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BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME INNOVATIVE ECONOMY (OP IE)

1. INTRODUCTION

Several premises point to a significant role played by entities that provide support for business in shaping the regional innovation system. Although SMEs constitute more than 90% of the companies that operate on the territory of the European Union and their sales profits constitute more than half of the total profits made by the companies that operate in the Community area, their internal potential is usually not sufficient to implement innovative projects. Thus, entities that provide the necessary support for SMEs and enable them to carry out innovative undertakings are essential. Such entities, also called business support institutions, are often the catalysts of internal networks that integrate the regional economy and science. Their active involvement in supra-regional networks inspires the other entities to participate in the interregional cooperation. Therefore it is crucial for the services provided by them to be on the highest possible level (they should correspond to the needs of entrepreneurs and support their innovative development). One of the parameters, based on which the effectiveness of the business environment in the region can be evaluated, is the extent of their commitment to improving these services, including the use of external financing. The suitable tool to perform the indicated verification is benchmarking.

2. BUSINESS SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS AND INNOVATIVE SUPPORT SYSTEM

Various terms are used to describe institutions that provide support for business. The literature offers, among others, the following terms: business support

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institutions[1], innovation and business centres[2] and the non-commercial business environment[3].

Analysing the interpretation of the above-presented terms, it can be said that business environment institutions create an innovative institutional infrastructure (called also an innovative support system) which constitutes an essential link in a properly functioning regional innovation system[4]. These institutions provide services for SMEs based on their real, financial as well as intellectual capital and "do not work for profit or the profits are assigned to the statutory purposes according to the regulations contained in the statute or the equivalent document"[5].

According to K. Matusiak, business environment institutions are an essential link in "a modern innovative system of the countries that build the foundations of the knowledge-based economy. They are responsible for building the dialogue and cooperation platform for the world of science and business, thus creating the conditions for the efficiency improvement in the transfer of knowledge, information and technology"[6].

The entities that operate within the framework of the innovative institutional infrastructure may be divided into two groups[7]:

• resource centres – entities with an appropriate potential of material and non-material resources (e.g.: equipment, knowledge, financial resources) that can be made available to companies in the form of services or on a cooperative basis. Additionally, their competences serve to meet specific needs reported by companies (in terms of quality, time and costs). Typical entities in this category are the following: R&D

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[1] K. B. M a t u s i a k (red.), *Innowacje i transfer technologii. Słownik pojęć*, Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2008, p. 155.

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 224.

[3] J. Ł o b o c k i, *Kapitał społeczny jako czynnik rozwoju społeczno-ekonomicznego*, Instytut Ekonomii Uniwersytetu im. Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie, http://www.univ.rzeszow.pl/ekonomia/zeszyty/Zeszyt6/08_Lobocki_J%F3zef.pdf, 12.11.2012.

[4] More on the subject of the regional innovation system, among others, in: A. R o g u t, M. K l e p k a, A. G r a l a k, B. P i a s e c k i, *Ewaluacja interwencji publicznej służącej podnoszeniu efektywności Regionalnych Systemów Innowacji. Praktyczny przewodnik dla zamawiających badania ewaluacyjne*, Fundusz Współpracy, Łódź–Warszawa 2008; A. R o g u t, B. P i a s e c k i, M. K l e p k a, P. C z y ż, *Dobre praktyki wdrażania Regionalnych Strategii Innowacji w Polsce*, Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2009.

[5] W. B u r d e c k a , *Instytucje otoczenia biznesu*, Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2004, p. 5.

[6] K. B. M a t u s i a k, *Pojęcie i rola ośrodków innowacji w gospodarce narodowej*, [in:] *Ośrodki innowacji w Polsce instytucje rządowe i ogólnokrajowe centra transferu technologii inkubatory technologiczne akademickie inkubatory przedsiębiorczości parki technologiczne*, K. B. M a t u s i a k (red.), Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Stowarzyszenie Organizatorów Ośrodków Innowacji i Przedsiębiorczości w Polsce, Poznań–Warszawa 2005, p. 8.

[7] *Regional Action for Innovation Methodology in Design, Construction and Operation of Regional Technology Transfer Volume II Assessment of the Regional Innovation Support Infrastructure*, EIMS Publication, No. 19, European Commission, Luxemburg 1996.

institutions, including the ones operating at universities and in large companies, institutions that provide financial support (e.g. venture capital funds, business angels).

• interface organisations – entities that play the role of catalysts of interactions between institutions that offer support in the form of specific competences (e.g. technological, financial, etc.) and companies that require this support. Typical entities in this category include among others: centres for technology transfer, regional development agencies, business chambers and other organizations for entrepreneurs, technological parks and incubators.

