

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE SECTOR OF THE VOIVODESHIPS OF EASTERN POLAND**

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to analyze the development of the SME sector in Poland, with particular emphasis on regions belonging to the Eastern Poland. The period of analysis covers the years 2001–2011. Throughout this period we note arise in the number of active SMEs in all voivodships. However, the density ratio of SMEs in the eastern voivodships is very low compared to other regions. Beneficial seem larger share of employment in SMEs in total employment in the eastern regions, similar trends exist in the case of revenue which is due to, however, low activity of large corporations in these provinces. Should be assessed positively increasing expenditures incurred for small and medium-sized enterprises located in eastern voivodships, which may result in an increase in the activity of SMEs in the future, which finally may contribute to the increase of competitiveness of the regions of Eastern Poland.

**Key words:** SME sector, dynamics of enterprises' indicators changes, comparisons between regions, regional development

### **INTRODUCTION**

Publications on economic development argue for the prime importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the economy of all the developed countries of the world. The experience of highly developed countries indicates that small and medium-sized enterprises can considerably affect the development of economic growth, significantly contribute to the creation of gross domestic product, facilitate the reduction of unemployment, supplement the market in the production of goods and the provision of services, and activate the local economy [Ayyagari et al. 2007, Ayyagari et al. 2011, Tewari et al. 2013, Berreneche Garcia 2014, De Wit and De Kok 2014]. Owing to small and medium-sized companies allocative changes to production factors take place in the region

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as a result of searching for market niches the constant efforts of small and medium-sized companies not only to survive in a given market, but also to continuously develop [Foreman-Peck et al. 2013]. The available reference books widely document the importance of SMEs and stress the mobility of this sector, quoting the examples of Portugal, Spain, Greece and such developed countries as Germany, France and the United Kingdom. The importance of this sector is particularly emphasised in the process of increasing the range of goods, the absorption of modern design, and the minimisation of production and distribution costs [Kokocińska 2012].

The local nature of small and medium-sized enterprises means that there is a close correlation between their development and regional development [Sobczyk 2006]. Entrepreneurs, largely committing their own capital, usually locate their businesses in their places of residence, and try to use local resources (especially labour), and the local market is the principle place of activity for them [Varum and Rocha 2013]. The scope and intensity of this process is conditioned by the level of regional development. There is also a reverse dependency. The development of this sector equalises regional disparities, contributes to the improvement of the living conditions of local communities, and creates new jobs, therefore generally helping to improve the economics of the region. Thus, as M. Strużycki points out, a thesis about the dependence of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises on the regional level of socio-economic development and, on the other hand, about the impact of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises on this level, can be noted – this is a classic feedback on the analysed phenomena [Strużycki 2004]. Also J. Chądzyński notes that the importance of the development of the SME sector plays a very important role in the development of regions [Chądzyński et al. 2007]. On the one hand, it allows making better use of their inner potential, and on the other, counteracting the problems arising from the rapidly changing economic situation. The dynamic functioning of the SME sector is indicated as one of the determinants of the competitiveness of regions [Wach 2008].

The importance of the issue led the authors to undertake research on the functioning of the SME sector with particular consideration of the regions of Eastern Poland in terms of regional development. The paper will verify following research theses: (1) the dynamics of changes in the number of SMEs in the regions of Eastern Poland is slower than in Western Poland, and the entrepreneurship of the residents of Eastern Poland is at a low level compared to the rest of the country; (2) the importance of the SME sector in the creation of jobs is the greatest in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland, but the share of the SME sector in these voivodeships in the country's economy is decreasing, which goes hand in hand with the low level of economic development in the eastern voivodeships; (3) the share of revenues generated by SMEs in total revenues is high in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland; (4) since Poland's accession to the EU, the expenditures invested in SMEs in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland, as well as throughout the country, have been increasing.

