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CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION OF LOWER SILESIA AND SAXONY – CURRENT RESULTS AND PROSPECTS*

Summary: The objective of this paper is to present the most important aspects of cooperation between two European regions at NUTS 2 level, i.e. the Lower Silesian voivodship (also called Lower Silesia) and the region of Saxony, a part of the federal country – Germany – and more specifically one of its parts, the so called Dresden district. The author attempts to carry out another review of the so far accomplished effects resulting from this cooperation and to present their assessment. In the final part of the paper the directions for the improvement of this cooperation and the conclusions regarding the stimulation of cross-border cooperation in this part of Europe were suggested.

Keywords: cross-border cooperation, European regions NUTS 2, bilateral relations between Lower Silesia and Saxony.

1. The concept of cross-border cooperation and other theoretical aspects of the problem

The concept of cross-border cooperation is relatively clear in professional literature. The European Union distinguishes three basic forms of cooperation [Praktyczny podręcznik... 2000, p. 12]:

- cross-border cooperation,
- interregional cooperation,
- transnational cooperation often referred to in other sources as international.

In practice, there are also used such terms as: along-the-border cooperation, Euro-regional cooperation, or cooperation of the, so called, partner entities and even intraregional cooperation [Sztando 2010, pp. 184–194]. The cooperation of

* The first comprehensive assessment was performed at the conference held in Wrocław on 29 June 2005 entitled: Lower Silesia and Saxony – partners in the European Union, organized by the Marshal Office of Lower Silesia region.

European regions may take the form of an along-the-border cooperation of a cross-border one. Therefore, the latter does not refer exclusively to these local entities (e.g. communes) which are adjacent to each other on both sides of the border, including regions [Pietrzyk 2000, pp. 166–196].



Figure 1. Spatial arrangement of Lower Silesia and Dresden district

Source: Tschechisches Amt für Statistik, Statistical Office in Wrocław, Statistisches Landesamt des Freistaates Sachsen, Kartengrundlage: GfK MACON AG.

The cooperation of regions in professional literature, especially referring to international economic relations, is regarded as one of the forms and manifestations of integration [Budnikowski 2001, pp. 246–256]. It directly influences the development of partners' economic potential, but most of all affects the development of production, commercial and financial relations [Dickheuer 2004, pp. 16–23]. Bilateral and multilateral advantages are discussed in more detail in contemporary international exchange theories and mainly the modern theories of localization, intra-

sectoral commerce and other demand-supply theories [Łoś-Nowak 2000, pp. 38–58]. These advantages are mainly visible in along-the-border areas (borderland) and manifest themselves in the living standards of inhabitants residing in regions cooperating with each other.¹ The process of European integration undoubtedly provided adequate arguments for partnership relations to become much stronger [Tomaszewski 2007, p. 104].

For the purposes of this analysis, Lower Silesia and Saxony will be referred to as the synonyms of common economic space (understood as a common economic area in accordance with EU documents) and especially their endogenous and exogenous potentials. The spatial arrangement of the cooperating regions is presented in Figure 1.

As the presented map shows, the two cooperating regions are adjacent to each other on both sides of the border. Dresden and Wrocław are the regional capitals. It should also be remembered that in the period of real socialism (the Polish People's Republic and the German Democratic Republic) there was cooperation between the Wrocław voivodship of that time and later the much smaller Jelenia Góra voivodship with the Dresden district. It was, however, centrally managed and ideologically burdened.

2. The characteristics of Lower Silesia and Saxony economic space – selected aspects

The European NUTS classification (The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) divides the European Union economic space into territorial units representing different levels by assigning specific number codes to them. Therefore NUTS stands for the hierarchical classification from NUTS 1 to NUTS 5. Germany, as a European Union member, is made up of 16 states (federal countries) – NUTS 1, 41 governmental districts (*Regierungsbezirk*) – NUTS 2, 439 counties (*Kreise*) – NUTS 3. Poland is divided into six regions – NUTS 1, 16 voivodships – NUTS 2 and 45 sub-regions – NUTS 3.²

Saxony, as the federal state (*Land*) of Germany, having been assigned NUTS 1 status, consists of three NUTS 2 regions. They are: Dresden District, Leipzig District and Chemnitz District.³ The Lower Silesia region is therefore referred to, in the system of NUTS classification, as NUTS 2 and covers four NUTS 3 sub-regions (wrocławski sub-region, jeleniogórsko-wałbrzyski sub-region and legnicki

¹ Already in 1997 the selection of expert opinions was published entitled International cooperation of regions.