In turn, the analysis of the evolution of the way that entities within the innovative institutional infrastructure operate carried out in the last century points to four stages of change: i) sector-oriented institutions that provide services of the "protective" nature (support for traditional sectors) and are managed on the national level – from the 1930's to the mid 1960's, ii) institutions oriented towards supporting innovative activity of the SME sector and its cooperation with the R&D sector – from the mid 1960's to the end of the 1970's, iii) decentralization of management of business environment institutions from the national level to the regional level and a turn towards stimulating actions that can contribute to the development of the region taken by individuals from various sectors – the 1980's, iv) institutions that operate within the framework of networks, oriented towards supporting interdisciplinary projects that are the key to the long-term development of the region – from the beginning of the 1990's to date[8].

The number of entities that are part of the innovative institutional infrastructure also changes and increases steadily. According to the research carried out by Matusiak's team in the mid 2010, there were 735 centres for innovation and entrepreneurship operating in Poland[9]. The largest number was situated in the Śląskie, Mazowieckie and Wielkopolskie Voivodeships and the smallest number in the Opolskie Voivodeship.

3. BENCHMARKING OF THE FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVENESS OF BUSINESS SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS BASED ON THE PROJECTS SUBMITTED BY THE SELECTED MEASURES AND SUB-MEASURES OF OP IE

The realisation of one of the seven flagship projects set out in the Strategy Europe 2020 – "An Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era – the project for

[8] K. B. M a t u s i a k, *Systemy wsparcia przedsiębiorczości i procesów innowacyjnych*, [in:] *Innowacje, przedsiębiorczość i gospodarka oparta na wiedzy*, P. N i e d z i e l s k i, E. S t a w a s z, K. P o z n a ń s k a (red.), "Zeszyty Naukowe. Ekonomiczne Problemy Usług" 2007, vol. 453, nr 8, (Uniwersytet Szczeciński, Szczecin).

[9] K. B. M a t u s i a k, *Uwarunkowania rozwoju infrastruktury wsparcia w Polsce*, [in:] *Ośrodki innowacji i przedsiębiorczości w Polsce Raport 2010*, K. B. M a t u s i a k (red.), Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2010, http://www.sooipp.org.pl/pliki/biblioteka/raport_2010.pdf, 12.11.2012.

the improvement of the business environment, particularly for SMEs, and for supporting a strong and diversified industrial base ready to compete on the world markets"[10] – requires from business environment institutions taking effective actions that support SMEs.

One of the parameters that constitutes the basis for the operational efficiency assessment of the innovative institutional infrastructure in the given region is the degree of involvement of institutions that form its part in the improvement of services rendered to SMEs, including, among others, making use of external sources of funding.

The appropriate instrument to conduct this verification is performance benchmarking[11]. Performance benchmarking[12] is a fast assessment of the entities in the given region – such as companies or centres for innovation and entrepreneurship – in relation to the entities that operate in other selected regions[13]. The aim of this process is to show, based on the available data such as financial or physical indicators, the leaders (the regions known as benchmarks where institutions achieved the best results) and the gap between the leading voivodeships and the other regions encompassed by benchmarking[14].

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[10] *EUROPA 2020 Strategia na rzecz inteligentnego i zrównoważonego rozwoju sprzyjającego włączeniu społecznemu*, KOM(2010), 2020 final, (Komisja Europejska, Bruksela, 03.03.2010), http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/1_PL_ACT_part1_v1.pdf, 12.11.2012.

[11] More on the subject of benchmarking, among others in: R. C. C a m p, *Benchmarking. The Search for Industry Best Practices that Lead to Superior Performance*, ASQC Quality Press, New York 1998; A. W ę g r z y n, *Benchmarking. Nowoczesna metoda doskonalenia przedsiębiorstwa*, Wydawnictwo Antykwa, Kluczbork–Wrocław 2000; T. B e n d e l l, L. B o u l t e r, *Benchmarking. Jak uzyskać przewagę nad konkurencją*, Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, Kraków 2000; J. L. M a i r e, *A model of characterization of the performance for a process of benchmarking*, "Benchmarking: An International Journal" 2002, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 506–520.

[12] More on the subject of performance benchmarking, among others in: P. K y r ö, *Revising the concept and forms of benchmarking*, "Benchmarking: An International Journal" 2003, Vol. 10, No. 3, (MCB UP); Ch. E. B o g a n, M. J. E n g l i s h, *Benchmarking jako klucz do najlepszych praktyk*, Wydawnictwo HELION, Gliwice 2006.

[13] More on the subject of benchmarking taxonomy, among others in: M. Z a i r, P. L e o n a r d, *Practical Benchmarking: The Complete Guide*, Chapman & Hall, Oxford 1996; E l m u t i D., K a t h a w a l a Y., *An overview of benchmarking process: A tool for continuous improvement and competitive advantage*, "Benchmarking for Quality Management & Technology" 1997, Vol. 4, No. 4, (MCB University Press); P. K. A h m e d, M. R a f i q, *Integrated benchmarking: A holistic examination of select techniques for benchmarking analysis*, "Benchmarking for Quality Management & Technology" 1998, Vol. 5, No. 3, (MCB University Press); K. S. B h u t t a, F. H u q, *Benchmarking – best practices: an integrated approach*, "Benchmarking: An International Journal" 1999, Vol. 6, No. 3, (MCB University Press); P. F e r n a n d e z, I. P. M c C a r t h y, T. R a k o t o b e - J o e l, *An evolutionary approach to benchmarking*, "Benchmarking: An International Journal" 2001, Vol. 8, No. 4, (MCB University); P. K y r ö, *op. cit*.

