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**Article**

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# The importance of the European funds for the development and competitiveness of the Wrocław Agglomeration

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**Summary:** This article presents an attempt to determine the importance of the European funds for the development and competitiveness of the Wrocław Agglomeration. The first part of this study presents the definitions used in this article and the characteristics of the Wrocław Agglomeration. The next part sets out the most important projects implemented with the use of the European Union funds in the Wrocław Agglomeration and shows the effects of using these funds in the region. Some of the projects implemented in the Wrocław Agglomeration were presented under the 2014-2020 financial scheme. In the final part of the study, an attempt is made to determine the importance of using funds for the development of the competitiveness of the Wrocław Agglomeration.

**Keywords:** the European funds, competitiveness, the Wrocław agglomeration

**JEL codes:** O20, P45, R11

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## **Introduction**

Since Poland became a member state of the European Union there have been opportunities to utilize the EU funds. The holder of the European funds in the province of Lower Silesia – as well as in the Wrocław Agglomeration, which is an urban agglomeration – is the Provincial Office.

## 1. Theoretical background

Agglomerations are usually created by settlement units of separate administrative units (Zathey, 2012). In urban planning agglomeration is an area of intense development also characterized by high density of population staying in a given area periodically (for example – during the day), constant flow of people and goods and a significant exchange of services. In a more proverbial sound, the agglomeration is a cluster of neighbouring cities and villages, which constitute a common organism, by integrating or complementing various forms of infrastructure of these towns and the mutual use of the potentials that these towns have. There are two types of agglomerations:

- monocentric – with one main city,
- polycentric – with several important urban centres – also called a conurbation. The development of nearby agglomerations may lead to the creation of a vast, highly urbanized area called megalopolis (Hadaś, 2015).

There are seven main agglomerations in Poland – with a population over one million inhabitants: the Warsaw agglomeration, the Upper Silesian urban area, the Krakow agglomeration, the Gdańsk agglomeration, the Wrocław agglomeration, the Łódź agglomeration and the Poznań agglomeration (see e.g. Swianiewicz and Klimska, 2005).

The Wrocław agglomeration is a monocentric agglomeration in the south-western part of Poland, in the Lower Silesian Voivodship, which consists of the City of Wrocław (GaWC, 2018) and its satellite towns. Depending on the concept and adopted criteria for fragmentation of the constituting areas, the population of the agglomeration is approximately 1.02 million. In the case of the Wrocław agglomeration the area is not fully urbanized in its entirety. The name of the Wrocław agglomeration is defined as the area that is economically connected with Wrocław, and a significant percentage of residents are associated with it (Zathey, 2012). In 2005, the city of Wrocław and 7 boroughs established the company *Agencja Rozwoju Aglomeracji Wrocławskiej* [Agency for Development of the Wrocław Agglomeration] – ARAW (see ARAW). Currently, its shareholders are 30 municipalities from the regions of: Wrocław, Trzebnica, Środów, Strzelno, Oława, Olesno, Milicz, Wołów and Świdnica (Czyż, 2009: 78). The main towns in the Wrocław agglomeration are: Wrocław (637,683 inhabitants), Oleśnica (37,366), Oława (32,773), Jelcz-Laskowice (15,863), Trzebnica (13,215), Wołów (12,446), Brzeg Dolny (12,460), Środa Śląska

(9,399), Oborniki Śląskie (9,032), Siechnice (7,081), Sobótka (6,965), Kąty Wrocławskie (6,708), Bierutów (4,981), Bielany Wrocławskie (3,229).

The competitiveness of the region is the ability to adapt to changing economic, social and environmental challenges and tasks, as well as the capacity to create new development conditions (possibilities) that allow maintaining and strengthening the region's position in the national and international system.

M.E. Porter (1990: 3) explains competitiveness as productivity. However, this approach does not explain which factors and how they affect the development of competitiveness. Being conscious of the limitations mapped out in this way, the author proposes a list of factors that determine the competitiveness of an individual (including the region). In turn, G. Hamel and C.K. Prahalad (2005: 195-196) argue that competitiveness is conditioned by three factors:

- 1) relative market position,
- 2) the ability to compete, e.g. through a pricing strategy,
- 3) the core of the region's competitiveness (the main attribute of the region's attractiveness).