² NUTS 4 and NUTS 5 levels will not be discussed owing to the specific subject matter of the study.

³ In professional literature covering the problems of regionalism, especially in German, also adjectives are used as the names of regions, e.g. drezdeński or lipski region.

sub-region and also a metropolitan area – the town of Wrocław).⁴ These issues are discussed because, while referring to the cooperation of Saxony and Lower Silesia, we have to remember that Saxony is classified as NUTS 1 and the Lower Silesian voivodship as NUTS 2. This decides, to a great extent, about the scope and forms of inter-regional cooperation between Lower Silesia and Saxony. Formally we should refer to it as the cooperation of the Lower Silesian voivodship and the Dresden district.

The common declaration of cooperation between the Lower Silesian voivodship and the Free State of Saxony was signed on 17 September 1999. It stated extending cooperation between the local authorities of the Lower Silesian voivodship and the government of the Free State of Saxony based on the treaty dated 17 June 1991, signed between The Republic of Poland and The Federal Republic of Germany regarding *Good neighbourhood and friendly cooperation* and based on the exchange of documents stating the establishment of the governmental commission for regional and cross-border cooperation. The objective of such cooperation was to bring the citizens of both regions closer and therefore to support the on-going European integration process.⁵ The economic characteristics of both regions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Basic information on Lower Silesia and Saxony (2010)

Specification	Lower Silesia	Saxony
Area (thousands of km ²)	19.9	18.4
Population (in millions)	2.8	4.1
The unemployed registered in thousands	158	230
Registered unemployment rate	13.6	10.8
GDP per 1 inhabitant in accordance with PPS* in thousands	10.5	18.5
Share of regional GDP in national GDP	7.8	3.9

* PPS – the unit of purchasing power parity used in international statistics.

Source: EUROSTAT data.

The presented data indicate both the similarities (similar size of the area) and the differences shared by both cooperating regions, of which Saxony represents a more economically developed region, which is indicated by the GDP per inhabitant – higher by about 80% than that of Lower Silesia, besides, Saxony features a lower registered unemployment rate and a definitely larger population number and therefore population density. Both regions are neighbouring ones and their borderline is only 80 km long. The length of the overall Saxony border with Poland

⁴ Therefore NUTS 1 in this part of Poland covers Lower Silesian and Opolskie voivodships.

⁵ Lower Silesian voivodship also signed the agreement with the Federal State of Lower Saxony on 24 August 2000. Lower Silesian entities cooperate with the State of Brandenburg too.

is 123 km. The remaining part – 43 km – is Saxony's border with the Lubuskie voivodship.⁶

As far as Saxony is concerned, the first document referring to the spatial development of this German federal state (Land) in new socio-political conditions (German unification) was the document prepared in 1994 and called *Landesentwicklungsplan* (Federal country development plan), later referred to as LEP. Based on Saxony's legislation, LEP is a spatial development plan (*Raumordnungsplan*) for the whole federal state of Saxony. Currently, a new LEP is in preparation and the proposal presented online, calls for making adequate remarks or suggestions.⁷

Having established the Lower Silesian voivodship, work was initiated to prepare the concept of development in a spatial system for the voivodship itself and for Lower Silesia–Saxony cooperation. Already in October 1999 a draft of the document entitled *Saxony–Lower Silesia Strategy of Development for INTERREG IIIA/PHARE CBC for the period of 2000–2006* was prepared. It was the first joint document referring to spatial development and cooperation between Saxony and Lower Silesia. With reference to Saxony, the Lower Silesia Strategy equivalent is the document entitled: “Spatial order and development of the Federal State of Saxony (*Raumordnung und Landesentwicklung in Sachsen*), developed in 2003 and referred to by the abbreviation of ROLES in the following part of the paper.

The above mentioned document frequently quotes the term “economic space” of Lower Silesia and Saxony. It is difficult to specify when and where the term of common economic space or common economic area, in relation to Lower Silesia and Saxony, was first used. This terminology appeared in the activities performed by working groups, meetings of spatial planners and regionalists, and was included in the documents at the end of the 1990s and also in the mentioned above *Development plan (LEP)*. This problem was also frequently discussed by the Working Group for Lower Silesia-Saxony cooperation, established in 2000.

In the first strategy for Lower Silesia development as a voivodship – region, Lower Silesia was defined as the “Region which connects Poland with Europe” (also understood as connecting it with Saxony – author's note). The new Strategy of the Lower Silesia voivodship development till 2020 refers to this problem, putting more focus in its marketing aspects: *Lower Silesia as the crucial European region*. Such an approach extensively raises the importance of the region and puts new pro-development challenges before it. In the new development Strategy of the Lower Silesian Voivodship, currently in preparation, cross-border cooperation is referred to as the crucial development factor.