[14] More on the subject of benchmarking methodology, among others in: R. C. C a m p, *op. cit*.; S. C o d l i n g, *Benchmarking*, Gower, Brookfield (VT) 1998; S. W e l c h, R. M a n n, *The development of a benchmarking performance improvement resource*, "Benchmarking:

Thus, the preliminary assessment of the operational efficiency of the innovative institutional infrastructure in individual Polish voivodeships was conducted with the use of performance benchmarking.

The aim of the conducted performance benchmarking was to determine the leading voivodeships in terms of the overall application activity of business environment institutions situated on their territory. The values of the co-financing granted for the projects submitted by the business environment institutions from sixteen voivodeships within the framework of the selected measures and submeasures of the Innovative Economy Operational Programme (OP IE) were benchmarked.

OP IE is one of the six national programmes of the National Strategic Reference Framework which is financed by the European funds and whose objective is to support innovativeness; business environment institutions are one of its beneficiaries.

The following indicators were used to conduct performance benchmarking[15].

• The percentage share of the total value of the signed co-financing agreements in the given voivodeship in relation to the total value of the co-financing agreements signed within the framework of the particular measure or submeasure (index I1).

• The analysis covered the OP IE measures and submeasures presented below directed mostly towards business environment institutions[16].

Initiating innovative activities (OP IE Measure 3.1). Co-financing within the framework of this measure is allocated to projects that provide support at the incubation stage (the selection of business ideas put forward by potential entrepreneurs and assistance with starting a business based on these ideas for the best entities) and investments in a newly founded enterprise (shares in the companies whose innovative concepts prognosticate commercial success after the incubation period).

Creating a system that facilitates investing in SMEs (OP IE Measure 3.3 Submeasure 3.3.1 Supporting business environment institutions). Support for the following projects: trainings for private investors, including business angels, and cooperation (initiating and developing the cooperation networks between

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An International Journal" 2001, Vol. 8, No. 5, (MCB University); M. C. T y l e r, *Benchmarking in the non-profit sector in Australia*, "Benchmarking: An International Journal" 2005, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 219–235.

[15] The data in the form of the list of the signed co-financing agreements used in the analysis made with index I1 can be found at http://poig.parp.gov.pl/ as of the end of the second quarter of 2011.

[16] The characteristics of individual measures and submeasures encompassed by performance benchmarking was prepared on the basis of the publications presented at http://poig.parp.gov.pl/, 23.10.2011, http://www.poig.gov.pl/, 23.10.2011, and prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development: *Szczegółowy opis priorytetów Programu Operacyjnego Innowacyjna Gospodarka, 2007–2013. Narodowe Strategiczne Ramy Odniesienia na lata 2007–2013*, Ministerstwo Rozwoju Regionalnego, Warszawa 2010.

investors, entrepreneurship incubators and high risk funds; creating a platform for transfer of experience and investment knowledge as well as matching investors with entrepreneurs).

Support for the development of supra-regional cooperative relations (IE OP Measure 5.1). Co-financing within the framework of this measure is allocated to common undertakings in the field of consulting, training and investment carried out by groups of entrepreneurs; it covers planning, creating and managing the organizational structure of the cooperative relationship, including its marketing and development, investments made by groups of entrepreneurs and investments essential for functioning and development of this relation made by the cooperating entrepreneurs.

Supporting business environment institutions providing proinnovative services and their networks of supra-regional importance (OP IE Measure 5.2). Support for projects with the objective of strengthening business environment institutions and their networks by promoting cooperation within the network, transfer of knowledge and experience, common customer service and the development of the offer of proinnovative services. Co-financing is granted for preparing and developing the offer of consulting, training and information services as well as in the area of supporting proinnovative cooperation networks for entrepreneurs in order to increase their innovativeness, covering the costs of providing these services for entrepreneurs as well as of network initiatives and operational costs of the entity coordinating the activities of the network (network office).

Support for innovation centres (OP IE Measure 5.3). Co-financing within the framework of this measure is allocated to projects connected with the creation and development of innovation centres located in the areas of high development potential, particularly the creation and development of science and technology parks. The overriding objective of the available funds is the creation of the conditions that foster the growth of enterprises in the area of new innovative technologies as well as the provision of a comprehensive offer of services for entrepreneurs interested in introducing new solutions and scientists starting their own business.

Intellectual property management (OP IE Measure 5.4, Submeasure 5.4.2 Dissemination of knowledge concerning intellectual property). Co-financing within the framework of this submeasure is allocated to projects that disseminate and propagate the knowledge of methods, possibilities and benefits that result from the protection of intellectual property in enterprises.