## **2. The most important projects in the Wrocław agglomeration co-financed from the EU's funds**

In the Wrocław agglomeration the EU's funds have played the largest role as regards the transport infrastructure. One of the most important investments was the building of *The Integrated Rail Transport System in the Wrocław Agglomeration and in Wrocław alone*. The main goal was the increasing the desirability of tramway connections with an increased standard, i.e. planned lines of the Tram Plus subsystem and the Trans-Tracks subsystem, with the simultaneous use of these subsystems for handling the most-loaded transport relations. This means that the subsystems will support downtown areas as high as possible, leaving the peripheral services of streetcar communication, the so-called classic trams, and where there are no tram lines – buses. Within the framework of this project the following actions were launched:

- construction of two new sections of tramway tracks;
- reconstruction of selected existing sections of tramway lines, construction of two new integrated transfer nodes;

- reconstruction of local streets, accompanying tramways investments;
- renovation of selected existing sections of tramway lines;
- construction and reconstruction of rectifier stations;
- purchase and delivery of 39 new low-floor trams;
- implementation of intelligent traffic control system at selected intersections with traffic lights.

The investment products are:

- length of the rail and trolleybus transport network constructed: 5.3 km
- length of reconstructed rail and trolleybus transport network: 37.85 km
- the number of units of public transport fleet purchased: 39 items
- public transport systems covered by telematics: 1 item
- capacity of units of the purchased public transport fleet: 7662 persons:
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Financial resources, co-financing amount:

- Total value of the project: PLN 736,189,291.52
- City's contribution: PLN 258,441,637.68
- Amount of eligible expenses: PLN 597,184,567.31

- Co-financing amount: PLN 477,747,653.84.

Another very important investment, which was completed from the EU's funds, is *Wrocław Airport* (the official name: Copernicus Airport Wrocław, IATA code: WRO, ICAO code: EPWR) – an international airport located in the City of Wrocław, about 10 km west of its centre, on the Strachowice estate. The airport has one asphalt runway in the 11/29 direction, 2503 m x 45 m, concrete sills, one national and one international passenger terminal, and one cargo terminal (Wrocław Airport, 2018). This airport has a second category ILS system. In terms of the number of passengers checked in, it is currently the 6<sup>th</sup> Polish airport, while in terms of the number of air operations it takes the 5<sup>th</sup> place. The airport is currently served by 9 regular airlines. In the summer, it supports a number of charter connections. On 28 March 2012, the first Polish and 47 European Ryanair airline database was built at the airport (Jadowska, 2011). The readers of “Business Traveller Poland” in the voting for the “Business Traveller Award” recognized the airport in Wrocław as the best regional airport in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 and the second best airport in Poland in 2014 (Gawryś, 2015). Wrocław Airport was in the elite group of the best airports in Europe in 2016, ranking the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and took the 3<sup>rd</sup> place among regional airports (Wrocław Airport).

The next investment relating to the infrastructure in the the Wrocław Agglomeration, which was co-financed by the European Union, is the Wrocław Central Bypass – the bypass in Wrocław, running around the city's central districts, 3 to 5.5 km from the Market Square. The road is being built and opened at stages, over 17 km of the road has already been put into use. When it is completed, its total length will be about 25 km. The bypass is a dual carriageway with an accelerated (GP) main class with normal one-level intersections, except for very few exceptions protected by traffic lights. Multilevel nodes, however, occur in the vicinity of viaducts and bridges. The downtown ring road is included in the urban spatial development plan, and later the study of conditions and directions for spatial development since the 1960s, although the course of its southern, south-eastern and south-west section was established in 1921.

The downtown ring road together with the Old Town beltway is to serve mainly to distribute the internal traffic between the districts of the city, while for the transit traffic, the motorway bypass and the eastern bypass are planned. On two sections of the downtown bypass, the strip separating the roadways has separated the tramway tracks.

The purchase is co-financed from the European Union's budget as a part of the implementation of the project called "Improving the quality of the rail transport system by building a technical base for servicing and servicing the rolling stock of *Koleje Dolnośląskie SA*" under measure 5.2. "Rail transport system" Sub-measure 5.2.1 "Railway transport system – horizontal competitions" Priority axis 5 "Transport". Regional Operational Program for the Lower Silesian Voivodship for the years 2014-2020. The project goal is enabling the Company to properly implement the maintenance process of railway vehicles through the construction and extension of technical facilities in Legnica at Pałnowska Street, and thus the development and improvement of the quality of rail transport in the Lower Silesian Voivodship. The total value of the project: PLN 34,590,862.36, with the European Union's contribution amounting to PLN 14,804,724.71 (Mapa Dotacji UE, 2018).

The importance of the European funds in the Wrocław agglomeration is also noticeable in other areas such as science and education, energy, investment in research, development and innovation, as well as in expenditure on culture and arts and health protection, telecommunications and e-services. They also play a very large role in the field of social integration and in combating unemployment.

