

## Summary

In the period of 2007-2013 Poland has been the biggest beneficiary of European funds of all European countries. From the whole sum, more than 4 billion Euro is at Ministry of Science and Higher Education disposal and should be designed for development of universities by finance research infrastructure, support R+D projects or keep high standards of education. By making use of given funds from EU, universities, as a result, have to influence on development of regions' economic competitiveness and support research and scientific potential. This report includes the opinion of that influence by the example of universities in the Malopolska region.

The report has been prepared based on information gathered from varied sources. The authors did some analysis of strategic documents touching many of the European funds issues and ways of spending them in the region. The data was collected also by individual interviews with experts who are managing the universities or are connected with projects funded by European funds. Another source of information was the report data gathered from all universities in Malopolska region. The analysis has been completed by information from Office of the Marshal of the Malopolska Voivodeship and from The Voivodeship Labour Office in Krakow. What is more, some polish and foreign good practices has been identified. Such a complex process of gathering information mentioned above enable authors to collect valuable material which can pose real help in describing strategic operations concerning granting Malopolska's universities European funds.

Comparing with rather generally expressed role of universities in the period of 2004-2006, in the current programming period 2007-2013, their role as a significant leader working for economic growth is widely characterized in many strategic documents such as National Cohesion Strategy or National Development Strategy 2007-2013. The similar depiction of the universities' role is included in documents of the Malopolska Voivodeship such as Malopolskie Voivodeship Development Strategy 2007-2013 and Regional Strategy of Innovation of Malopolska, in which the main universities' goals are to strengthen regions' economic competitiveness, create conditions for varied social development and high living standards as well as support institutional potential of Malopolska's region. In these documents the main operations' directions are outlined: investing in human capital, modernization and development of teaching and social infrastructure of universities.

Comparing with previous programming period, in the period of 2007-2013 the European funds dedicated for higher education has significantly increased. The attitude to the priority areas of expense has also changed by paying more attention to R+D sectors and technology transfer. Nowadays, universities can participate in project funded by European Union in a different ways – there are programs dedicated directly to the universities, but there is also possibility to participate in program by other university's unit or by cooperation with other outside institutions. These possibilities cause that it is extremely difficult to estimate the real potential of universities of using European funds. The attempt of estimating is connected with the risk of its underestimation.

The report consists of diagnosis of process of education in Malopolska's universities. Polish higher education has been changed a lot. One of these changes is the demographic expansion meaning higher percentage of students with simultaneous lower level of

education. In the consequence, the biggest challenge in the very next future will be demographic low. The authors also analyzed the most important barriers in the process of education. Additionally, there is also the analysis of educational potential in Malopolska's universities comparing to other schools in few, chosen voivodeships. The comparison shows that despite few universities, Malopolska is the second region in the whole country (after Mazowieckie voivodeship) in terms of the number of students.

The report also consists of analysis of research potential in Malopolska's universities. Not only qualified people but also specialized research equipment make up this potential. Low research activity is characteristic mainly of smaller, private universities which doesn't possess their own research workers and the proper funds for technical and research equipment. The main source of funds designed for universities' R+D area is finance resources from national budget. The biggest beneficiaries of these funds are public universities.

Another financial source for R+D area in universities is European funds. The diagnosis of Malopolska's universities shows that gaining and using them means long and difficult process of formal procedures and complicated guidelines. Because of that, there are some special offices in the universities, responsible for gaining European funds and cooperation with other, exterior structures. The process of getting and accounting funds is often connected with many barriers which can be initiated both within the universities and in their exterior environment.

The report also touches on the influence of regional decisions and exterior environment on the process of education in universities. It also includes the analysis of universities cooperation with other structures as the business sector or management ones.

In all important documents the innovation and R+D issues are the clue themes for economic-social life. The harmonious development of higher education requires adequate funds and the cooperation of academic, business and administration environments. The growth expenditure for education (mostly on R+D issues) and studying the scheme for financing research should be recognized as the priority trends.

The Malopolska region is one of leaders of taking advantages of European funds in the period of 2007-2013. One should make every effort to use the effects of that and influence for whole region.