The conducted performance benchmarking for the selected OP IE measures and submeasures indicated that within the framework of Measure **3.1 OP IE** the most active in terms application were the business environment institutions in two voivodeships: Małpolskie (I1 = 26.43%) and Mazowieckie (19.60%). Eight entities representing the business environment institutions from the Małpolskie Voivodeship signed agreements of the total value amounting to 116,634,521.82 PLN. In the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, the agreements were signed by five entities

for the total sum of 86,488,830.32 PLN. Bełchatów and Kleszczów Industry and Technology Park Ltd. from the Łódzkie Voivodeship was also a beneficiary of Measure **3.1 OP IE** with the project valued at 20,527,749.78 PLN. According to the data as of the end of the second quarter of 2011, the list of the beneficiaries of Measure **3.1 OP IE** did not include the business environment institutions from the following voivodeships: Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie and Świętokrzyskie (Fig. 1).

In terms of the number of the signed agreements for Submeasure **3.1.1 OP IE**, the Mazowieckie Voivodeship is a definite benchmark (I1 = 46.96%). Nine business environment institutions in this region signed agreements to implement projects in the area of training and support for the cooperation between investors and entrepreneurs. The value of the agreements signed by these institutions totalled 45,227,683.78 PLN. The Śląskie Voivodeship (I1 = 17.06%) and the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (I1 = 12.26%) were next in the classification. The Łódzkie Voivodeship ranked fourth (I1 = 7.96%) and the agreement for the implementation of "The Guild of Business Angels" project with the value of 7,671,476.00 PLN was signed by the Lodz Regional Development Agency. As in the case of Measure **3.1 OP IE**, the list of the beneficiaries for Measure **3.1.1 OP IE** excluded institutions from the following voivodeships: Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie and Świętokrzyskie. As of the end of the second quarter 2011, no institution from the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship was included on the list of the signed agreements (Fig. 1).

The results of the voivodeship classification for Measure **5.1 OP IE**, where the Podkarpackie Voivodeship was the benchmark, were particularly interesting (I1 = 29.35%). In this region two institutions signed the agreements for implementation of projects in the area of cooperative undertakings with the total value of 29,435,826.00 PLN. The list of the beneficiaries of this measure also included institutions providing support for business from three voivodeships: Śląskie, Mazowieckie and Dolnośląskie (Fig. 1). A low application rate of the business environment institutions in the other regions could have been caused by: i) little interest in cooperative undertakings; ii) no eligibility for co-financing due to the lack of the required minimum of granting points for the submitted projects.

Within the framework of Measure **5.2 OP IE**, the clear application dominance was seen in the case of the entities from the Mazowieckie Voivodeship (I1 = 63.41%). Eleven entities received support for the business environment institutions and their supra-regional networks, mostly for the development of proinnovative services, and the total value of co-financing agreements for the submitted projects amounted to 93,684,990.94 PLN. The Śląskie Voivodeship (I1 = 13.37%) and the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (I1 = 11.47%) were among the first three highest ranked voivodeships. The Łódzkie Voivodeship (the fifth position in the ranking, I1 = 3.82%) was represented by Bełchatów and Kleszczów Industry and Technology Park Ltd. that submitted a project with the value of 5,649,240.09 PLN.

However, there were no beneficiaries of Measure **5.2 OP IE** among the institutions providing support for business from the following voivodeships: Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie, Podlaskie, Pomorskie, Świętokrzyskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Zachodniopomorskie (Fig. 1).

In turn, the highest total value of support for innovation centres, in particular for the creation and development of science and technology parks (**OP IE 5.3**), was granted to the Małopolskie Voivodeship (I1 = 32.02%). Three projects from this region received co-financing: "The Development of the Jagiellonian Park and Technology Incubator – Life Science", "Technology Park – Multimedia City", "Information Technology Park of Małopolskie – Innovation Centre of the Cracow Technology Park", and the total value amounted to 254,815,336.05 PLN. "BIONANOPARK", the project of the Lodz Regional Science and Technology Park, received support in the Łódzkie Voivodeship. The Mazowieckie Voivodeship, however, considered the benchmark in most of the above-mentioned OP IE measures and submeasures, was not on the list of the beneficiaries of Measure **5.3 OP IE** (Fig. 1). Moreover, according to the report of 2010 entitled "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centres in Poland. Report 2010"[17], only the Płock Industry and Technology Park was in operation. The aforementioned report states further that "Despite high expectations, political pressure and the prepared documentation, at the beginning of 2009 the initiative of the Warsaw Technology Park was discontinued. Warsaw, in spite of a large concentration of national innovative as well as research and development potential, has no such park. It is seen as a weakness from the perspective of the national innovation system"[18]. Moreover, the Małopolskie and Dolnośląskie Voivodeships (that were among the first three of beneficiaries of Measure **5.3 OP IE**) were characterised by the highest concentration of technology parks (4 technology parks operating in the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and 3 in the Małopolskie Voivodeship).