A primary school was built in the framework of the educational infrastructure as part of the *School and Pre-School Complex* at Stabłowice housing estate in Wrocław. It concerns the Regional Operational Program Lower Silesia 2014-2020 and the subject of the project is the construction of a school block in the School and Pre-School Complex at Stabłowice housing estate. As a result of the construction of the school, up to 1,200 new places will be created for schoolchildren. The school block (constituting the scope of the project) is a two-storey building, without a basement, made in a reinforced concrete skeleton structure, placed on a reinforced concrete slab. Additionally, as part of the project, it is planned to have a permanent school block and a playground. As part of the school playground, there is a zone for chalk drawing, for playing checkers with bituminous surfaces, ping-pong tables, a sandy surface area on which recreational devices will be mounted. Other objects of the Team (not being the subject of the project) are functionally and technically separated blocks: pre-school, sports and nutrition. Financial resources, co-financing amount, in accordance with the co-financing agreement: own contribution: PLN 15,749,340.43, co-financing: PLN 6,594,000.00. The total value of the project: 22,343,340.43 PLN.

Other examples of investments related to science and education include equipping the studio in High School No. V in Wrocław, "Edukacja i Partnerswo bez Barrier" [Education and Partnership] project aimed at disseminating and ensuring high quality pre-school education by creating new places of pre-school education, organizing additional educational activities for children and improving teachers' qualifications. Another example is Subrideo's therapeutic pre-school points as an opportunity to promote pre-school education among children with disabilities or a project aimed at improving the quality of education at High School No. 15 in Wrocław by purchasing physics lab equipment and 4 digital labs, or a project related to modern equipment and didactic materials of the physical and biological lab at High School No. III.

An important role for society are projects related to the provision of high quality pre-school education for children with autism in the Therapeutic Kindergarten "Blue Kite", or the development of school competences and social skills of preschoolers and improvement of professional competences of pre-school teachers.

As part of the energy-conserving scheme, a number of projects co-financed from European funds for thermo-modernization of educational facilities were implemented: Junior High School No. 7, Junior High School No. 14, Primary School No. 82 in Wrocław, thermo-modernization of educational buildings of the Medical University in Wrocław, modernization of the building at Dawida Street 1a in Wrocław, energy modernization of the building of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Karol Boromeusz Parish in Wrocław, energy modernization of the UCFS office building located in Wodzisławska Street in Wrocław, installation of renewable energy sources for the indoor swimming pool at Chełmońskiego Street 43a, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences and others.

A large percentage of the completed projects co-financed from European funds also had investments for research, development and innovation. An example here can be, among others, the innovative support system for care, caring and rehabilitation centers in the area of constant monitoring of the basic life functions of charges, Medical Solution Sp. z o. o., where the value of the project amounted to PLN 4,817,394.00, and PLN 3,133,160.00 was covered from European funds.

Another example is the Mito-Sport project, a dietary supplement for amateur athletes improving skeletal muscle metabolism and mitochondrial function thanks to the significantly increased bioavailability of astaxanthin and epicatechins, resulting from the patented Lycosome



™ technology, carried out by Carocelle SA, where the value of the project was PLN 4,147,528.00, and the funds covered by the EU's funds amounted to PLN 2,887,569.60. Another investment related to the discussed scope is performance of research and development works in the field of developing an innovative geo-information technology for cities by SHH Sp. z o.o. and a project on circulating sporadic cells in the diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis, carried out by Cellpeuticus Sp. z o. o.

In the field of culture and art, the investments included, among others, adaptation of rooms and purchase of equipment for the needs of the Theater Museum in Wrocław. The value of this project amounted to PLN 4,198,007.96, and the amount of PLN 1,913,891.43 was covered from European funds. In addition, the revitalization of the church under the invocation of St. Jan Nepomucen, along with the development of the adjacent area in Szczytnicki Park in Wrocław, was completed. The cost of this revitalization was PLN 1,955,260.19, and PLN 1,181,731.81 was obtained from European funds.

Very significant investments were carried out in the field of health protection, under which, among others, purchase of equipment for the endoscopy laboratory of J. Gromkowski Provincial Specialist Hospital, valued at PLN 1,231,175.47, of which PLN 1,045,976.40 was covered by European funds. Another example of a project in the field of health care in the Wrocław agglomeration is the scheme of improving the efficiency and access to health services in the Lower Silesian Voivodship through the construction and equipment of the Breast Unit and extension along with the equipment of the Operational Block in the Lower Silesian Oncology Center in Lower Silesian Center of Oncology Wrocław. The value of this project was PLN 43,510,821.68, and the amount of PLN 29,780,327.74 was covered by European funds. In addition, in the field of health protection, a project was implemented to increase the availability of healthcare services in the field of vision dysfunction, through purchase of medical equipment and IT for Spektrum Sp. z o.o. in Wrocław Spektrum Sp. z o.o., whose value amounted to PLN 1,439,810.00, of which the amount of PLN 1,223,838.50 came from the EU's funds.

