivodships.

Macroeconomic figures confirm the occurrence of the progressive development process in relation to the Eastern Poland Macroregion. It corresponds with the high mobilization of the voivodship internal potential as well as effective exploitation of the development opportunities provided by the EU funds. In the period of 2004–2014 one may observe a significant growth in the value of the social and economic development indices being the subject of this research analysis. The achievement of the discussed growth sufficiently diminishes the disparities in the average values reached in the territory of the European regions and the Eastern Poland voivodships (the Ministry of Economic Development, 2014).

The voivodship cities and the interregional centres are regarded as The Eastern Poland growth poles. Consequently, poorly developed metropolitan functions of the voivodship cities limited the development of Macroregion. The growth rate of the metropolis is usually interrelated with the specialization in the field of managerial functions, as well as strategic management, all occurring under the specific circumstances (Pietrzyk 2004, p. 14). According to the analysis of the population potential carried out in the cities and their neighboring areas, there is a possibility of the further transformation and the extension of their metropolitan functions. Among the number of problems limiting the possibility of further development of the presented functions, there is a lack of modern public transport system and innovative infrastructure (the Ministry of Regional Development, 2008).

In accordance with the presented analysis one shall admit that the factors inhibiting formation of five metropolis in the area of Eastern Poland were inter alia the size of interregional centres, the scale of the development of innovative exogenous functions able to strengthen the competitiveness of the regions in the international dimension, and finally the negative outcome of demographic processes. The occurrence of these particular obstacles resulted in introducing systemic solutions of support and investment measures devoted to the develop-

ment of metropolitan functions in the territory of the Eastern Poland Macregion (the Ministry of Regional Development, 2014). The advanced level of the implementation of the projects under the Operational Programmes of the financial perspective 2007–2013, aimed at resolving the problems mentioned above, restores optimism and creates hope for permanent growth in competitiveness ratio with regard to the Eastern Poland Macregion. Shortening development convergence was evidence to the effectiveness of the undertaken actions. The key element in achieving the goals presented in the course of this research analysis was the implementation of the projects under OP DEP 2007–2013, and especially realization of the objectives of the Priority Axis III, which stand as an example of the effective use of the EU funds. In the period of 2007–2013, the value of transport infrastructure investments (including public transport systems) in the area of Eastern Poland, financed by the EU funds, amounted to PLN 24,7 billion (The Ministry of Regional Development, 2014).

Unfortunately, it does not change the fact that Eastern Poland voivodships are still among the group of 20 least developed regions belonging to the European Union (the European Commission, 2014). All at once, it is worth mentioning that processes aimed at removing development barriers among the Eastern Poland regions prove to be long-lasting, thus they require to be reflected in the EU's financial perspective for 2014–2020. The implementation of the Operational Programmes 2007–2013 reports will undoubtedly contribute to even more effective use of the EU's support measures.

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