Within the framework of the last of the analysed submeasures – Submeasure **5.4.2 OP IE** – the Mazowieckie Voivodeship was the benchmark (I1 = 45.64%). Almost half of the financial support granted within the framework of Measure **5.4.2 OP IE** was received by the three business environment institutions in this region and the total value of the projects submitted by these entities amounted to 8,978,998.00 PLN. In the Łódzkie Voivodeship, the Entrepreneurship Development Agency received 519,000.00 PLN for disseminating the knowledge regarding intellectual property. As of the end of the second quarter of 2011, there were no institutions providing support for business from the following voivodeships on the list of the co-financing agreements: Dolnośląskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie and Zachodniopomorskie (Fig. 1).

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[17] K. B. M a t u s i a k, *Uwarunkowania rozwoju...*

[18] K. B. M a t u s i a k, *Parki technologiczne*, [in:] *Ośrodki innowacji i przedsiębiorczości w Polsce Raport 2010*, K. B. Matusiak (red.), Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Warszawa 2010, http://www.sooipp.org.pl/pliki/biblioteka/raport_2010.pdf, 12.11.2012, p. 37.

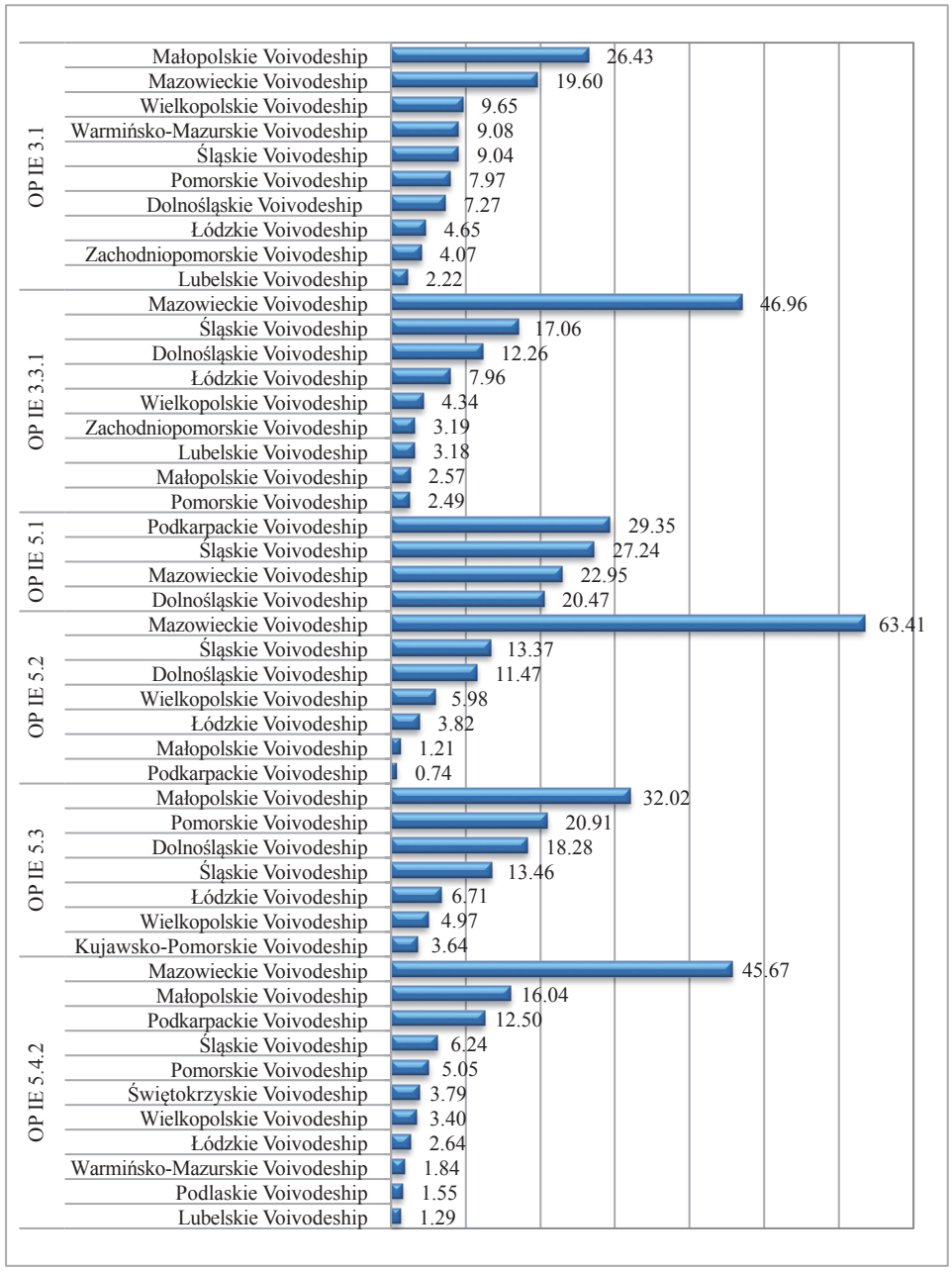

Fig. 1. Performance benchmarking for Index I1 (as of the end of the second quarter 2011) for each of the analysed measures and submeasures (in %)

S o u r c e: based on the list of the co-financing agreements signed within the framework of each of the analysed measures and submeasures, http://poig.parp.gov.pl/.

