

## **The marching column glances behind itself ?**

### **The European Union's cohesion policy in view of regional problems in socioeconomic development - a study based on Polish and German experiences**

In 2013, there came the ninth anniversary of Poland's membership in the European Union and the twenty third anniversary of accession into the Community by the former GDR. The fate of Poland and of East Germany became joined for several decades. As a result of turmoil after the Second World War, both these countries became satellite states of the Soviet Union. Liberation from under the influence of the USSR occurred in the autumn of 1989 as a result of transformations in the eastern-block countries. These states took up their own path which in the case of the GDR meant unification with the FRG and thereby these new union countries became inadvertently a member of the European Union. Poland's road to Europe was longer. It was preceded by years of difficult systemic transformation and lengthy negotiations culminating with EU accession in May of 2004. Accelerated membership in the European Union of the former GDR, that was the result of unification of the German states, gave the East-German transformations an exceptional character and thus they were different from those taking place in other countries of the eastern block. Meanwhile, one notices similarities as well as differences. One of the common elements is belonging to the European Union. Poland and East Germany had gotten the unique opportunity of supporting own development processes with resources from the Union budget. Until recently, many analyses limited themselves to studying changes based on economic metrics. In the meantime, many scientists notice that this criterion should not be the exclusive superseding goal in socioeconomic development of a region or state. Increase of quality of life is also an essential element of Union policies and programs. The defining and measurement of quality of life is not an easy task as it is complex and interdisciplinary. In this study, various parameters and indicators were selected; these served to evaluate the different aspects of quality of life.

The goal of the dissertation titled: „*Marching column glances behind itself? Cohesion policy of the European Union regarding regional problems in socioeconomic development...*” is the presentation of the essence of European Union policies, its mechanisms, programs, most important visions, and strategies, to be followed then by presentation of changes, differences, and also common traits of the quality of life in Poland and in East Germany against the backdrop of other members of the European Union. This means the analysis with use of selected metrics

where special attention is paid to Polish voivodships and East German federal states. An essential part of the study is the attempt to list and evaluate impact of the „Union stimulus” and in particular resources designated for the cohesion policy. Within the framework of this policy, there are implemented the concepts which are meant to decrease inequality in socioeconomic development of the regions. The reduction of disparities is to contribute to strengthening of economic, social, and territorial cohesion of the entire European Union. Many researchers are studying the quality of life, cohesion policy, or socioeconomic development both in Poland as well as in Germany. What is missing in literature however is the subject of a holistic study attempting to encompass the widest possible scope of research topics in reference to the area of Poland, East Germany, and also other states of the EU in the context of membership in the Community through the prism of the quality of life. This dissertation comprises an attempt to explain the holistic mechanism of socioeconomic development of Poland, taking into account individual traits of the region as compared with the neighboring country of Germany. The Union experiences of East Germany have helped in forming proposals and recommendations for Poland, which are placed at the end of the study.