## THE RESEARCH METHOD

The main objective of this paper is to analyse and assess the functioning of the small and medium-sized enterprises sector in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland compared to the whole country, while taking into consideration regional development conditions over

a period of one decade. More specifically, the main objective will be pursued through a statistical analysis of selected indicators describing the development of the SME sector: the number of active SMEs, the SME density ratio, the number of jobs generated by SMEs, the revenues and expenditures per enterprise, and the share of revenues and expenditures in SMEs in total revenues and expenditures. The paper will analyse the indicators characterising the SME sector, examine the directions of changes to these indicators depending on the socio-economic development conditions of the regions, using an observation method and a critical analysis of statistical data.

### THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE SMEs

At the end of 2011, in Poland there were 1,781,414 active entities included in the SME sector. More than half (55.2%) of the active SMEs were located in five voivodeships – Mazowieckie, Śląskie, Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie and Małopolskie – and this share remained at a similar level throughout the analysed period. In five voivodeships of the so-called Eastern Wall, 16.7% of the active SMEs were located in 2011, a slight decrease compared to 2001 of 0.3 pp. The development of the SME sector in Poland and the eastern voivodeships in the years 2001–2011 is shown in Table 1.

Analysing changes in the number of active SMEs in the years 2001–2011, it can be observed that from among the voivodeships of the Eastern Wall only in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship was there a decrease in SMEs by 5%, and a similar trend

Table 1. The number of active SMEs in the years 2001–2011

Specification	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Poland, in total	1 654 823	1 732 701	1 706 877	1 712 229	1 673 939	1 711 935
Lubelskie Voivodeship	73 491	74 720	71 825	73 988	74 214	74 076
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	66 645	64 799	67 288	64 344	65 197	66 815
Podlaskie Voivodeship	39 408	40 737	43 936	41 475	40 078	42 288
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	45 281	48 995	47 528	47 658	41 623	46 038
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	56 569	57 575	51 079	50 188	55 693	58 252
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011/2001
Poland, in total	1 773 831	1 859 211	1 670 415	1 723 497	1 781 414	1.08
Lubelskie Voivodeship	77 583	71 054	70 581	73 187	76 368	1.04
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	69 606	75 043	63 161	68 667	74 027	1.11
Podlaskie Voivodeship	45 493	47 674	40 149	41 674	44 514	1.13
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	46 520	49 558	45 378	47 231	50 025	1.10
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	56 536	59 505	53 911	55 476	53 813	0.95

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

occurred in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. In the Podkarpackie, Podlaskie and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeships the growth rate of active enterprises exceeded the national average, while in the Lubelskie the increase was relatively small, at only 4%.

A rapid decrease in the number of active SMEs in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland, much sharper compared to other voivodeships, occurred at the time of Poland's accession to the EU, which involved the need to introduce adjustments to the requirements of the common market, and not all enterprises managed to cope with this situation. Enterprises located in Eastern Poland performed worse compared to the rest of the country during the economic crisis in 2008 and 2009, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Dynamics of changes in the number of active SMEs in the years 2001–2011

