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# **Globalization and Socio-Economic Development of the West Pomeranian and the Mecklenburg Vorpommern Regions**

## INTRODUCTION

The technological revolution and the dynamics of the integration processes in international trade and in international financial transactions have dramatically changed the face of today's global economy. It becomes the global economy [Grosse, 2002, pp. 181–206] within which an integration of national economies into a single economic organism is happening. In the global economy we are now dealing with the globalization of markets, namely with the growth of the market and production interdependence [Grzywacz, 2005, pp. 49–51; Kisiel-Łowczyc, 1994, p. 25].

Globalization specifies the links between different actors in all spheres of society. It is an ongoing complex process, which affects all people [Graban, Piekarski (ed.), 2003, p. 7]. Globalization has replaced the term “international”, which was associated with a division of the economies, systems, societies, etc. into the national, foreign or interstate [Grzywacz, 2005, p. 49].

## GLOBALIZATION – YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

The assessment of globalization depends on many factors. For some, it may be beneficial, for others, deadly. However, Jacques Chirac has pointed out that globalization is not making a better life for those who really need globalization the most [Chirac, 1996]. The economic divide into the industrialized countries and developing countries led to a split in the understanding of globalization. It is the participation in the international trade that has brought many benefits to developed countries.

Globalization was supposed to bring prosperity to the countries but in many cases it brought misery and poverty. Globalization has definitely decreased the

sense of isolation and, mostly for developed countries' citizens, increased the access to the knowledge and technology.

At the turn of the millenniums, many definitions of globalization have arisen. One of the most relevant is: globalization is the spread of the relationships between people [Scholte, 2006, p. 65], which in turn contributes to the development of technology, knowledge, commerce, etc.

Globalization today is completely different than a dozen years ago. It is difficult to determine the time at which it was created, however, already in ancient China, one said *tian xia* ("everything that lives underneath the sky"). This internationalization of the economy has gained the momentum with the appearance of the first communication tools, and dispersed together with the founding of the computer networks in the 60. and 70. of the XXth. Today globalization accelerates, electronic means are supraterritorial, travelling is cheaper, the number of companies is increasing, as well as the value of global foreign direct investment, markets are functioning through the global trade and easily available transportation techniques, currencies have ceased to be related to its territory thus lost their monopolistic position yielding an electronic finance, and the world is ruled by the global companies whose earnings may exceed the GDP of small countries.

## GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONALIZATION

One cannot forget about globalization. However, a process called regionalization is, in turn, the process that aims to isolate the regions, which is the manifest for their identity, primarily on a cultural level. Regionalism does not necessarily mean to be in opposition to globalization. One may think of it as a supplement to the internationalization of economies in the face of the global trade. In this context, one can distinguish two options of regionalism:

1. Economic regionalism, within which regionalisms are created inside the country, seeking to achieve greater economic freedom.
2. Sentimental region, which is deeply rooted in the consciousness of its inhabitants.

The changes in globalization affect the economic life in different countries and regions of the world and appear to be threatening to many, for example, in the developed countries it favors the acceleration of the economic growth, while in less developed countries it is a certain threat to further growth [Flejterski, p. 45; Wahl, 2003]. In addition, the uneven economic progress seems to be almost unattainable for many countries and companies. The widening gap between rich and poor opens up a world of great opportunities for some, but for the other – carries great risk. The response to the increasing globalization of the

world's economy is the revival of the regionalization process [Gwiazda, 2000, p. 8]. Although, regionalization leads to "the fragmentation" of the global economy, both are more complementary than competing. The international co-operation of the regions is a positive response to globalization and barriers to political, economic and social development of Europe [Toczyski, Sartorius, Zauch (ed.), 1997, p. 13]. The regional cooperation is a conscious and deliberate collaboration of state or local government units within a certain region, or regions to ensure peace, security, stability, economic development, social and cultural life [<http://www.infoport.pl>]. These actions will be positive, when the balance between subsidiarity and solidarity in the regions is kept.

