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**The impact of innovation processes in the public sector on
regional and local development in the conditions of Polish
membership in the European Union**

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The main research problem of this dissertation concerns the innovation processes in the public sector and their impact on regional and local development under the conditions of Poland's membership in the European Union. The leading rationale for undertaking research on innovation in the context of the functioning of public sector entities and units, became the specificity of the public sector as one of the sectors of the economy in which investment decisions are often made not only in economic terms, but also in social and political terms, as well as the increasing importance of innovation processes as a factor of socio-economic development. In addition, the few publications in the area of the topic reflect the deficit of scientific and research activities in this area.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters and conclusions. In the first chapter, an attempt is made to place innovation processes among the factors of socio-economic development, using scientific achievements in the field of development processes, including at regional and local levels. It was pointed out that changes of a qualitative nature, characterized by high dynamics and uncertainty, which can be identified at different spatial scales, are becoming increasingly important. Over several decades, the factors of development and their power of influence have been redefined, and knowledge, creativity and the ability to use them in the economy, come to the fore, increasingly determining the development processes at regional and local levels. A review of selected concepts of regional and local development showed an increasing emphasis on the qualitative aspect of management.

The second chapter presents different approaches in defining innovation and its perception, highlighting the approach according to which innovation is considered through the prism of a multidimensional process. The paper proposes a way to view innovation processes as innovative solutions (technical, organizational, legal, social, communication, among others), i.e. specific results and effects created on the basis of knowledge and creativity, the usefulness of which is determined only by the moment of transferring them to socio-economic processes, and consequently obtaining measurable quantitative effects and qualitative changes. Then the determinants of the functioning of the public sector in the economy were identified. It was pointed out that the public sector is shaped by a number of factors, both economic and social, cultural and political, which affect its specific role in the processes of economic development manifested primarily in the provision of public services and the formation of appropriate pro-development conditions. Entities and organizational units of the public sector in order to meet the growing demands and expectations of society, while facing financial constraints, as well as to be able to find their way in the competitive environment, which already applies to entire

territorial systems and not only to individual enterprises, must take up the challenge of creating, implementing and disseminating, new and effective solutions to socio-economic problems.

The third chapter characterizes the public sector in Poland. For this purpose, the entities and organizational units comprising of the public sector and their tasks in the context of shaping and implementing development policy are identified. Then the determinants of the implementation of innovation in the public sector in Poland are indicated. It was specified that the integration processes associated with Poland's accession to the European Union and the transformation processes relating to economic and social changes after 1989 forced the entities and organizational units of the public sector to behave and act innovatively. These entities have been equipped with tools for creating and stimulating innovation processes which oscillate mainly around planning-strategic instruments and financial opportunities.

The fourth chapter attempts to show the mechanism for supporting innovation processes in the context of Poland's membership in the European Union. It identified its three main elements, i.e. sources of innovation, their scope and conditions, which make up the appropriate climate for creativity and innovation. It was pointed out that the need to implement the assumptions of EU policies and the related requirements for obtaining additional financial support prompted entities and organizational units of the public sector to seek new solutions to socio-economic problems.

In the fifth chapter, an economic and financial analysis of the expenditure of public sector entities and organizational units on the implementation of investment projects co-financed by EU funds under the 2014-2020 financial perspective was carried out, and the scope and impact of innovative processes on regional and local development was assessed. It was pointed out that the projects co-financed from the EU budget referred to unique activities which had to result not only in measurable material effects but also assumed the creation and implementation of innovations, or at least indirectly used already existing new techniques, technologies and other innovative solutions. There was a strong diffusion of innovation, which was clearly revealed in the assumptions of investment projects and indirectly implemented activities. It was observed that some of the public investment projects had a high degree of technical and technological advancement, which was possible and necessary in some investment scopes. There were also projects that, by their very nature, are less prone to innovation, but innovative solutions were also identified in this type of investment, which was mainly due to the phenomenon of inter-sectoral diffusion.

Investments subsidized by EU funds, containing an element of innovation, concerned various areas of socio-economic activity, covering all major spheres of public infrastructure

and public service provision, including the areas of administration, transport, energy, health care, waste management, management, water and sewage, social inclusion, education, culture and tourism, as well as business support. In addition, projects of an innovative nature were implemented by diverse public sector entities. The highest funds for innovative projects characterized the provinces, which were at the same time characterized by a relatively high level of gross domestic product per capita at the national level, and in which high private and public sector investment was recorded in 2014-2020. However, additional financial resources from EU sources enabled the implementation of development projects, including projects of an innovative nature, also in those regions that showed high demand for the construction and modernization of basic public infrastructure and were characterized by a relatively lower level of economic development.

Expenditures on innovative projects were primarily concentrated in urban areas, especially those of provincial importance. It was in places equipped with basic municipal, transportation, educational and social infrastructure that the largest number of diverse activities of an innovative nature were initiated, including original research and development work. Other areas were characterized by much lower spending on innovation in the public sector, mainly aimed at adapting new info-communication solutions in administration.

The clear impact of innovation processes in the public sector was manifested in a quantitative and qualitative increase in the provision of public services, as well as through positive results related to the spread of new behaviour and solutions in the public sector, which in turn translated into the functioning of entities in other sectors of the economy. Therefore, the aforementioned transformations can undoubtedly be considered a positive influence on the processes of socio-economic development.

At the end of the dissertation, the conclusions of the conducted research are presented, containing the most important conclusions arising from the individual, as well as indicating the direction of further research work in the field of innovation processes in the public sector in Poland.