

Barriers to development of small county centres. The case of Brzozów^x

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Introduction

Small towns in rural areas fulfilling the functions of nodes for their hinterland exert significant impact on the directions of local development. Their traditional function has been servicing of agriculture and the rural population directly or indirectly involved in it. Alongside socio-economic development a growing differentiation among them, both from functional and socio-cultural point of view, took place (Heffner K., Marszał T. 2005). The increase in disproportions in economic development and the faster dynamic of development of urban agglomerations leads to stagnation or socio-economic crisis of small towns located outside urban agglomerations and those small towns whose economic functions are based on close economic links with rural surroundings. Such small urban centres suffer from permanent negative trends of demographic and social development combined with the lack of perspectives for economic growth (Heffner K., Marszał T. 2005). Such trends may be slowed down or reversed if broadly understood local community is able to make use of new development trends emerging in Poland after 1989. Among most often cited causes of immobilizing or halting the development of small towns the weakening role of so-far existing factors of urban development (Świć 1994, Brol, Maj, Stahl 1990), losing former local economic basis (Matczak, Szymańska 1997), or the fragmentation of administrative structure existing since 1973 which has led to the weakening of the role of small towns in the overall settlement network (Brol, Maj, Stahl 1990) may be mentioned. Attention should also be paid to key consequences brought about by both World War II and the period of centrally planned economy. During World War II not only did the material tissue of many small towns suffer much destruction, but most of all a significant share of their

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population was annihilated, including the loss of their Jewish inhabitants. Nationalisation of the economy, especially destructive in trade and retail lead to the limiting of the so far existing socio-economic functions of small towns connected to the services they provided for the agricultural surroundings (Szymańska, Grzelak-Kostulska 2005, 25).

An important factor of success of cities and towns is the centrality of the settlements and their place in the settlement hierarchy. Many authors notice that while during the times of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) the pace of development of urban settlements with specialised industrial functions was fastest, after 1989 the role of central functions was most important. With respect to small towns with central place functions however, even on county (powiat) level such central functions are not sufficient to counteract negative trends in local socio-economic development (Sobala-Gwosdz 2005, 176). Such tendencies are all the more visible since presently a tendency towards deindustrialisation of medium and small size towns may be observed (Chojnicki 1996, Matczak, Szymańska 1997).

Within the above presented theoretical framework, the aim of the article is to deliver detailed characteristics of functions, socio-economic bases of development of the town of Brzozów. The choice of case study was inspired by functions fulfilled by the town in agricultural areas, and its location in regional and local contexts. The characteristic features of Brzozów include location in an area of high tourism, nature and culture values, and position in an agricultural problem region. Additionally, Brzozów performs a significant role of the central town on a county level, with a very high of services provided to its catchment area, and has a polyfunctional economy structure.

Location of Brzozów

Brzozów is a town, located in the south-eastern Poland, in the east part of the Pogórze Dynowskie foothills. The Stobnica river, which is a right tributary of the Wisłok river, flows through the town. Brzozów is one of 21 county towns of the Podkarpackie Region. As far as its population is concerned, Brzozów is a small town, with 8 thousand residents, which gives it the last but one position among the county towns of the Region (Tab. 1). Although it is low in the hierarchy of towns in the Podkarpackie Region, its role is significant when one assesses it against the background of similar-size towns.

Tab. 1. Population in county towns of the Podkarpackie Region

No.	Town	Administrative status	Population		
			1995	2000	2005
1.	Rzeszów	Region's Capital, County town	160 271	160 779	158 539
2.	Przemysł	County town	68 789	68 220	66 909
3.	Stalowa Wola	County town	71 775	68 243	66 097
4.	Mielec	County town	64 304	61 859	61 241
5.	Tarnobrzeg	County town	50 699	50 310	50 115
6.	Krosno	County town	49 277	48 531	47 817
7.	Dębica	County town	48 769	47 798	47 054
8.	Jarosław	County town	41 823	40 286	40 677
9.	Sanok	County town	41 426	40 344	39 552
10.	Jasło	County town	38 800	38 075	37 811
11.	Łańcut	County town	17 773	17 895	18 076
12.	Przeworsk	County town	16 407	15 884	15 746
13.	Nisko	County town	15 228	15 553	15 633
14.	Ropczyce	County town	12 209	14 848	15 070
15.	Leżajsk	County town	14 544	14 240	14 297
16.	Lubaczów	County town	12 711	12 371	12 387
17.	Ustrzyki Dolne	County town	10 122	9 748	9 521
18.	Kolbuszowa	County town	8 746	8 914	9 179
19.	Strzyżów	County town	8 349	8 595	8 699
20.	Brzozów	County town	7 919	7 732	7 745
21.	Lesko	County town	6 489	5 979	5 875
	Podkarpackie Region		2 105 597	2 101 375	2 098 263

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

The town has a great significance as a main centre in its area. Brzozów has a very high service ratio, expressed as the ratio of the number of its catchment area population who gravitates towards the town and the population number of the town itself, which amounts to 5.0 (Sobala-Gwosdz 2005). As regards absolute number of population that actually gravitates towards the town, Brzozów occupies the eleventh place in the whole region (39 830 persons) and the top place among towns of less than 15 thousand population (Tab. 2). Such a high rank of Brzozów in its town-size category results from the fact that this is the main urban centre in a densely populated, agricultural county. Brzozów is located centrally in its impact area, and the town's catchment area is territorially cohesive. Viewed from the point of view of history, sometime in the past the standing of Brzozów was much higher, as the town was the second greatest urban centre of the former Ziemia Sanocka province, and still in the mid 19th century it was a centre by 1/3 bigger in its population number than Krosno.

A considerable decline in the Brzozów's position dating back to the 19th century results, among other factors, from the fact that the town was not included in any

significant railway or road route systems. Presently, there is only one regional road (Rzeszów-Domaradz-Sanok) that crosses the town. Brzozów lies ca. 50 km to the south of Rzeszów (the largest city and the capital of the Podkarpackie Region) and ca. 30 km to the east of Krosno, which is a strong subregional centre (Fig. 1).