It should be noted that regional cooperation [Malendowski, Ratajczak, 2000, p. 23], being an alternative to the globalization, highlights the fact that the entire universe is made up of smaller units, which cooperate, compete, complement or mutually exclude each other [*Międzynarodowa współpraca...*, 1997, p. 10]. Nevertheless, these elements form the entirety which is constantly evolving. The process complexity between all of the elements of the great entirety means that there is a need for cooperation between small parts of the model. The idea of cooperation between the regions makes it possible to equate the levels of development between them and the gradual convergence with preserving their cultural differences [Grabowska-Pieśła, 2003, p. 26–27]. It is important not to lose the identity. According to the sententia of the "global village" the topographic boundary ceases to exist and we are all the citizens of the united Europe, where new transborder and transcultural links are built.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The global economic and political life, as well as the large-scale development of international cooperation is a vital source of interdependence, causing the individual countries to be increasingly intertwined. It would seem that in a globalized world the cooperation of smaller units is not possible, because the economies are subject to globalization [Malendowski, Ratajczak, 2000, p. 23]. The main globalization alternative is the regional cooperation<sup>1</sup>.

The cross-border cooperation as a conscious and deliberate collaboration of state or local government units within a certain region or regions, as well as between countries is to ensure peace, security, stability, economic development, social and cultural life. The concept of the cross-border cooperation means "any jointly undertaken activity designed to strengthen and the further development

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<sup>1</sup> The result of the regional cross-border cooperation are jointly developed principles and rules of conduct contained in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

of neighborly relations between territorial communities or authorities of two or more contracting parties, as well as conclusion of agreements and agreements necessary to implement such plans<sup>2</sup>". The cooperation between different regions across the border does not mean the liquidation of the sovereignty of nation states, but only the search for solutions to smooth life on both sides of the border. An efficient interaction of local communities, particularly on adjacent areas, may lead to the changes in the extent and nature of international cooperation, which brings the possibility of creating cooperation networks to enable communications, infrastructure, economic, social and cultural activities. An important objective of the creation of cross-border structures is the fact that the issue of partnership and subsidiarity is indissoluble. The border areas are losing their peripheral features thus becoming a center for the exchange and cooperation between the two adjacent countries. Nowhere more than in the border areas, the need to overcome the isolationist and nationalist barriers is visible. Polish border areas are very different, which affect the conditions for the cross-border cooperation and the creation of the organizational structures for such cooperation. The variations are historical, economic, geographic, ethnic, political. The western boundary is fairly homogeneous in geographical and social terms. Nevertheless, there are obstacles to formalize the cooperation, which involve mainly differences in political and organizational structures of the two countries. The partners on both sides of the border are working on different organizational levels. This requires not only understanding, but also matching local administrative structures, which are not identical.

#### FORMS OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION. THE EXAMPLE OF THE WEST POMERANIAN AND MECKLENBURG – VORPOMMERN

The West Pomeranian region has an active economic policy at the level of interregional and international levels, but because of the geographical location and the number of common interests, the main "player" is the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Zachodniopomorskie's cooperation with the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has begun in less than six months after the German unification treaty. The West Pomeranian province is one of the most important partners for the Mecklenburg Vorpommern. The aim of the cooperation is the "common action for equitable and sustainable development of the region, and to align people and institutions on both sides of the border" [Berlińska, 2003]. The Polish-German cooperation is carried out at three levels [*The Government Centre...*, 1999, p. 70]:

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<sup>2</sup> European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between territorial communities and authorities 21 May 1980.

- interaction at the governmental level including the Committee on the Polish and German CBC,
- the cooperation at the municipal level, a number of cities, municipalities and counties partnerships create opportunities for cooperation in various fields [Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 2001, p. 25],
- cooperation within the Euroregion Pomerania [*Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion...*, 1999; Toczyski, Sartorius, Zauch (ed.), 1997, p. 106].