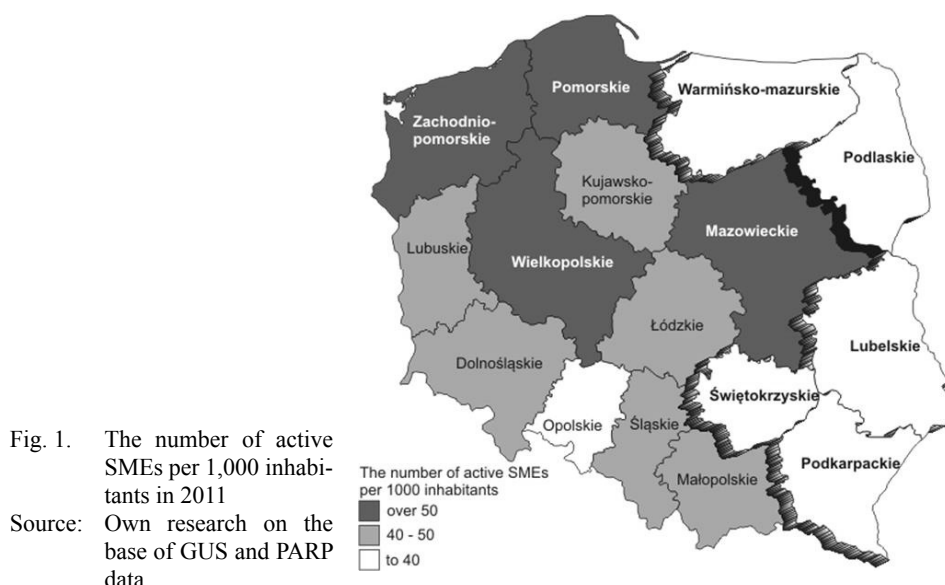
Specification	2002/ /2001	2002/ /2003	2003/ /2004	2004/ /2005	2005/ /2006	2006/ /2007	2007/ /2008	2008/ /2009	2009/ /2010	2010/ /2011
Poland, in total	1.05	0.99	1.00	0.98	1.02	1.04	1.05	0.90	1.03	1.03
Lubelskie Voivodeship	1.02	0.96	1.03	1.00	1.00	1.05	0.92	0.99	1.04	1.04
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	0.97	1.04	0.96	1.01	1.02	1.04	1.08	0.84	1.09	1.08
Podlaskie Voivodeship	1.03	1.08	0.94	0.97	1.06	1.08	1.05	0.84	1.04	1.07
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	1.08	0.97	1.00	0.87	1.11	1.01	1.07	0.92	1.04	1.06
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	1.02	0.89	0.98	1.11	1.05	0.97	1.05	0.91	1.03	0.97

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

The spatial concentrations of SMEs are usually created close to large urban areas and in regions with well-developed industry. The relationship between the number of SMEs and the number of residents is determined not merely by the entrepreneurship of residents of individual regions, but also the degree of accessibility to production and services provided by local SMEs. This index is unfortunately unfavourable, particularly in the eastern part of the Poland, as shown in Figure 1.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SME SECTOR IN THE CREATION OF JOBS

The small and medium-sized enterprises sector has a dominant share in employment in developed Western countries. The SME's share in the total number of those employed in the private sector in the European Union exceeds 69% [Sobczyk 2006]. In Poland, at the end of 2011, all enterprises employed 9.03 million people, of which – 70%, was in the SME sector and the share of enterprises employing up to 50 people represented 50.5%. In 2001, 40% of Polish SME employees were employed by entities located in three voivodeships – Mazowieckie, Śląskie and Wielkopolskie. About 16% of those employed worked in the voivodeships of the Eastern Wall. Employment increased in the analysed period both throughout Poland and in each of the voivodeships in the eastern part of the country, where the leader was the Lubelskie Voivodeship. However, the employment growth rate in the SME sector in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland was slower compared to



the whole country, which resulted in a decrease in the share of those employed in these voivodeships to 11.5% in 2011. In particular, these voivodeships did not record as fluctuating dynamics after the economic crisis as the rest of the country, where employment increased from 2010 to 2011 by 47%. Changes in the number of those employed in SMEs in Poland and eastern voivodeships are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Employed persons in SMEs in the years 2001–2011