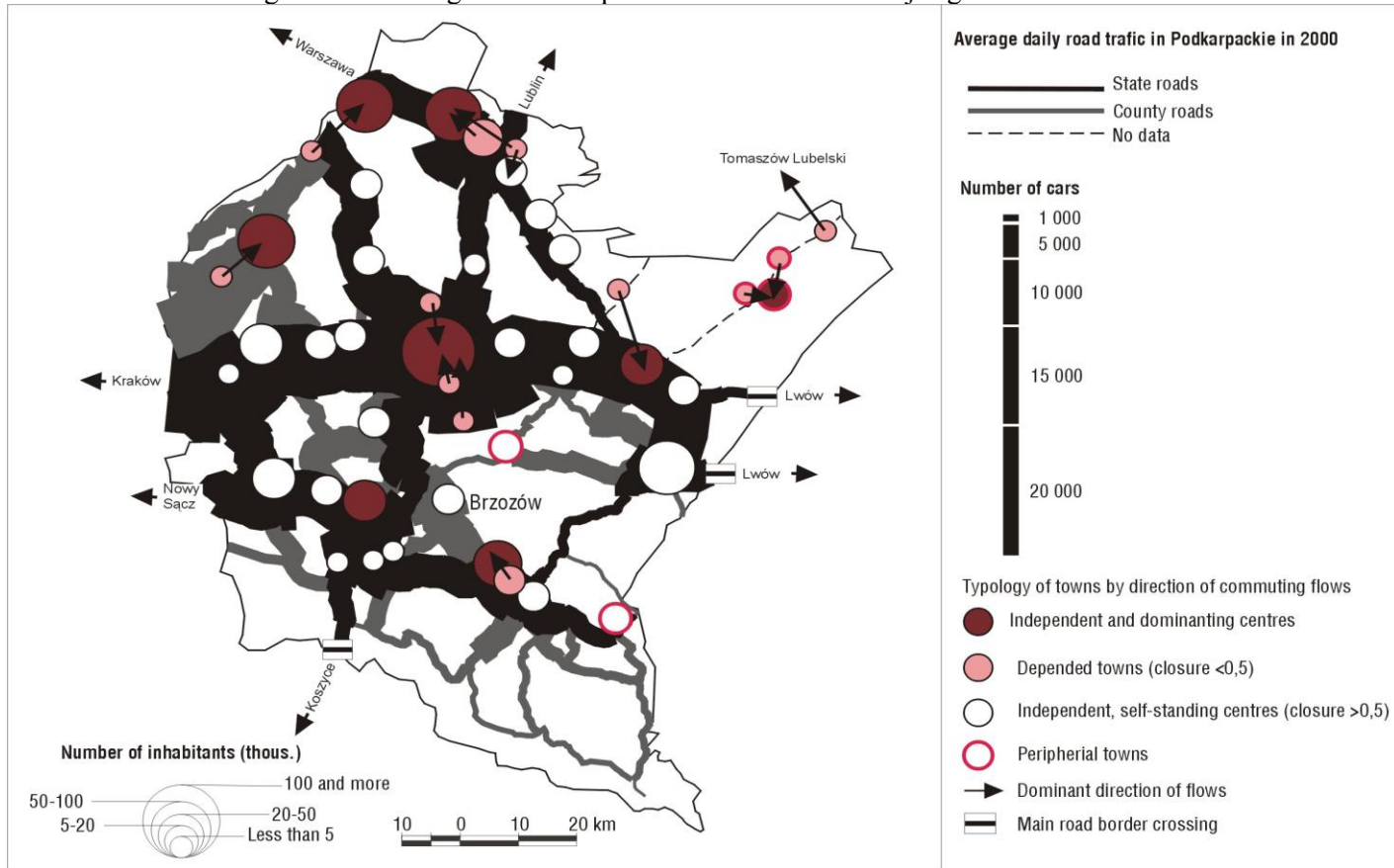
Tab. 2. Size of county town catchment areas, determined by the size of gravitation towards high schools during the school year of 2003/2004

No.	Town	Administrative status	Population (2002)	Catchment area population that gravitates towards the centre	Total population that gravitates towards the centre (c+d)	Service ratio (d/c)
	a	b	c	d	e	f
1.	Rzeszów	Region's Capital, County town	160 376	199 898	360 274	1.2
2.	Krosno	County town	48 372	92 597	140 969	1.9
3.	Jarosław	County town	40 235	86 886	127 121	2.2
4.	Jasło	County town	37 916	69 451	107 367	1.8
5.	Przemyśl	County town	68 095	65 159	133 254	1.0
6.	Mielec	County town	61 728	64 614	126 342	1.0
7.	Sanok	County town	40 039	63 303	103 342	1.6
8.	Dębica	County town	47 678	56 515	104 193	1.2
9.	Stalowa Wola	County town	67 555	54 279	121 834	0.8
10.	Łańcut	County town	17 890	43 906	61 796	2.5
11	Brzozów	County town	7 917	39 830	47 747	5.0
12.	Leżajsk	County town	14 305	38 901	53 206	2.7
13.	Kolbuszowa	County town	9 002	29 885	38 887	3.3
14.	Tarnobrzeg	County town	50 287	29 536	79 823	0.6
15.	Lubaczów	County town	12 458	26 124	38 582	2.1
16.	Strzyżów	County town	8 617	23 543	32 160	2.7
17.	Przeworsk	County town	15 855	21 275	37 130	1.3
18.	Ropczyce	County town	14 996	20 208	35 204	1.3
19.	Lesko	County town	6 790	14 852	21 642	2.2
20.	Nisko	County town	15 773	14 602	30 375	0.9
21.	Ustrzyki Dolne	County town	10 346	10 703	21 049	1.0

Source: A. Sobala-Gwosdz (2005).

The level of life in Brzozów against the background of the surrounding region is relatively high, especially as regards the housing situation and social infrastructure. As far as the latter is concerned, it should be noted that similarly high indicators were recorded by other, small county towns, which are the only urban centres in their respective administrative units (Strzyżów, Kolbuszowa). This, undoubtedly, is the result of concentrating service facilities in those towns, with the lack of any competitive centres.

Fig. 1. Brzozów against the map of road traffic and of major gravitation streams



Source: A. Sobala-Gwosdz (2005) based on data from Generalnej Dyrekcji Dróg Krajowych i Autostrad

Demographic situation

At the end of 2005, Brzozów had 7 745 residents (Tab. 1), which constitutes 0.4% of the population of the Podkarpackie Region, 12% of the population of the Brzozów County and 30% of the population of the municipal and rural Commune of Brzozów. The area of the town and Commune of Brzozów is 103 km² and it is inhabited by 26 087 persons, living in 6 983 households. There are 253 people per 1 km², with the average number for the Brzozów County amounting to 121 people/km². That value is slightly higher than the average population density index for the whole Podkarpackie Region, which is 118 people/km² (Tab. 3).