The cooperation at the governmental level focuses mainly on common agreements, in areas such as: spatial planning, tourism, culture, education, agriculture, environmental protection, social policy and health, labor market, including employment in the border area, the development of border crossings, modernization and expansion of transport links, exhibitions and fairs, information exchange, youth exchange, agriculture, forestry, energy, health. – these are just some of the areas that are the case of mutual contacts [*Vademecum...*, 2003].

An important component of the cross-border cooperation between the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the West Pomeranian is the Pomerania Euroregion. These Euroregions have recently become very important elements of the European integration. The establishment of Euroregions is to: ensure good relations between communities to improve the development of border regions, to promote the idea of the European unity, to establish joint ventures, to raise funds for the joint ventures' implementation, the economic cooperation [Glas, Puślecki, Serloth, 1995, p. 169–170].

It became customary for joint visits and the experience exchanges at the fairs and cooperative exchanges.

The result of the economic cooperation is an increase in the number of private businesses, mainly in trade and service sectors targeted to foreign visitors. Large cities play an important role in the development and international cooperation stimulation, being the independent “units” to decide on the pace and directions of development of the region and country, as they have sufficient human capacity to conduct the cross-border cooperation independently and to become its creators and dominant centers. But one can not underestimate the cross-border cooperation of small communities, where the individual projects such as marinas, bike paths, or sewage systems are not able to radically change the status quo of the shortage, but a network of communities working together is able to do it.

Internal borders, however, have disappeared only in theory. The Polish EU membership did not resolve the problems of border regions. It helped border regions to develop mutual relations, but it did not solve their problems [Szmyt-Radosevic, Siemiątkowski, 2004, pp. 4–7].

It should also be mentioned that there are differences between the border regions, which are the barriers to cooperation. Differences between the West Pomeranian and the Mecklenburg Vorpommern are:

- on the social level – differences in the level of social welfare, education, the level of wages, availability of services, negative stereotypes, poor knowledge of neighbors, not resolved problem of the mutual recognition of school certificates and baccalaureate,
- in the economic field – very different levels of socio-economic development, spatial development of border areas, the level of infrastructure and investment,
- on the level of infrastructure – poorly developed transborder infrastructure, in particular technical standards of border crossings,
- on the level of finances – different tax systems, different share of funds for the development of these areas,
- in the sphere of law regulations.

In summary, it can be stated that an international regional cooperation, thanks to the intensity of contacts, usually contributes to a better definition of comparative advantage. In the long term, it provides an additional impetus for the development. As a result, thanks to the market operations and their strategic planning influence, the cooperation leads to the activation of the regions' endogenous resources and allows for a better use of their specificity and promotes the economic development processes.

The international regional co-operation is considered to be an effective tool for strengthening regional development and its success depends largely on the regional authorities' mind openness to the international cooperation.

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### *Summary*

Globalization is very contested, however in the context of the West Pomeranian's and Mecklenburg Vorpommern's development, it has brought an integrated cooperation. This cooperation is an effective tool for strengthening two nations comparative advantage in the global market. What is more, authors put an emphasis on the strength of the regionalization and globalization processes of the regions and what impact the factors have on the socio-economic development. Moreover, authors prove the two processes may coexist and bring tangible socio-economic effects but only if subjected to an effective management.

## **Globalizacja i społeczno-gospodarczy rozwój regionów województw zachodniopomorskiego i Meklemburgii Pomorza Przedniego**

### *Streszczenie*

Globalizacja jest bardzo sporna, jednak w kontekście rozwoju województw zachodniopomorskiego i Meklemburgii Pomorza Przedniego globalizacja odnosi sukcesy w postaci między innymi zintegrowanej współpracy. Współpraca ta skutecznie wzmacnia oba regiony zapewniając im silniejszą względną przewagę konkurencyjną na globalnym rynku. Co więcej, autorzy kładą nacisk na siłę regionalizacji i globalizacji regionów i jaki wpływ czynniki te mają na rozwój społeczno-gospodarczy. Dodatkowo autorzy dowodzą, że te dwa procesy mogą ze sobą współistnieć i przynieść wymierne skutki społeczno-ekonomiczne pod warunkiem skutecznego zarządzania.