Specification	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Poland, in total	5 481 300	5 626 600	5 512 935	5 811 991	5 869 176	5 993 811
Lubelskie Voivodeship	21 4300	234 100	221 954	239 242	248 133	249 974
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	222 600	233 700	229 050	239 287	242 009	247 443
Podlaskie Voivodeship	129 000	136 700	133 423	137 266	137 509	140 173
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	147 200	157 100	151 932	155 750	149 229	154 609
Warmińsko-mazurskie Voivodeship	172 200	173 900	169 559	184 587	194 181	200 043
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011/2001
Poland, in total	6 219 555	6 620 482	6 230 873	6 191 657	9 026 526	1.65
Lubelskie Voivodeship	255 717	259 352	256 520	252 402	261 109	1.22
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	260 017	286 868	260 657	267 320	276 211	1.24
Podlaskie Voivodeship	146 217	155 463	141 167	139 824	145 938	1.13
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	167 551	174 520	164 012	165 359	171 053	1.16
Warmińsko-mazurskie Voivodeship	199 672	208 498	192 545	192 083	191 932	1.11

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

The index reflecting the importance of the SME sector in the absorption of the labour force in individual regions is the share of those employed in the SME sector in the total number of employees in the voivodeship. On the basis of Figure 2 it can be stated that the importance of the SME sector is the greatest in the least industrially developed voivodeships (including the three voivodeships of the Eastern Wall).

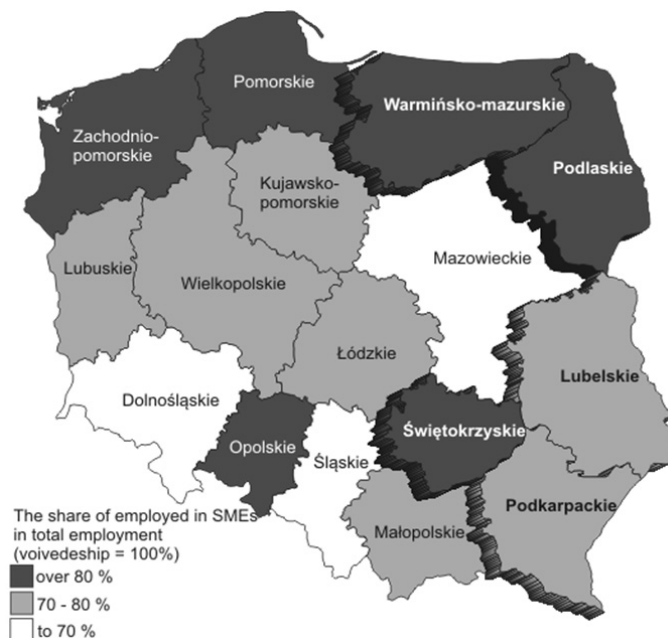


Fig. 2. Employed persons in SMEs in 2011  
Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

## CHANGES IN THE SALES REVENUES OF SMES

Analysing the effectiveness of the activities of SMEs in various regions, sales revenues and revenues per enterprise should be taken into account. Almost 50% of SME revenues in Poland were generated by entities located in the Mazowieckie, Śląskie and Wielkopolskie Voivodeships (45.9% in 2001, 48.1% in 2011). In the eastern part of Poland less than 15% of total revenues (11.6 and 13.4%, respectively) were generated (Table 4).

The biggest share of SME revenues in total revenues (voivodeship = 100) was generated, i.a. in the voivodeships of the Eastern Wall and this resulted mainly from the structure of entities' size and the lack of so-called big industry and big investments. However, taking into account the value of revenues per enterprise, the most effective entities were in the Mazowieckie, Lubuskie, Śląskie and Wielkopolskie Voivodeships, and the eastern voivodeships belonged to the weakest group (Fig. 3).