Just like the majority of other small and medium-sized towns in Poland, Brzozów recorded a decline in the number of its population within the last dozen or so years (Tab. 1). On the one hand, this is a result of the decreasing birth rate, and on the other of the negative balance of migration. According to the official data, almost 2,500 people from the Brzozów County live abroad; however, the actual extent of that phenomenon is higher. Migration, especially of young people, is a big social problem but at the same time often the only opportunity for finding a job and gaining a capital which, in future, may be invested in the region.

Still in 2000, the Brzozów County recorded one of the highest birth rate indexes in the region (3.4‰). The decrease of that index has been noticeable for several years. It is interesting to note that the index is presently higher in the region than in those counties, which are better economically developed, such as the Ropczyce, Sędziszów, Mielec, and Dębica counties. This may be a proof of a large outflow of young people to the better-developed areas.

Tab. 3. Most important population indexes concerning Brzozów and the Brzozów County against the region's background

Territorial Unit	Population	Population density	Index of feminisation	Birth rate in ‰		Migration balance in %	
	2005	2005	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
Town							
Brzozów	7 745	704.1	107	3.9	2.2	0.0	-0.5
Strzyżów	8 699	621.4	108	1.0	0.5	0.1	-0.1
Lubaczów	12 387	476.4	107	2.7	0.9	-0.2	-0.6
County							
Strzyżów	61 978	123.2	102	1.4	-0.2	-0.1	0.1
Brzozów	65 337	121.0	103	3.4	1.2	-0.1	-0.2
Przemyśl	78 717	112.8	100	2.6	0.2	-0.2	0.1
Sanok	94 733	77.3	104	2.4	1.4	-0.2	-0.1
Podkarpackie Region	2 098 263	117.6	104	2.6	1.1	-0.1	-0.1
Poland	38 157 055	122.0	107	0.3	-0.1	-0.1	0.0

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

The index of feminisation in Brzozów is 106.6 women per 100 men (Tab. 3). That index has been gradually decreasing since 2000. People in an economically productive age (ca. 63.8%) dominate in the town's age structure. Persons in the pre-productive age, that is up to 18 years of age, constitute 13.6% of the whole population (Tab. 4), and no significant changes in time can be seen. In comparison to rural areas, there are more people in the town in an economically productive age, while less in pre- and post-productive ages.

The demographic load¹ for the town of Brzozów is unfavourable (56.6) and it is higher than in other county towns of a similar size. The nature of that phenomenon is even more intensified, if one considers the whole Brzozów County, where the demographic load amounts to 68.4, which differs considerably from the average value for the whole Region (61.3). This is the highest index in the whole area (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4. Age structures of Brzozów and the Brzozów County against the region's background

Territorial unit	Age			Demographic load (b+d)/c*100
	Pre-productive (< 18 years)	Productive (18-60 women 18-64 men)	Post-productive (> 60 women, >64 men)	
a	b	c	d	e
Town				
Brzozów	22.5	63.8	13.6	56.6
Strzyżów	20.0	66.3	13.7	50.8
Lubaczów	22.6	66.2	11.3	51.2
County				
Strzyżów	23.9	59.9	16.2	66.9
Brzozów	25.1	59.4	15.5	68.4
Przemyśl	25.1	59.7	15.2	67.5
Sanok	22.5	63.4	14.1	57.7
Podkarpackie Region	23.1	62.0	14.9	61.3
Poland	20.6	64.0	15.4	56.3

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

The population of the Brzozów County is educated relatively poorly in relation to the whole Podkarpackie Region population, and far less people in there have tertiary and secondary education (Tab. 5). However, it should be stressed that in Brzozów the number of people having at least secondary education increased during last 14 years by almost 14 percentage points. Brzozów has improved through that its position among other county towns in the region by four places. The structure of education of the residents of Brzozów is highly similar to that of other agricultural county towns, i.e. Strzyżów or Lubaczów (Tab. 6).

¹ The number of people in non-productive age per 100 people in productive age.

Tab. 5. Structure of education of the Brzozów County population against the region's background in 2002

Territorial unit	Education			
	Tertiary	Secondary	Primary	Other
Brzozów County	5.3	21.9	38.8	5.4
Podkarpackie Region	8.5	27.6	32.0	3.9

Source: author's elaboration based on 2002 National Census

The Brzozów County has three secondary schools (high school and two technical colleges). In the case of general secondary education, the majority of pupils from Brzozów receive education in their own town, and only individual persons attend high schools in Sanok (Fig. 2).

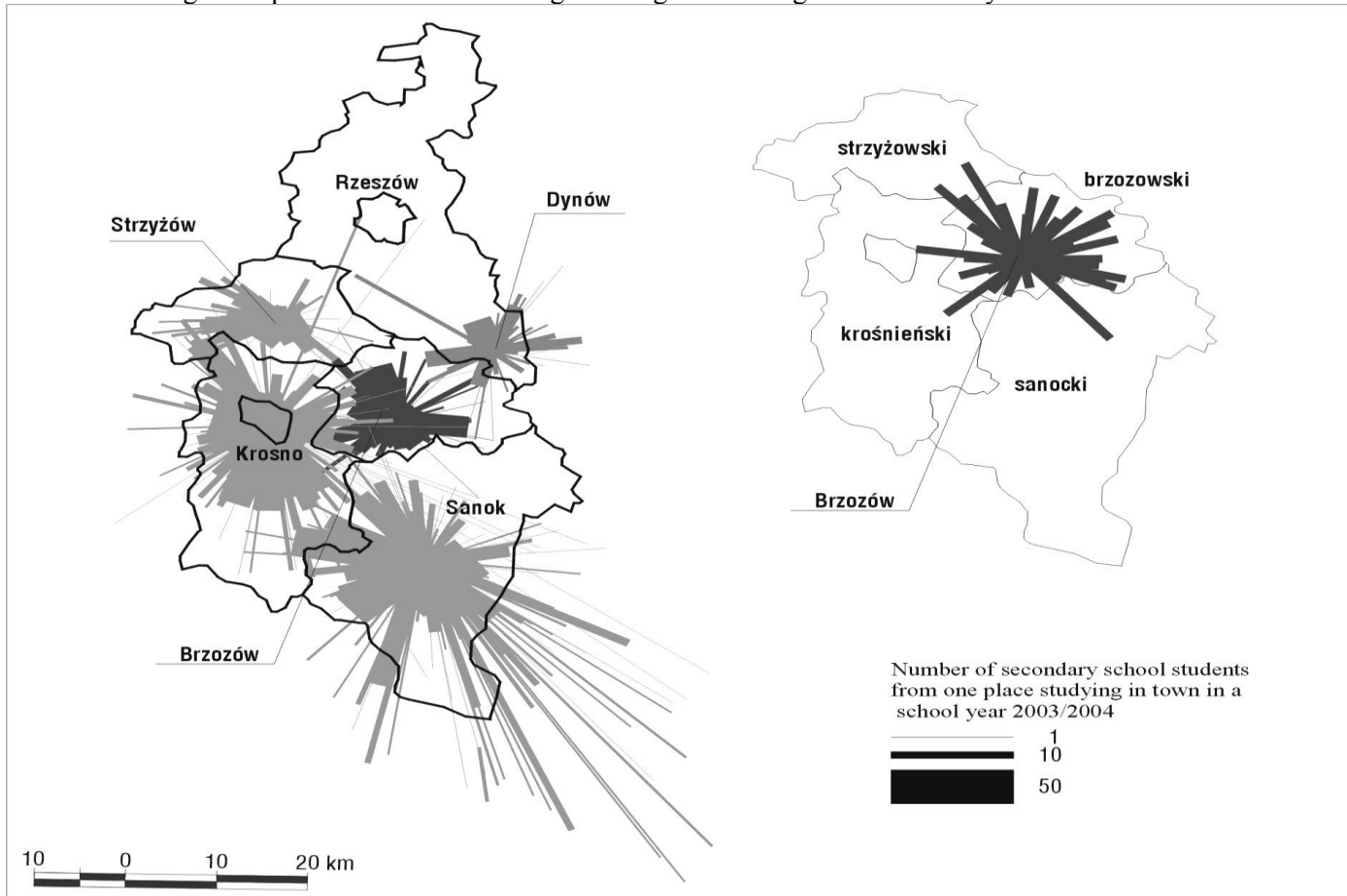
Most popular with young high-school graduates in Brzozów is the academic centre in Rzeszów with the University of Rzeszów and the Polytechnic of Rzeszów as the schools they choose most often. Among private schools, it is the Higher College of Information Science and Management.