The summary of performance benchmarking is included in Fig. 1. The figure shows the classification of the regions in terms of the total value of signed contracts by localizing within the business environment institutions. In the figure, voivodeships were placed with ascending from the benchmarks (voivodeships, where business environment institutions received the most funds for projects) to the voivodeships with the lowest W1 index divided into analyzed measures and submeasures. In most of these measures and submeasures, the Mazowieckie Voivodeship was the benchmark in terms of the application activity of its business environment institutions (**OP IE: 3.1** (the second position in the ranking); **3.3.1; 5.2** and **5.4.2**). The Małopolskie Voivodeship also achieved a high position in the classification for some of the analysed measures and submeasures and in the case of Measure **3.1 OP IE** and Measure **5.3 OP IE** it held the first place. In turn, the Podkarpackie Voivodeship was the benchmark of Measure **5.1 OP IE**. The Śląskie and Dolnośląskie Voivodeships also achieved high classifiaction positions. The business environment institutions from the Lubuskie and Opolskie Voivodeships, however, were not included on the lists of the signed agreements. A low rate of application activity was also recorded for the business environment institutions in the following voiodeships: Kujawsko-Pomorskie (one project for Measure **5.3 PO IG**), Podlaskie and Świętokrzyskie (one project each for Submeasure **5.4.2 OP IE**), Warmińsko-Mazurskie (two projects for Measure **3.1 OP IE** and one project for Submeasure **5.4.2 OP IE**) and Zachodnipomorskie (one project for Measure **3.1 OP IE** and Submeasure **3.3.1 OP IE**).

4. PROJECT BEST PRACTICES WITHIN SELECTED MEASURES AND SUB-MEASURES OF OP IE

In a more detailed benchmarking of projects on the lists of the signed co-financing agreements, "good project practices" can be seen[19]. Characteristics of these projects aims to indicate solutions, which may be an "inspiration" for the other business environment institutions, which plan to improve their services for SME both based on external sources of financing, as well as its own resources.

[19] The verification of "good practice" in this paper has a subjective character and is not a recommendation for other entities. The available information shows that no competition was carried out to determine good practices for the analysed OP IE measures and submeasures. There are also no available evaluation reports due to the fact that most projects are still being implemented. Hence, the selected "good practices" form only guidelines for the implementation of innovative solutions defined as innovative due to the application of the given solution in one project within the framework of comparable projects for the particular OP IE measure or submeasure and due to its interesting and uncommon character. More on good practices in: A. R o g u t, B. P i a s e c k i, M. K l e p k a, P. C z y ż, *op. cit*.; *What is a Good Practice?, Zespół projektu RUSE*, http://www.ruse-europe.org/what-is-a-good-practice/, 07.02.2010.

Thus, within the framework of Measure **3.1 OP IE**, the project of the Wrocław Research Centre EIT+ Ltd. entitled "EIT+ Accelerator of Innovative Companies with Hybrid Industry Profile"[20] that provided support at the incubation stage for only interdisciplinary concepts can be seen as good practice[21]. The analysis of the methods employed by the applicants within the framework of this measure aiming at the identification of undertakings for commercialisation, however, indicates the existence of two good practices.

• The project entitled "InQbe – the Incubator for Technological and Internet-related Projects"[22] submitted by InQbe Ltd. from the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship aimed at creating a virtual community of innovators serving to select undertakings with a commercial potential, to exchange good practices and to integrate the circles of concept originators.

• The project entitled "TechnoBoard – pre-incubator and incubator for the commercialisation of e-economy undertakings"[23] submitted by TechnoBoard Ltd. from the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, in which the initial stage of concept selection was based on organizing video conferences conducted by the incubation team.

Within the framework of Submeasure **3.3.1 OP IE**, the activities planned in the two projects implemented by the business environment institutions in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship can be seen as good practices:

• "Fruits of Business" – a good offer is the key to success[24], the project submitted by the Management Observatory Foundation which involves the presentation of short business proposals in the Polish and English version as well as the preparation of analytic offers including the main elements of the Investment Memorandum for the entrepreneurs selected by the means of a competition mode.

• "Activisation and Increasing Competence of the Entities Operating on the Business Angel Market in Poland"[25], the project submitted by the Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan characterised by a comprehensive offer of training, making use of European and American training programmes and seminars for concept originators and investors.

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[20] *EIT+ Accelerator of Innovative Companies with Hybrid Industry Profile*, http://akcelerator plus.pl/pl/o_projekcie/564/, 12.11.2012.

[21] The analysed projects from the list of the signed co-financing agreements within the framework of this measure had mostly a one-sector character and were directed mainly towards the teleinformation, energy, transport, pharmaceutical and medical services sector.