Table 4. Revenues from sales of products, goods and materials in SMEs in the years 2001–2011 (in thousand PLN)

Specification	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Poland, in total	1 018 570.0	1 044 457.0	1 136 222.00	1 352 796	1 377 001	1 530 435
Lubelskie Voivodeship	38 445.7	36 835.6	39 340.42	43 875	47 002	64 945
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	36 192.8	37 887.6	39 403.10	45 212	49 515	51 916
Podlaskie Voivodeship	21 245.7	23 146.0	27 474.30	31 005	32 805	32 697
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	29 747.1	25 263.0	28 521.93	32 808	31 673	33 864
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	27 566.0	27 733.7	27 428.63	33 831	36 511	40 072
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011/2001
Poland, in total	1 705 742	1 911 633	1 773 335	1 857 935	2 050 259	2.01
Lubelskie Voivodeship	69 510	60 973	58 814	60 109	71 468	1.86
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	60 026	70 478	59 199	62 065	70 790	1.96
Podlaskie Voivodeship	36 921	39 426	38 296	40 010	43 302	2.04
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	39 064	42 328	40 046	43 735	44 370	1.49
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	40 846	44 319	39 156	40 375	45 296	1.64

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

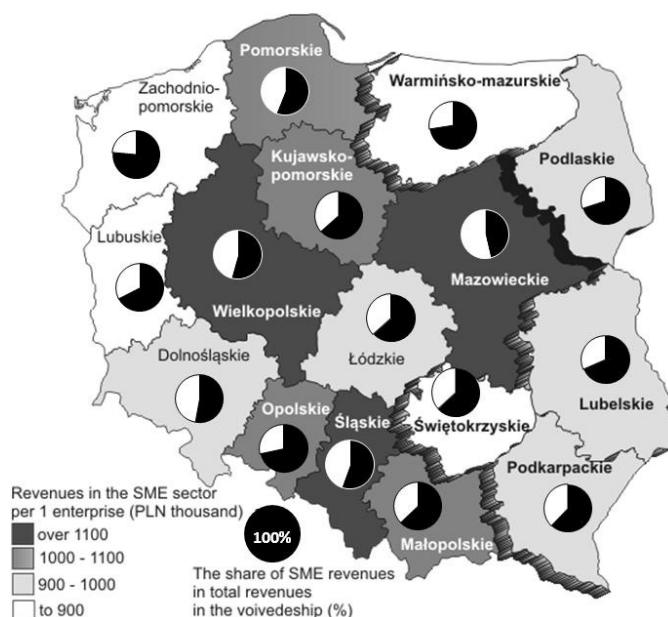


Fig. 3. Revenues from sales of products, goods and materials in the SME sector in 2011

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

## CHANGES IN THE CAPITAL EXPENDITURES OF SMES

In the case of capital expenditures, raising the competitiveness and effectiveness of SMEs in the market, in 2001, 68% of the expenditures were generated in five voivodeships: Mazowieckie, Wielkopolskie, Śląskie, Dolnośląskie and Pomorskie. In 2011, the spatial concentration of the capital expenditures was lower – in five leading voivodeships (Małopolskie moved forward in the ranking and replaced Pomorskie) “only” 58% of the capital expenditures in the country were generated. The share of the five eastern voivodeships in the expenditures in 2001 was only 9.2%, in 2011 this share almost doubled, increasing to 16.4% (Table 5). The growth rate of the expenditures invested in the small and medium-sized enterprises of Eastern Poland was the highest compared to the rest of the voivodeships, while it considerably exceeded the average for the whole of Poland, but these voivodeships started from a very low base. For example, the lowest expenditures were invested in the Podlaskie Voivodeship in 2001 (PLN 554.1 million) represented only 3.3% of the expenditures invested in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship (PLN 16,523.8 million). In 2011, this relationship improved – the lowest expenditures invested in the Lubuskie Voivodeship represented almost 10% of the expenditures of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship.

The shares in the expenditures of SMEs in the Eastern Wall voivodeships in the total expenditures (voivodeship = 100) are relatively high, but per enterprise, the entities from these voivodeships rank in a group of medium voivodeships (Fig. 4).