⁶ The border between Lower Silesia and The Czech Republic is more than 5 times longer and amounts to 434 km.

⁷ <http://www.landesentwicklung.sachsen.de/11117.htm>.

Saxony (Freistaat Sachsen) prepared its first federal state development plan – the mentioned above LEP, in 1994. Since 2003, this country has had a new document, currently in force, referring to the issues of spatial order and development, entitled “Spatial order and the development of the Federal State of Saxony”, which is based on the above mentioned study called ROLES.

The problems of the Saxony and Lower Silesia cooperation are discussed in ROLES. The study presents platforms of this cooperation as well as the general advantages which may result from cooperation development with foreign entities. The issues of inter-regional cooperation are visible in two concepts of economic development in Europe, the so called “Blue and Orange Banana” (Europ. Wirtschaftsraum “Blaue Banane” und “Orange Banane”). This area covers both Wrocław and Katowice, and in this respect common space or even economic area can be discussed, which covers both Saxony, Lower and Upper Silesia.

It seems that the cooperation of Lower Silesia and Saxony should be analysed in a more extensive perspective as the cooperation of European regions taking care of sustainable development of this area (space). Polish-German cooperation is presented as the background of the European regional development concept, so called EUREK (*EuropäischenRaumordnungskonzept*), broadly discussed in ROLES and also highly evaluated.

In the period of 2000–2012, as has already been pointed out, the Lower Silesia-Saxony Working Group was functioning and operating within seven thematic sub-groups. The meetings were held once a year alternatively – in Saxony and in Lower Silesia – altogether 12 meetings. The sub-groups are listed below:

- economy and labour,
- environment and farming,
- spatial management, communication, border crossings (since 2004 the topics related to border crossings were limited and reduced to operational issues),
- internal issues (crisis management, police, fire brigade),
- culture and education,
- welfare issues (health care policy, social issues),
- coordination.

The number of working sub-groups may change, as well as their name and scope of work. In the period of 2000–2011 the following meetings were held:

- 1) 17–18 May 2000 in Dresden,
- 2) 24–25 April 2001 in Wrocław,
- 3) 5–6 July 2002 in Dresden,
- 4) 17–18 June 2003 in Krzyżowa,
- 5) 13–14 June 2005 in Schmochtitz,
- 6) 28–29 June 2005 in Wrocław,
- 7) 30–31 May 2006 in Dresden
- 8) 5–6 June 2007 in Wrocław,

- 9) 17–18 June 2008 in St. Marienthal,
- 10) 9–10 June 2009 in Wrocław,
- 11) 24–25 June 2010 in Miśnia,
- 12) 21–22 November 2011 in Karpacz,
- 13) 12–13 December 2012 in Dresden.

As the above presented schedule indicates, the 12th meeting of the Working Group was held on 21–22 November 2011 in Karpacz. Eight working sub-groups were functioning: 1. Coordination, 2. Education and Sport, 3. Health care and social issues, 4. Economy, 5. Transport, 6. Labour, 7. Environment, farming and forests, 8. Spatial management. Among the most important decisions taken during this meeting the following should be listed:

- 1) evaluation of the *Working Group* functioning in 2011,
- 2) presenting and defining the work schedule for 2012.

At this meeting the accomplishments carried out in 2011 were positively evaluated, among others the Strategy for Western Poland was presented, the project entitled “Together for borderline areas”, activities undertaken within the framework of Polish Presidency in the European Union Council, as well as the project referring to Wrocław as the European Capital of Culture in 2016.

The cooperating regions were not consistent in all matters regarding the evaluation of the problems discussed, their significance hierarchy or financial issues. This should, however, be considered as typical, and it is not the Author’s intention to assess each single detail of the above mentioned matters. What matters most is the fact that there were always present positive intentions and good will towards searching for compromises and solutions favourable for both parties involved.

Lower Silesia and Saxony represent a very important component of the European economic space and an example of the advancing and extending – in spite of numerous obstacles – regional cooperation in an integrating Europe.⁸ The proposal of a common economic area (so called “3CIP”) with the Federal State of Brandenburg, Wielkopolskie and the Lubuskie voivodships and the Czech partners, even though slightly underestimated, seems quite interesting. It was initiated and carried out in the period of 2001–2002 and its spatial scope is presented in Figure 2 [Adamczuk 2012, pp. 35–45].