Tab. 6. Structure of education in county towns of the Podkarpackie Region

County towns	Percentage of people with secondary and tertiary education in a group of people above 15 years of age			
	No.	2002	No.	1988
Rzeszów	1.	64.6	1.	57.6
Łańcut	2.	59.6	2.	47.9
Jarosław	3.	58.8	7.	45.5
Przemyśl	4.	57.6	4.	47.0
Krosno	5.	57.2	3.	47.9
Przeworsk	6.	55.0	14.	43.1
Leżajsk	7.	54.0	8.	45.1
Kolbuszowa	8.	53.8	9.	44.9
Sanok	9.	53.4	6.	46.1
Jasło	10.	52.4	13.	43.5
Lubaczów	11.	52.4	10.	44.7
Brzozów	12.	52.0	16.	40.8
Strzyżów	13.	51.9	20.	38.0
Dębica	14.	51.8	11.	44.6
Stalowa Wola	15.	50.9	12.	44.4
Mielec	16.	50.9	5.	46.9
Tarnobrzeg	17.	50.8	15.	43.0
Lesko	18.	49.2	19.	39.4
Ropczyce	19.	47.3	18.	39.9
Ustrzyki Dolne	20.	45.6	17.	40.1
Nisko	21.	44.9	21.	35.7

Source: author's elaboration based on 1998 and 2002 National Censuses.

Fig. 2. Impact of Brzozów and neighbouring centres as general secondary education centres



Source: author's elaboration

Unemployment

The Brzozów County is marked by one of the highest unemployment rates in the Podkarpackie Region, which reached 28.2% at the end of 2005, while the average value for Poland and the region was about 19%. The definite majority of the unemployed, that is as much as 90.5% live in rural areas. Only ca. 19% of the total number of the unemployed are entitled to receive social benefits (Tab. 7).

Tab. 7. Characteristics of the unemployment in the Brzozów County against the region's background

County	Unemployment rate as at the 2005 end	Share of the unemployed entitled to social benefits in total number of the unemployed	Share of the unemployed living in the country in total number of the unemployed	Share of the unemployed living in the country and entitled to social benefits in total number of the unemployed living in the country
Brzozów	28.2	19.5	90.5	19.4
Strzyżów	24.9	18.4	87.6	18.2
Przemyśl	23.4	16.7	100	16.7
Sanok	22.0	15.4	56.7	16.2
Podkarpacki e Region	19.1	11.0	63.3	–

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

The structure of unemployment in the Brzozów County is unfavourable and may result in far-reaching social consequences. Unemployment strikes there mainly the young people, who enter the labour market (Tab. 8). The weakness of Brzozów and other communes of the Brzozów County is demonstrated by the existing opportunities for finding a job, since as much as 42.4% of the unemployed remain jobless for longer than 24 months. This is by as many as 7 percentage points more than in Poland, and by 4 percentage points more than in the whole Podkarpackie Region (Tab. 9). Women remain without work for more than 24 months much more often, than men do. People with basic, vocational education dominate among the unemployed (39.9%).

Tab. 8. Age structures of the unemployed in the Brzozów County against the backgrounds of the neighbouring countries, the region and Poland

County	Age				
	24 and less	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 and less
Przemyśl	30.8	33.3	21.0	13.0	1.9
Strzyżów	24.8	34.2	23.0	15.7	2.3
Brzozów	23.5	33.4	23.8	16.8	2.5
Sanok	23.6	30.7	22.8	20.0	2.9
Podkarpackie Region	25.0	31.7	22.7	17.7	2.9
Poland	22.6	28.1	20.4	23.8	5.1

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

Tab. 9. Structure of the unemployed as per gender and joblessness period in the Brzozów County against the backgrounds of the neighbouring countries, the region and Poland

County	Gender structure		Joblessness period				
			3 months and less	3-6 months	6-12 months	12-24 months	More than 24 months
	Men	Women					
Przemyśl	50.4	49.6	17.6	13.3	13.0	15.0	41.2
Brzozów	48.3	51.7	17.9	11.6	13.7	11.5	45.4
Strzyżów	46.3	53.7	20.1	11.5	14.0	12.1	42.4
Sanok	42.4	57.6	22.5	12.4	10.3	11.6	43.2
Podkarpackie Region	46.6	53.4	20.6	13.7	13.3	13.9	38.4
Poland	46.4	53.6	21.9	13.3	14.6	15.5	34.7

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

It should be emphasized that despite a high unemployment rate, the poverty rate in the Brzozów County maintains on a lower level than the average value calculated for the Podkarpackie Region. Worse situation can be found in the neighbouring Counties of Strzyżów, Sanok and especially in the County of Przemyśl (Malikowski 2005).