[22] *InQbe – Inkubator projektów technologicznych i internetowych*, [in:] *INQBE. Innowacje dla przyszłości*, http://inqbe.pl/aktualnosci/wyswietl_wiadomosc/13/inqbe_inkubator_projektow_technologicznych_i_internetowych.html, 12.11.2012.

[23] *TechnoBoard. Inkubator small e-biznesu*, http://www.technoboard.pl/index.php, 12.11.2012.

[24] *Owoce biznesu. Dobra oferta krokiem do sukcesu*, http://www.owocebiznesu.pl/, 12.11.2012.

[25] *Pomysł – biznes – sukces! Konkurs. Zacznij.biz*, [in:] *Business Angels Lewiatan*, http://www.lba.pl/projekt/o-projekcie, 12.11.2012.

Due to the products received within the framework of Measure **5.1 OP IE**, the project of the Regional Development Agency MARR Plc. from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship entitled "Building of an Electric Vehicles Market and the Charging Infrastructure – a Foundation of Energy Security"[26] is an example of good practice. This project, apart from providing a support platform for cooperative relations and investments in the motorization and sustainable energy sectors, sets out to create the prototype of electricity-powered vehicle and a model of the urban charging system for these vehicles. The creation of the mobile laboratory that allows the members of the passive and energy-efficient house cluster the freedom to use the equipment necessary to carry out the research on the energy efficiency of buildings is also an innovative undertaking within the framework of Measure **5.1 OP IE**. The laboratory is one of the tasks planned as part of the project entitled "The Development of the First Polish Passive and Energy-efficient House Cluster"[27] submitted by the Upper Śląskie Industrial Park Ltd.

Within the framework of Measure **5.2 OP IE**, the good practice in terms of proinnovative services is their provision in the form of e-services (the activity planned by most of the applicants). Additionally, the beneficiaries from the Mazowieckie[28] and Dolnośląskie Voivodeships[29] included in their offer for companies, apart from standardised instruments supporting a wide scope of business activity, the creation of individual Internet instruments designed to meet the needs of specific consumers.

Showing good project practices within the framework of Measure **5.3 OP IE** is not feasible due to the object of co-financing – the creation and development of innovation centres located in the areas with high development potential. Each of the co-financed projects is an individual good practice adapted to the needs of the region where it is implemented, including the economic sectors that constitute a priority for the given region.

Within the framework of Measure **5.4.2 OP IE**, the applicants planned a number of activities aimed at the dissemination and propagation of the knowledge concerning the protection of intellectual property in enterprises, including

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[26] *Budowa rynku pojazdów elektrycznych, infrastruktury ich ładowania – podstawą bezpieczeństwa energetycznego. Program Operacyjny Innowacyjna Gospodarka Działanie 5.1 Dyfuzja Innowacji*, http://www.marr.com.pl/poig/index-1.html, 12.11.2012.

[27] *Klaster budownictwa pasywnego i energooszczędnego*, http://klasterbudownictwa.pl/pl/o_klastrze, 12.11.2012.

[28] The National Chamber of Commerce in the project entitled "LEM – Diffusion of Innovations among SMEs", http://www.kig.pl/projekty-realizowane-przez-kig/realizowane/2636-lem-dyfuzja-innowacji-wrod-msp.html, 12.11.2012, and the National Economic Chamber of Electronics and Telecommunication in the project entitled "The Creation of Proinnovative Service – Correspondence Management System for SMMEs", http://www.kigeit.org.pl/informacje/szok/iSZOK_ogolne.htm, 12.11.2012.

[29] The Free Entrepreneurship Association Branch in the project entitled "Business Clinic – Centre for New Proinnovative Services", http://klinikabiznesu.pl/, 12.11.2012.

the organisation of various types of meetings (workshops, seminars, conferences), running Internet information services, web portals and media campaigns as well as the creation and issue of publications. The following, however, can be seen as good practices that widen the scope of the indicated actions:

– appointing a virtual patent ombudsman within the framework of the project entitled "Intellectual Property – Undervalued Potential of Entrepreneurs"[30] of the Małopolskie Regional Development Agency;

– designing Internet tools that allow independent threat assessment concerning the loss of industrial property and planning the development strategy for the company based on the industrial property rights owned within the framework of the National Chamber of Commerce project entitled "IP HERMES. Industrial Property Protection in Innovative Companies"[31].

The more detailed benchmarking of the projects indicates that they are characterised by a number of good practices in terms of the objectives planned for implementation, supported sectors and project products. The analysis shows that the applicants' offer also included, apart from standardised solutions, solutions "custom-made" to meet the needs of the end beneficiaries, i.e. SMEs. Additionally, a large number of applicants make use of modern information and communication technologies to implement the projects planned.

5. CONCLUSION

1. Business support institutions as a whole support system for enterprises, especially SMEs, have gone the long way since the 30's. Initially, they were of the nature of national institutions support traditional sectors and then they evolved into the networks oriented on the support of interdisciplinary, crucial form the region projects.