Favourable trends in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland occurred in the case of the amount of capital expenditures invested per enterprise in the SME sector. Although in

Table 5. Capital expenditures in SMEs in the years 2001–2011 (in million PLN)

Specification	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Poland, in total	44 975.2	3 0612.9	33 007.77	44 996.79	44 157.45	55 064.94
Lubelskie Voivodeship	1 126.7	894.9	878.7918	1 187.193	1 336.13	1 465.44
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	917.5	1 009.2	1 265.537	1 699.332	1 678.729	1 979.159
Podlaskie Voivodeship	554.1	602.8	631.7344	803.775	917.642	1 240.59
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	655.5	1 023.2	667.1264	1 245.483	1 075.966	1 108.304
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	889.8	824.4	845.01	1 023.799	1 126.35	1 593.425
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2011/2001
Poland, in total	68 906.64	72 173.64	69 075.29	71 322.68	80 823.75	1.80
Lubelskie Voivodeship	1 897.857	2 373.933	2 338.5	2 341.993	3 131.075	2.78
Podkarpackie Voivodeship	2 533.45	2 611.763	2 694.175	2 890.050	3 359.523	3.66
Podlaskie Voivodeship	1 712.413	1 826.315	1 399.848	1 435.702	2 456.192	4.43
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	1 757.735	1 801.637	1 641.527	2 494.781	2 253.641	3.44
Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship	1 747.982	1 981.594	1 761.819	1 860.655	2 172.442	2.44

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.



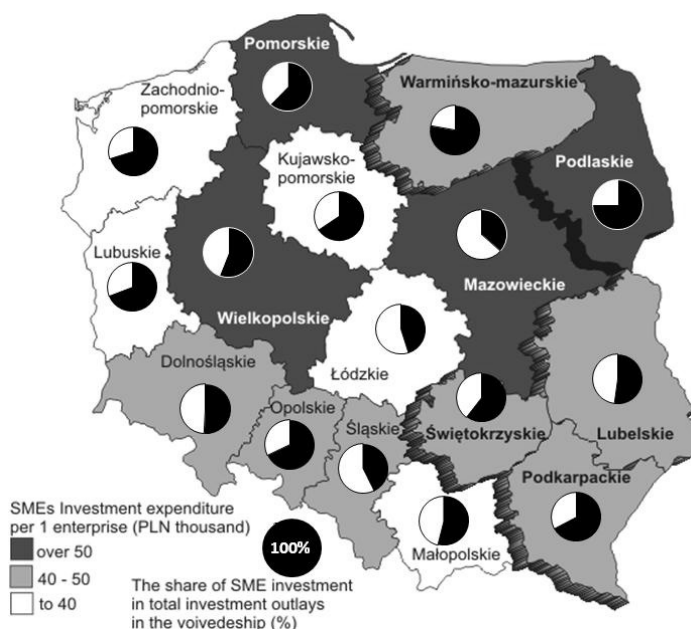


Fig. 4. Capital investments in SMEs in 2011

Source: Own research on the base of GUS and PARP data.

2001 these voivodeships were placed in the last five positions in the ranking and expenditures on SMEs in the Podkarpackie (16th place) represented 20% of the expenditures on SMEs in the Mazowieckie (1st place), in 2011, the Podkarpackie moved to 6th place, the Podlaskie from 15th to 2nd, the Świętokrzyskie from 14th to 7th, the Lubelskie from 13th to 10th, the Warmińsko-Mazurskie from 12th to 11th, and the ratio of the lowest (the Zachodniopomorskie) to the highest expenditures (the Mazowieckie) was 1 to 2.

## CONCLUSIONS

The development of the regions of Eastern Poland is slower than the other regions of Poland, and in addition the difference in the level of development and the regional disparities between Eastern and Western Poland are increasing [Jarosz-Angowska 2012]. The main development barriers of Eastern Poland's region have been identified and described in many documents, including those which were the basis for the creation of the Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of Eastern Poland until 2020. The main weaknesses include, i.a. the low entrepreneurship of the residents, and among the risks, attention is drawn to strong competitive pressure from other voivodeships of Poland [Development Strategy..., 2008].