Town functions and economic sphere

A. Sobala-Gwosdz (2005) defines the functional type of the town of Brzozów as a mixed, polyfunctional and strong one (Tab. 10). In addition to the indicated strong central functions and the concentration of public and service institutions in there, Brzozów is a small industrial centre. There are traditional industries and trades represented there, such as textile (lace factory), glass-making and wood industries

Tab. 10. Functional types of county towns in the Podkarpackie Region

Functional type		Boundary conditions of classification	Number of towns	Towns	
Specialized	Weak	share of people employed in specialized activities within the 25-50% bracket of the population in a productive age, degree of centrality below 0.5; people employed in services less than 25% of population in a productive age	3	Stalowa Wola, Mielec, Dębica	
	Strong	share of no group employed in specialized activities exceeds 25% of population in a productive age; degree of centrality above 0.5	2	Lesko, Lubaczów	
Central	Weak	share of no group employed in specialized activities exceeds 25% of the population in a productive age; degree of centrality below 0.5. or unidentified	2	Tarnobrzeg, Ustrzyki Dolne	
Mixed	Polyfunctional	Strong	share of people employed in 1 group of specialized activities within the 25-50% bracket; degree of centrality above 0.5	8	Brzozów , Jarosław, Jasło, Kolbuszowa, Krosno, Leżajsk, Łańcut, Strzyżów
		Weak	share of people employed in at least 1 group of specialized activities within the 25-50% bracket; degree of centrality below 0.5	4	Rzeszów, Przeworsk, Sanok, Ropczyce
	Gate towns	high share of market place and wholesale trade; functioning of the own economy in 1990-2002	1	Przemyśl	

Source: A. Sobala-Gwosdz (2005), amended.

The most important business entity that operates within the Brzozów area and is, undoubtedly, its showpiece is Koronki S.A., the Europe's largest manufacturer of bobbin lace. This is, at the same time, the greatest employer in the Brzozów County, which employs ca. 500 people. A large group of businesses is involved in construction trade activities (WAFRO S.A., Eleo Budmax, Inwest-Bud, Krusz-Bud). Certain roles are also played by chemical (Artgos plastics, Kama household glass products), food (Gran-Pik cookies) and wood (Polikat, Holmar) trades (Tab. 11). The activities of the Forest District Office have great significance for the town and county economies. The Office is the main organizer of high-quality wood fairs, with customers from many European countries participating in them. An important employer in the sector of services is the Rev. Markiewicz Oncology Centre in Brzozów. This is the only, full-profile oncology centre in the Podkarpackie region of a supraregional reach.

Tab. 11. Most important businesses in Brzozów

N o.	Name in Polish language	PKD Business Code	Employment in 2005	Type of activities
1.	Koronki S.A.	1 740	340	Manufacturing of lace and cotton gussets
2.	WAFRO Sp. z o.o.	4 531	300	Installation and designing of power, telecommunication and sanitary networks
3.	PPH Wyrobów Cukierniczych Gran-Pik	1 582	200	Confectionery products
4.	Zakład Tworzyw Sztucznych Artgos S.A.	2 524	165	Processing of plastics; manufacturing of plastic products
5.	PKS Connex Brzozów Sp. z o.o.	6 021	137	Passenger transport and tourism services
6.	Polikat S.A. (company with foreign capital share)	2 020	132	Plywood and plywood products
7.	Coronet S.A.	1 754	100	Manufacturing of lace and cotton gussets
8.	Gminna Spółdzielnia Samopomoc Chłopska	5 211	90	Retail sale of food and industrial products
9.	Nadleśnictwo Brzozów	7 513	80	Managing of forest resources; sale of timber
10.	Przedsiębiorstwo Gospodarki Komunalnej Sp. z o.o.	9 001	74	Disposal of solid and liquid waste; provision of town cleaning services
11.	Alta	5 211	69	Retail sale of groceries and chemical products; running a hotel and a restaurant
12.	Pracownicza Grupa Inwestycyjna Koronki Sp. z o.o.	5 141	58	Wholesale of textile products

Source: author's elaboration based on Business 2006 HBI database.

As far as natural resources are concerned, the Brzozów County is not too rich. It has small resources of oil and natural gas, which are still exploited. Also the already depleted Strachocina deposit is used as an underground storage tank for natural gas. Dust stone rocks and shales are extracted on a small scale, mainly for road engineering purposes.

Brzozów is in that group of the Podkarpackie Region towns, which are on a lower economic development level. More than half of residents of the Brzozów County earn their living through full-time employment (54.4%). The structure of

those working in the Brzozów County shows the domination of agriculture and forestry (44.1%), which is considerably more than in the Podkarpackie Region on the average. The level of employment in the industry, construction industry and market services is significantly lower than all over the Region (Tab. 12).

Tab. 12. Structure of jobs as per economy sectors in the Brzozów County against the region's background

Territorial unit	Percentage of those employed in		
	Agriculture and Forestry	Industry and construction	Services
Brzozów County	44.1	15.7	12.0
Podkarpackie Region	30.0	28.9	19.0

Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

The structure of income sources of the county residents is unfavourable. Almost 45% of people support themselves from non-earning sources, which significantly differs from the Region's average value, which is 39.1% When assessed against the regions' background, more people in the Brzozów County live off various state pensions, while less off standard retirement or old-age pensions (Tab. 13).

Tab. 13. Population income sources in the Brzozów County against the region's background

Income sources	Brzozów County	Podkarpackie Region
Earning	55.3	60.9
Non-earning, including:	44.7	39.1
Old-age pensions	37.9	44.9
Various state pensions	29.0	26.6
Other	33.1	28.6