Also in the field of telecommunications and e-services, the share of European funds in investments in the Wrocław agglomeration was very significant. It helped to realize, among others, implementation of electronic services in the area of e-Health and development of medical information systems in medical entities with a provincial range in J. Gromkowski Provincial

Specialist Hospital of in Wroclaw. The value of this project amounted to PLN 12,342,854.43, of which the European funds covered PLN 10,327,803.42.

In addition, as far as this field is concerned, a system for collecting and delivering electronic medical records, security systems and an intra-administrative system adapted to the requirements of medical entities in the Lower Silesia Voivodship in A. Falkiewicz Specialist Hospital were implemented. The total value of this project amounted to PLN 10,362,493.00, and the amount of PLN 7,933,703.91 was obtained from European funds. Another example of implementation of an EU project within telecommunications and e-services is the project "Lower Silesia e-Health stage 4 - Development and optimization of IT systems and resources for medical e-services - *Dolnośląskie Centrum Chorób Płuc* [Lower Silesian Center for Lung Diseases] in Wrocław, with a total value of PLN 6,994,140.00, of which PLN 5,936,289.52 was covered for this purpose from European funds.

A very important role in the Wrocław agglomeration was played by European funds in the sphere of social and labor integration and in combating unemployment. Thanks to the co-financing from the funds, the project "Activation of unemployed people over 30 in Wrocław and the district of Wrocław", worth PLN 4,673,770.00, including PLN 3,972,704.00 from the funds, was implemented in cooperation with the District Labor Office in Wrocław. A similar project was carried out for young people, under the name "Activation of young people who are unemployed in the County of Wrocław (II) and the district of Wrocław (II)" - also in cooperation with the District Labor Office in Wrocław. The value of this project amounted to PLN 4,033,811.00, while European funds covered PLN 3,706,668.00.

A very significant amount of European funds under the 2014-2020 perspective was allocated to the development of companies. As many as 116 projects were planned in this field, and a significant number of them have already been implemented.

Some of the projects implemented in the Wrocław agglomeration, in which European funds are used, concern the environment and ecology. One of them is the project financed by the European Union's Framework Program for Research and Innovation "Horizon 2020" – the so-called "Grow Green" – green cities for climate, water, sustainable economic development, healthy residents and environments. The aim of this project is to test the possibility of using solutions based on the so-called environmental services that enable local development and use of rainwater, creating oases of greenery that provide shelter from heat, providing shade and local

temperature reduction to increase the city's resilience to climate change. In Wrocław, as part of this project, experimental solutions will be created in the part of Ołbin, a district with intense downtown development, inhabited by many people who need contact with green areas in close proximity to their homes. Activities under this project will include: creation of an innovative model system of green microorganisms in the city built of the following elements (pocket parks, green streets and other solutions in the field of green infrastructure), development of methods for local rainwater management and prevention of heat islands, local improvement of residents' quality of life through increasing the availability of green public space and improving the air quality and preparing recommendations for other European cities how to use micro-green systems to increase resilience to climate change.

### **3. Impact of the projects on the development and competitiveness of the Wrocław agglomeration**

Different projects co-financed by the EU have had a strong influence on many spheres in the Wrocław agglomeration. In general, they have led to multiple positive external effects visible in the socio-economic life of the city and in surrounding areas, e.g. in the form of improvements of human capital or possibilities of mobility. As a result, better life conditions and enhanced attractiveness of the city in terms of economic activity contributed to improved competitiveness and to dynamic development processes. Further examples of the effects important for the development and competitiveness of the Wrocław agglomeration are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Examples of the impact of selected projects for the analysis financed with the participation of the EU's funds for the development and competitiveness of the Wrocław agglomeration**

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Sphere</b>	<b>Effects in the development of the Wrocław agglomeration</b>	<b>Effects in the competitiveness of the Wrocław agglomeration</b>
The Integrated Rail Transport System in the Wrocław agglomeration and in Wrocław City- Tram	Transport infrastructure, construction of two new sections of tramway tracks,	Improving agglomeration accessibility, connection of peripheral districts	Increase in the quality of life of residents, a constantly increasing number of people settling in the