An interesting conclusion is that the importance of the SME sector is the greatest in the least industrially developed voivodeships, including the three voivodeships of the so-called Eastern Wall. A similar trend can be observed in Spain, where the low efficiency

of the economy is, i.a. the consequence of the structure of economic operators and the lower concentration of production compared to France and Germany. In Spain, small enterprises employing less than 50 persons are major employers in the economy (over 50% share of total employment), while employment in this type of small company represents 23% of the total labour force in Germany and 32% in France [Mucha-Leszko 2013].

On the basis of the analysis of the functioning and development of the SME sector in the voivodeships of Eastern Poland compared to Poland overall in the years 2001–2011, it can be concluded that the main research theses are confirmed. In addition, the following trends can be observed:

1. Throughout the analysed period an increase in the number of active SMEs in all voivodeships can be noted. In 2009, the upward trend was broken – in most voivodeships there were decreases in relation to 2008, which was connected with the economic crisis. The Lubelskie Voivodeship was ranked much below the national average in terms of the rate of decrease, but in the Podkarpackie and the Podlaskie Voivodeships the rate of decrease was higher compared to the country average. In 2010, the activities of SMEs were dynamically rebuilt, but at a slower pace in the case of the voivodeships of Eastern Poland than in other voivodeships.
2. The density ratio of SMEs in the eastern voivodeships is very low compared to other regions, which may be somewhat attributed to the low activity levels of both entrepreneurs of the SME sector and the residents of these regions.
3. The statistics on the number of those employed in the SME sector look interesting. Generally, Polish SMEs are employing more and more people. However, an increased share of those employed in SMEs in the total number of employees in the eastern regions is apparent. This is mainly due to the fact that there are no “big investments” and there is less and less “big industry” in these voivodeships. However, it should be appreciated that the SMEs in these regions are a factor mitigating the effects of development problems (absorbing the labour force and minimising the consequences of unemployment).
4. Similarly to employment, the sales revenues of SMEs show a significant share in their generation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the voivodeships of Eastern Wall, which, however, is not the result of strong activity and the effectiveness of entrepreneurs, but unfortunately due to the lack of, or insignificant other sources of, income in the region except for SMEs. An unfavourable trend is the quite low revenue per enterprise in the eastern voivodeships, which is maintained throughout the analysed period.
5. The growing capital expenditure invested in small and medium-sized enterprises located in the eastern voivodeships should be positively assessed. This is largely the result of programmes implemented under the Structural Funds, much of which was earmarked for co-financing the activities of SMEs. In the capital expenditure invested in SMEs a particular role should be assigned to the development of the innovation and technology transfer support scheme, which in turn should result in an increase in the activity and competitiveness of enterprises.

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## ZNACZENIE SEKTORA MŚP WOJEWÓDZTW POLSKI WSCHODNIEJ

**Streszczenie.** Celem pracy jest analiza rozwoju sektora MŚP w Polsce, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem regionów należących do Polski Wschodniej. Okres analizy obejmuje lata 2001–2011. W okresie tym można odnotować wzrost liczebności aktywnych MŚP we wszystkich województwach. Jednakże wskaźnik gęstości MŚP w województwach wschodnich jest bardzo niski w porównaniu z pozostałymi regionami. Korzystny wydaje się większy udział zatrudnienia w MŚP w całkowitym zatrudnieniu w regionach wschodnich, podobne tendencje występują w przypadku dochodów, co jest jednak spowodowane słabą aktywnością dużych korporacji w tych województwach. Należy ocenić pozytywnie zwiększenie wydatków poniesionych na rzecz małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw zlokalizowanych w województwach wschodnich, co może skutkować wzrostem działalności MŚP w przyszłości i w rezultacie przyczynić się do wzrostu konkurencyjności regionów Polski Wschodniej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sektor MŚP, dynamika zmian wskaźników przedsiębiorstw, porównanie regionów, rozwój regionalny