2. Effectiveness benchmarking of the functioning of institutions, made on the basis of the number and quality of projects within measures **3.1, 3.3.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4.2 of Operational Programme Innovative Economy**, allowed to identify these regions, which characterize concentration of "active application" business support institutions and those within the confines of which are located institutions, which did not apply or with relatively smallest frequency or effectiveness for funding to support their activities.

3. The Mazowieckie Voivodeship was undisputedly the benchmark in terms of business support institutions' action results measured with the number of

[30] *MARR. Małopolska Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego SA. Własność intelektualna, niedoceniony potencjał przedsiębiorców*, http://www.marr.pl/wi.html, 12.11.2012.

[31] *O projekcie*, [in:] *IP HERMES. Ochrona własności przemysłowej w innowacyjnych firmach*, http://ip-hermes.pl/o_projekcie.php, 12.11.2012.

project applications. At a considerable distance behind the Mazowieckie Voivodeship there remain Małopolskie, Pomorskie, Śląskie, Dolnośląskie and Podkarpackie Voivodeships, which does not disqualify those provinces in the race to take benchmark positions in the future, because the large number of submitted projects in Mazowieckie Voivodeship has many causes, which help to hold a good position at the start, certainly including the fact of having within its borders the capital city of Warsaw. It would be worth to take a closer look at this region to precisely determine what affects the success of actions of business support institutions in its area.

4. The lack of projects concerning researched measures and sub-measures of OP IE in Lubuskie and Opolskie Voivodeship and a very small percentage of projects in Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeships. The low activity of the studied business support institutions in these regions may also indicate a corresponding low level of services provided by these institutions to regional SMEs. It is recommended to carry out more research on these regions in order to diagnose the underlying cause of their low activity.

5. Activities carried by OP IE Beneficiaries were various both in terms of tasks performed, final products and the sectors to which support was addressed. A wide range of conducted activities may present that the business support institutions that study was conducted on, try to provide services tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs in terms of industry, business profile and size measured with the number of employees and annual turnover. However, quoted solutions – good project practices – can be a source of inspiration for the other entities, which plan to improve the support they provide to SMEs.

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BENCHMARKING EFEKTYWNOŚCI FUNKCJONOWANIA INSTYTUCJI OTOCZENIA BIZNESU Z SZESNASTU WOJEWÓDZTW NA PODSTAWIE ZŁOŻONYCH PROJEKTÓW DLA WYBRANYCH DZIAŁAŃ I PODDZIAŁAŃ PROGRAMU OPERACYJNEGO „INNOWACYJNA GOSPODARKA" (PO IG)

Realizacja jednego z siedmiu projektów przewodnich wskazanych w „Strategii Europa 2020 – Polityka przemysłowa w erze globalizacji" nakłada na instytucje otoczenia biznesu obowiązek świadczenia usług na rzecz MŚP na najwyższym poziomie. Z uwagi na to, że udoskonalenie oferty dla MŚP wymaga zaangażowania odpowiednich środków finansowych, które zwykle przewyższają możliwości budżetowe tych instytucji, konieczne jest skorzystanie z zewnętrznych źródeł finansowania przeznczonych na ten cel. Dla instytucji otoczenia biznesu w Polsce takie źródło stanowi m.in. PO IG. Zatem dokonanie wstępnej oceny aktywności aplikacyjnej instytucji otoczenia biznesu w ramach wybranych działań i poddziałań PO IG może stanowić jeden z parametrów

weryfikujących ich zaangażowanie w udoskonalanie oferty dla MŚP. Ponieważ MŚP korzystają zwykle z usług podmiotów funkcjonujących w regionie ich lokalizacji, zasadne jest przeprowadzenie zbiorczej oceny dla instytucji otoczenia biznesu z poszczególnych województwach. Odpowiednim narzędziem do przeprowadzenia takiej oceny jest *benchmarking* wyników, który umożliwia wskazanie zarówno: 1) województw liderów – *benchmark*-ów – pod względem łącznej aktywności aplikacyjnej instytucji otoczenia biznesu zlokalizowanych na ich obszarze, jak i 2) dystansu dzielącego pozostałe województwa objęte *benchmarking*-iem. Przeprowadzony *benchmarking* wyników dla wybranych działań i poddziałań PO IG wyróżnił cztery województwa wiodące: mazowieckie, małopolskie, dolnośląskie i śląskie. Znaczący był również dystans między wskazanymi województwami a pozostałymi objętymi *benchmarking*-iem, zwłaszcza dwoma: lubuskim i opolskim, z których instytucje otoczenia biznesu nie znalazły się na żadnej z analizowanych list podpisanych umów o dofinansowanie. Co więcej, do podmiotów z województw uznanych za *benchmark*-i trafiła większa część wsparcia przyznanego dotychczas w ramach każdego z analizowanych działań i poddziałań. Projekty instytucji z tych województw były również źródłem dobrych praktyk.