Apart from the above quoted initiative, another cooperation platform has been functioning in Polish–German–Czech borderline areas since 16 February 2006. It was established in Zittau under the name of the trilateral *Lower Silesian – Saxony – Northern Czech Group* (referred to as *Group* later in the text). This institution was dissolved in 2011. It was not a competitive initiative for the Working Group and its objective was to extend both the scope and forms of cooperation between Lower Silesia and Saxony by their partner located in the northern part of the Czech Republic.

⁸ The Connecting Office of the Free State of Saxony has been established in Wrocław.

After a few years of its functioning it was, however, decided that it replicated some forms of borderline and cross-border activities and therefore the decision was taken to wind it up. A more detailed discussion regarding this cooperation platform, in the period of 2006–2011, does not constitute the subject matter of this study.



Figure 2. Region “3-CIP” in Europe

Source: http://www.3-cip.com/en/3-CIP_Region/17082.html.

Euroregional cooperation of communes and districts along the borderline areas of three regions: Lower Silesia, Saxony and the Liberecki voivodship (CZ) plays a supplementary role for the cooperation of both regions within the framework of the Neisse–Nisa–Nysa Euroregion (ERN) established in 1991. The activities focused on ERN development were undertaken in 1993 and 1994 to be finalized by the approval of a controversial strategy prepared by the Dornier company. Currently, work on a new concept (strategy) preparation for ERN development till 2020 is in progress.

3. Final remarks

Based on the conducted analysis, and having studied numerous documents referring to Lower Silesia and Saxony development, the following conclusions may be put forward:

1. Bilateral cooperation between Lower Silesia and Saxony is both economically and socially justified since it establishes the background, in Polish-German

borderline areas, for a common economic zone. So far the conditions for this goal's accomplishment have not been met. The basic document is still missing, i.e.: *The Concept of Polish–German borderline areas development*.

2. The efforts undertaken and carried out by the Working Group should be very positively assessed, in spite of numerous critical remarks and reservations regarding the set goals. This mainly refers to spatial planning on both sides of the border and infrastructure compatibility.

3. Within the regional development strategies covering both partners, i.e. Lower Silesia and Saxony – The Strategy for Lower Silesian Voivodship until 2020 as well as in the *Saxony Development Plan* (Landesentwicklungsplan F.S. Sachsen), the issues of common economic area establishment require further substantializing. These matters are not dealt with by the, so called, “3CIP” Concept which may, at most, serve as the starting point for preparing the necessary documents. The extension of bilateral cooperation: Lower Silesia–Saxony or Czech–Saxony into a trilateral one – manifesting itself in the attempts undertaken by the *Lower Silesian–Saxony–Northern Czech Group* represents a particularly valuable form of activity in borderline areas – at the border of the three countries. It is necessary to return to some form of trilateral cooperation in spite of the fact that the results of the above mentioned *Group* work effects, in the period of 2006–2011, seemed to be quite limited.

4. The concept of the, so-called “blue banana”, as well as other documents, such as e.g. The study of borderline areas management along the Polish-German border, prepared in 2006 by the Institute of Geography and Spatial Management of the Polish Academy of Science (Polish abbreviation: IGiPZ PAN) may become the starting point for deepening and extending the cooperation of both regions.

The prospects for inter-regional cooperation of Lower Silesia and Saxony seem promising, despite numerous problems in cooperation between Poland and Germany occurring at central level. A stimulus for further stage of cooperation may take the form of appointing the European Group for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in the borderline Polish–German–Czech areas [Branda 2009, p. 2].

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WSPÓŁPRACA TRANSGRANICZNA DOLNEGO ŚLĄSKA I SAKSONII – AKTUALNE WYNIKI I PERSPEKTYWY

Streszczenie: Celem tego opracowania jest przedstawienie najważniejszych aspektów współpracy między dwoma europejskimi regionami NUTS 2, tj. województwem dolnośląskim (zwanym również Dolnym Śląskiem) i Saksonią stanowiącą część państwa federalnego Niemiec, a zwłaszcza jej część zwaną okręgiem drezdeńskim. Autor podejmuje próbę przeprowadzenia kolejnej oceny dotychczasowych efektów współpracy oraz przedstawia jej wyniki. W końcowej części artykułu zasugerowane zostały kierunki udoskonalenia tej współpracy oraz wnioski dotyczące dalszego rozwoju współpracy transgranicznej w tej części Europy.

Słowa kluczowe: współpraca transgraniczna, regiony europejskie NUTS 2, bilateralna współpraca między Dolnym Śląskiem i Saksonią.