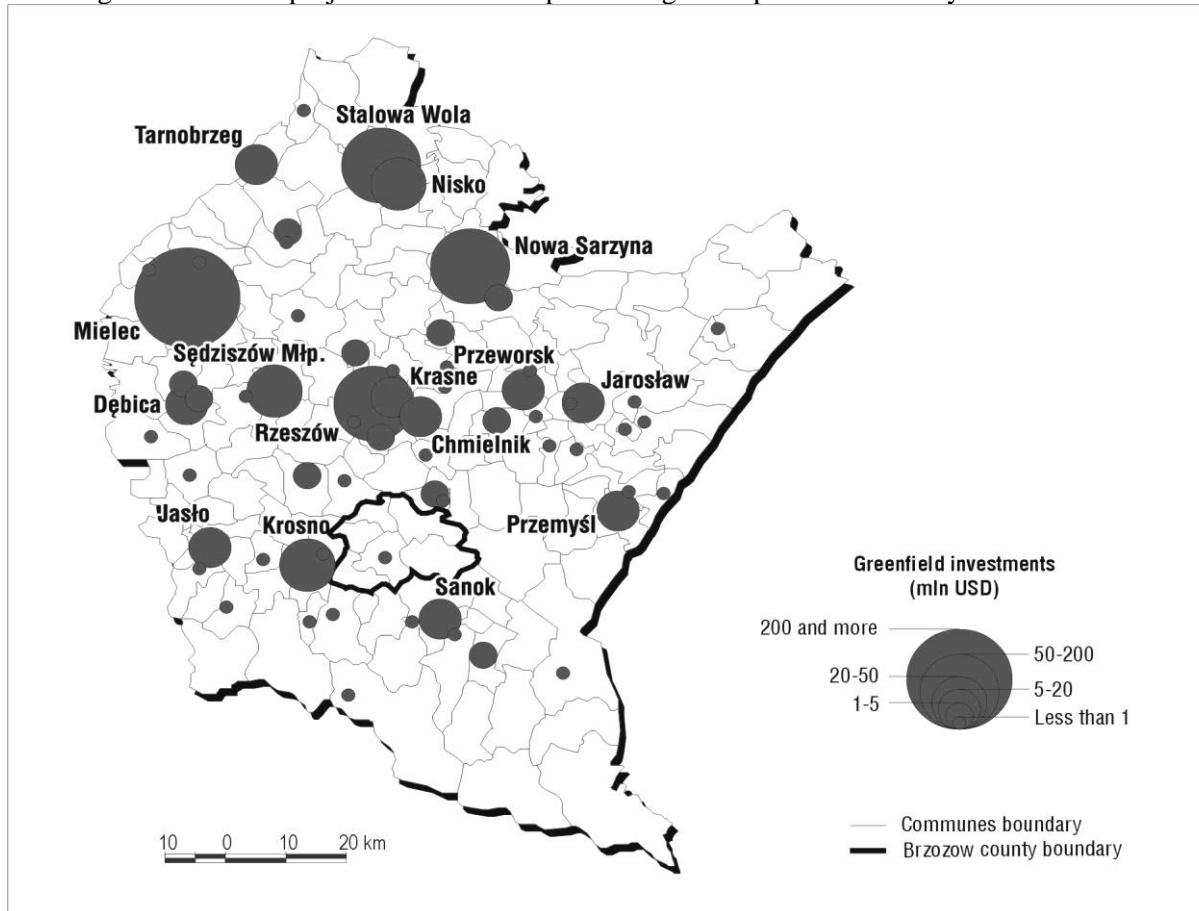
Source: author's elaboration based on data provided by the Regional Data Bank, GUS Statistical Office.

8.9% of persons employed in the non-agricultural sector operate their own businesses. According to the 2005 data, there were 3,176 business entities registered in the Brzozów County as at the year end, which constitutes 2.3% of the whole number of business entities in the Podkarpackie Region economy REGON register. There were 730 business entities registered in Brzozów itself, which constitutes 0.9% of the overall number of businesses in the Region's towns. There are 9.4 private companies per 100 town dwellers, and that is less the average figure for other Region towns (9.8). Among natural persons, who run their own businesses, the majority were engaged in trade and repairs.

The definite majority of operating businesses are private ones (94.6%). There are only seven companies with foreign capital shares. The largest of them is Polikat,

which employs 132 persons (wood trade). The volume of direct foreign investments is one of the lowest in the whole Podkarpackie Region and amounts to USD 132 *per capita*, which is almost ten times less than the average value in the Region (USD 1,300) (Fig. 3). When viewed against the background of the other counties, the Brzozów County has not shown any improvement in its position concerning the increase of foreign investments in recent years, while the lack of medium-sized and large greenfield investment projects reflects its poor capital investment attractiveness (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Greenfield projects in the Podkarpackie Region as per communes by the end of 2005



Źródło: A. Sobala-Gwosdz at al. (2006)

Agriculture

The Brzozów County belongs to agricultural and industrial areas. As many as 44% out of all county residents work in agriculture and forestry. This percentage is much higher than the average value for the whole Podkarpackie Region (30%). 93.7% of the county population work on their own farms. This, in turn, is only slightly higher than the average value for the whole Region, amounting to 90.9%. Farms are small and fragmented. Out of the total number of 13,945 individual farms in the Brzozów County (4.4% of all farms in the Podkarpackie Region), more than 95% of them are farms smaller than 5 hectares, with 36% of them smaller than 1 hectare. Large farms (above 10 hectares), which might generate the highest income, constitute only 0.49% (that is 69 farms). The average arable land surface area in an individual farm is 2.03 ha, and it is smaller than the Region's average (Tab. 14).

Tab. 14. Size structure of farms in the Brzozów County against the backgrounds of the region and Poland

Territorial unit	Average arable land surface area on a farm (ha)	Percentage of farms, with the surface areas of		
		up to 5 ha	5-10 ha	over 10 ha
Brzozów County	2.03	95.1	4.4	0.5
Podkarpackie Region	2.59	82.3	15.6	2.1
Poland	5.76	55.3	25.5	19.2

Source: author's elaboration based on the 2002 *Agricultural Census* results

Farming land covers 86.7% of the total land area in the Brzozów County. The largest part of it is arable land (75.4%), with – what should be stressed here – 40% of it being fallow and wasteland.

Tourism

Tourism is seen as one of the basic pillars of development for the Brzozów County in the future. Location of the county in the direct vicinity of the attractive Bieszczady and Beskid Niski mountains is often emphasized, while focusing less on great landscape values of the Pogórze Dynowskie and the Pogórze Strzyżowskie foothills that the county borders on. Meanwhile the hills, several-hundred metres high, cut by river valleys provide excellent resting conditions for hikers and walkers, bikers and those who love horse riding. The man-made lake at Blizne offers good recreation conditions. In the area of the town and Commune of Brzozów and in its direct neighbourhood there are no major sources of environmental pollution and contamination, which might significantly impact the natural environment condition. The only problem is that related to the high pollution level of the Stobnica river. The contents of nitrate nitrogen, phosphorus and phosphates exceed the admissible values at almost the whole monitored river length.

The nature attractions of the Brzozów region include two reservations: the Cisy at Malinówka and the Kretówki at Jabłonica Polska, the Czarnorzecko-Strzyżowski

Landscape Park with valuable ecosystems and picturesque line of rocky outcrops (with the Prządki reservation), as well as the Park's surrounding protecting zone (the Czarnorzecki Obszar Chronionego Krajobrazu). Lovers of architecture can find world-class monuments, such as the oldest Polish Orthodox church at Ulucz, a Rococo basilica at Stara Wieś, and wooden churches at Haczów and at Blizne, both included on the UNESCO's world heritage list.