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<b>Projects</b>	<b>Sphere</b>	<b>Effects in the development of the Wrocław agglomeration</b>	<b>Effects in the competitiveness of the Wrocław agglomeration</b>
Plus subsystem	reconstruction of selected existing sections of tram lines	with the center, reducing traffic in the city center	agglomeration, better comfort of the journey in new trams
Construction of the new airport (Copernicus Airport) in the Wrocław agglomeration	One national and one international airport, one cargo terminal, Ryanair base	The ability to handle more passengers, increased service quality	Greater mobility of residents, possibilities of using new flight connections, increase in the ranking of the best airports in Europe
Construction of the Wrocław Central Bypass	The Bypass of the total length 25 km, The Old Town beltway, the downtown ring road	Shorter travel time, smaller traffic jams, better possibilities to access the periphery districts	A greater number of tourists, higher incomes for the city, better image of the Agglomeration
Expansion and modernization of railway lines in the Wrocław agglomeration	The new connections with other cities and towns in the Wrocław Agglomeration (about 350 km of the railway lines)	An increase in the number of people using the Polish Railways' services and related companies	Better connection possibilities with other Polish and European cities, shorter travel time resulting in increased quality and comfort of travel
Construction of a new School and Pre-School Complex in Stabłowice Expansion of the Kindergarten in Piotrkowska Street and in Suwalska Street in Wrocław Project "Education and Partnership without Barriers"	Education of children, greater comfort of school and pre-school children, more rooms, better class equipment, more opportunities for additional and integration activities. Dissemination and provision of high quality pre-school education,	Improving the quality of human capital, greater opportunities to improve the level and quality of teaching through the organization of additional educational activities, education through playing, introduction of new	Improving the availability of highly qualified employees for employers (e.g. investors), a higher level of income offered, greater opportunities for improving qualifications, greater opportunities to use subsidies, competitions organized in the

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Sphere</b>	<b>Effects in the development of the Wrocław agglomeration</b>	<b>Effects in the competitiveness of the Wrocław agglomeration</b>
	improving teachers' qualifications	teaching methods and standards, greater access to education	agglomeration
Project “Promotion and Internalisation of the Elko-Bis Firm” and other projects connected with the development and research	Grants, funds for the research of the foreign markets for small enterprises, for the development of export activities, participation in international trade fairs, etc.	Increasing the potential of small and medium enterprises, greater opportunities for their development and expansion into foreign markets	Attracting human, financial and investment capital, which favors the development of investments and greater possibilities of expansion on foreign markets

Source: author’s own elaboration

#### 4. Conclusion

To sum up – European funds have already played a very important role in the development of the Wrocław Agglomeration, contributing to a considerable improvement in the city’s infrastructure, which is one of the main factors of sustainable development of the region. In this particular region, the largest amount of the European funds was used for transport infrastructure (road and rail) and for the implementation of joint ventures in the field of transport accessibility.

In the perspective currently implemented, that is in the perspective of 2014-2020, the largest increase in the expenditure has taken place in the sphere of innovation and support for entrepreneurs. Investment in environmental protection and energy, as well as projects in the field of culture, education, employment or counteracting social exclusion will continue to be financed.

In addition, the funds will finance investments in cities, especially projects related to comprehensive revitalization, ecological urban transport, and low-emission economy. The EU's requirement is also the development of the so-called smart specializations, or the focus of individual regions on selected priorities of the innovation policy. The use of European funds has also contributed substantially to an increase in the competitiveness of companies based in the

Wrocław Agglomeration and to a substantial growth in innovativeness and technological development.

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***Znaczenie funduszy europejskich  
dla rozwoju i konkurencyjności aglomeracji wrocławskiej***

***Streszczenie***

W niniejszym opracowaniu przedstawiona została próba określenia znaczenia funduszy europejskich dla rozwoju aglomeracji wrocławskiej i jej konkurencyjności. W pierwszej części niniejszego artykułu zostały przedstawione definicje i pojęcia wykorzystywane w niniejszym artykule i charakterystyka aglomeracji wrocławskiej. W drugiej części niniejszego opracowania zostały przedstawione najważniejsze projekty zrealizowane z wykorzystaniem środków Unii Europejskiej w aglomeracji wrocławskiej oraz pokazano efekty wykorzystania tych środków w tym regionie. Ponadto zaprezentowano część projektów realizowanych w aglomeracji wrocławskiej w ramach perspektywy finansowej 2014-2020. W końcowej części opracowania podjęto próbę określenia znaczenia wykorzystania niniejszych funduszy dla rozwoju konkurencyjności aglomeracji wrocławskiej.

***Słowa kluczowe:*** Fundusze Europejskie, konkurencyjność, aglomeracja wrocławska