The distance between the County of Brzozów and the cities of Rzeszów and Krosno which are the main urban centres generating tourist traffic is ca. half an hour drive, and enables the utilization of the county area for weekend tourism purposes. The Brzozów County is also predisposed to long-stay holidays, e.g. agritourism ones.

The presence of tourist infrastructure is a condition for translating the great tourist values of the region into profits, and thus contributing to the development of the region. However, tourist accommodation facilities are modest, as there are only 4 of them, with 208 accommodation places. In 2005, there were 4,421 tourists who stayed in them, including 72 foreigners. Also, in the county area, there are a dozen or so of agritourism farms (Tab. 15).

Tab. 15. Agritourism farms in the Podkarpackie Region

County	1997				February 2004			
	Number of agritourism farms		Number of accommodation places		Number of agritourism farms		Number of accommodation places	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Lesko	85	37	398	38	172	30	1 904	37
Sanok	28	12	120	11	87	15	641	13
Krosno	18	8	88	8	56	10	576	11
Bieszczadzki	22	10	84	8	42	7	491	10
Przemysł	19	8	108	10	37	6	282	6
Jasło	1	0	0	0	29	5	219	4
Leżajsk	20	9	60	6	28	5	212	4
Lubaczów	12	5	56	5	23	4	173	3
Rzeszów	7	3	50	5	18	3	118	2
Strzyżów	9	4	50	5	16	3	91	2
Dębica	0	0	0	0	14	2	56	1
Brzozów	1	0	5	0	13	2	129	3
Jarosław	8	3	34	3	8	1	31	1
Niżańsk	0	0	0	0	8	1	52	1
Kolbuszowa	0	0	0	0	5	1	38	1
Ropczyce-Sędziszów	0	0	0	0	5	1	20	0
Stalowa Wola	0	0	0	0	5	1	29	1
Mielec	0	0	0	0	2	0	14	0
Tarnobrzeg	0	0	0	0	2	0	12	0

Podkarpackie Region	230	100	1053	100	570	100	5088	100
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Source: author's elaboration.

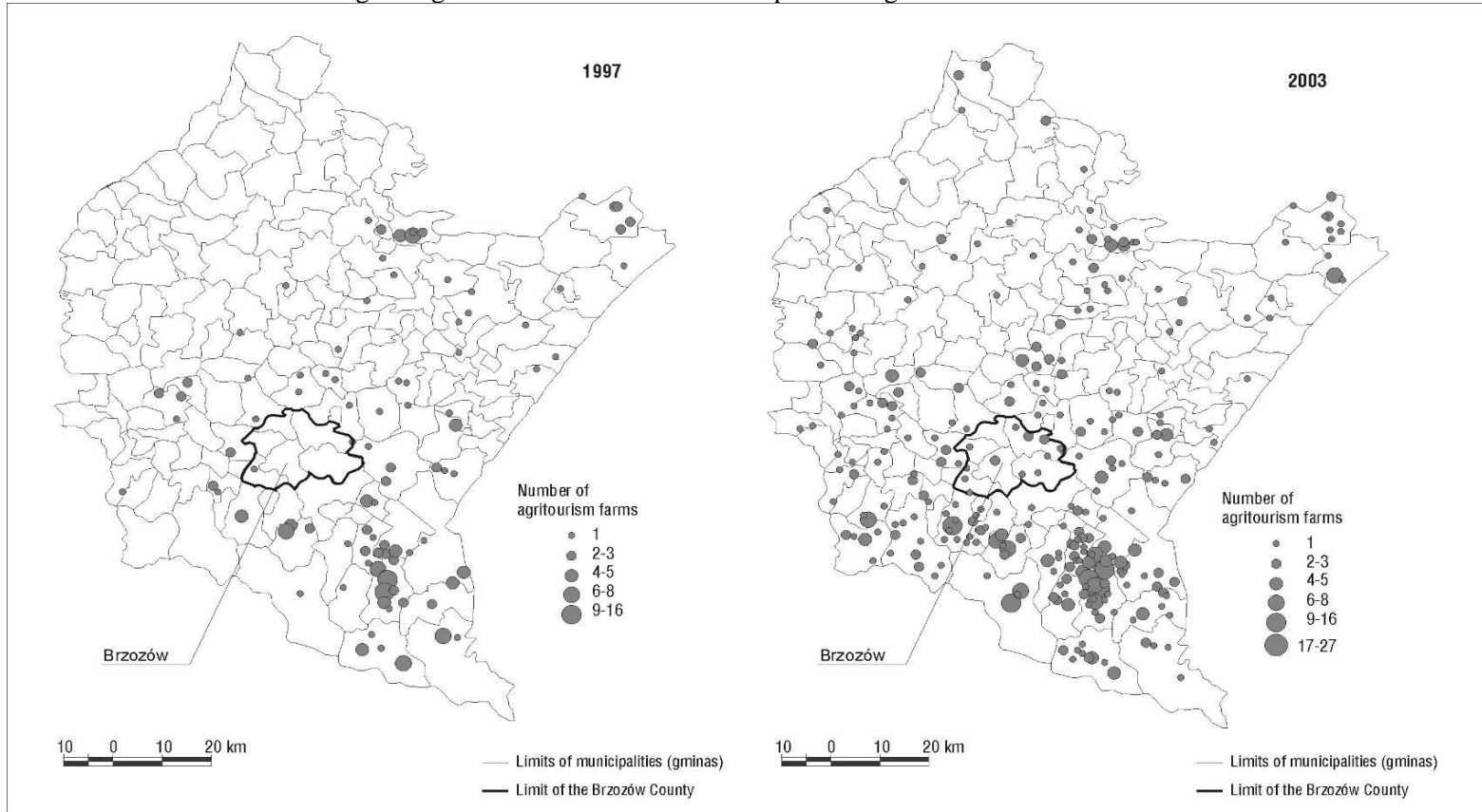
The Brzozów County, just like other counties and communes located in that region, has a much lower number of agritourism farms, as compared to the neighbouring mountain communes. Both as regards the number of agritourism farms, and the number of accommodation places, the Brzozów County is on the last position among the southern counties of the Podkarpackie Region. The number of agritourism farms is also lower than in other foothill counties, that is the Strzyżów County and the Przemyśl County (Fig. 4). This can be a sign of a low level of local entrepreneurship of farmers on the one hand, and of a poor promotion of the area, on the other.

The reconstruction of spa that existed in Brzozów before World War II progresses too slowly. So far, only the design for soil tests and hydrogeological drilling has been prepared and approved to confirm the volume and composition of mineral waters available in the spa. Positive test results might allow proceeding with the reactivation of a natural medicine centre in that area. The reactivation of the spa would surely foster the development of Brzozów. A high level of life and relatively economic prosperity of Iwonicz Zdrój best prove the significance of an operating spa for small towns of the region².

The Brzozów County boasts strong folklore traditions. Folklore ensembles to be mentioned in that respect include the *Grabownicy* ensemble, which performs traditional folk wedding ceremonies, and numerous folk bands, such as the *Graboszczanie*, the *Domaradzanie*, the *Przepióreczka*, or the *Ostrzewianie*. Great attractions of the Brzozów area are brass bands, acting and performing in Brzozów, as well as in the villages of Dydnia, Górki, Nozdrzec, Jasionów, and Haczow, and the Brass Standard Jazz Orchestra big band, which performs jazz music.

² This is a spa resort located in a distance of ca. 35 km from Brzozów

Fig. 4. Agritourism farms in the Podkarpackie Region in 1997 and in 2003



Source: author's elaboration based on data of: Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego w Korytnikach, Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne Galicyjskie Gospodarstwa Gościnne, Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne Regionu Dolina Strugu, Związek Gmin Turystycznych Pogórza Synowskiego, Galicyjskie Gospodarstwo Gościnne Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne Oddział Bieszczadzki

Policy

Once cannot speak of any comprehensive policy adopted within the regional development framework in the case of Brzozów, just like in the case of many other towns in the region or in Poland. Programmes, which may be utilized for their further development, are related to sectoral programmes that concern small and medium-sized businesses, the motivation of the unemployed, or the development of rural areas. The majority of those programmes include financial support, or are financed in whole from the EU funds, that is the European Regional Fund Development and the European Social Fund. Although Brzozów was in the province³, which had the quickest access to the EU funds under the Phare Rapid or Phare Struder II programmes, the county, just like other agricultural counties of the Region (Strzyżów, Lubaczów) gained as little as 1% of the while EU aid granted to the Podkarpackie Region by the end of 2003. The same situation concerns the acquisition of funds for the development by small and medium-sized enterprises. This reveals the basic problem faced by all rural counties, which are unable to cope with the acquisition of the EU structural funds, although the major part of those resources is allocated just towards them. Villages and communes located close to bigger towns can cope better, where not only the community is more enterprising community, but also it has a better access to information and advisory institutions.

Also, there is a lack of local government activities, both aimed at developing local entrepreneurship initiatives, such as business incubators and advisory institutions, and directed towards external investors (industrial and technological parks). Any labour-consuming industry operating in the area of such a high unemployment rate would improve the situation on the labour market and, through that, contribute to a lower migration of the young people. Gaining any production facilities would also be essential from the point of view of technical education system, which, on the one hand could provide workers, and on the other hand, could have an opportunity to teach young people in consideration of the actual market needs.

In the case of initiatives in the field of tourism, one should stress the activities that were undertaken within the framework of the Carpathian Euroregion, and consisting in the detailed survey and marking of tourist attractions. Also the program titled "Shingles in Poland. Development of Rural Areas and the Protection of Culture Heritage" (*Bois debout en Pologne. Association pour la défense du patrimoine culturelle et le développement rural en Pologne*), which popularizes wooden buildings among tourists from the Western Europe, has contributed to the area promotion. The Program also provides for the preservation of wooden buildings and the increase in the number of tourist accommodation facilities through the development of agritourism farms. As far as the local government policy is concerned, one should mention also numerous projects related to the construction and modification of county roads that have been implemented within the last years.

³ Only the communes of the former Krośnieńskie and Rzeszowskie Regions that now belong to the Podkarpackie Region could make use of those funds.

This has been one of the chief demands of the local community when preparing the county development strategies.

Conclusions

The currently observed main factors deciding on the level of local development presented in the article show that for small towns located outside the sphere of influence of larger urban agglomerations – such as Brzozów – there are no easy solutions which would transform their development path into a more favourable one. Such state of affairs is connected with the compounding of negative factors of development of both internal and external character. In the described case with respect to the main industrial employer we may thus speak of its weakening competitive position with respect to producers from countries with cheaper labour force especially in the Far East. At the same time external investors are not especially interested in the area of Brzozów County (*powiat*). Taking into account the insufficient level of activity of the local community both with respect to entrepreneurship and absorption of EU funds, endogenous development is not able to fill in the gap in the labour market. High unemployment and insufficient perspectives in the labour market combined with the feeling of stagnation lead to the outflow of mainly young, better educated and more active people to larger urban centres or abroad.

Development perspectives of Brzozów would be significantly better if transport access to Rzeszów – the regional growth pole – and to Krosno – a growth centre of sub-regional importance – improved. On the one hand, it would mean an improved possibility of access to more diversified labour markets, on the other, residential and recreational attractiveness of Brzozów *powiat* could grow, taking into account its above regional and above national average qualities. Such development potentials of Brzozów do not sufficiently impact on its economy. For example the advantage of the oncological hospital in the town (a strong specialised function) is unexploited because of the problems inherent in the Polish health care system. For towns such as Brzozów the key to success also consists of strengthening the local development resources, such as well educated and dynamic residents. People returning from abroad, richer in experiences, with a positive attitude and a capital to invest, who seem to be more prone to actively engage in the local small business sector may be regarded as such future chance for development.

Summary

The increase in disproportions in economic development and the faster dynamic of development of urban agglomerations leads to stagnation or socio-economic crisis of small towns located outside urban agglomerations and those small towns whose economic functions are based on close economic links with rural surroundings. Such small urban centres suffer from permanent negative trends of demographic and social development combined with the lack of perspectives for economic growth.

These trends may be slowed down or reversed if broadly understood local community is able to make use of new development trends emerging in Poland after 1989. The currently observed main factors deciding on the level of local development presented in the article show that for small towns located outside the sphere of influence of larger urban agglomerations – such as Brzozów – there are no easy solutions which would transform their development path into a more favourable one. Such state of affairs is connected with the compounding of negative factors of development of both internal and external character. Development perspectives of Brzozów would be significantly better if transport access to Rzeszów – the regional growth centre – and to town of Krosno – a growth centre of sub-regional importance – improved. On the one hand, it would mean an improved possibility of access to more diversified labour markets, on the other, residential and recreational attractiveness of Brzozów County (*powiat*) could grow, taking into account its above regional and above national average qualities. For towns such as Brzozów the key to success also consists of strengthening the local development resources, such as well educated and dynamic residents. People returning from abroad, richer in experiences, with a positive attitude and a capital to invest, who seem to be more prone to actively engage in the local small business sector may be regarded as such future chance for development.

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