

Chapter 7

Regional Innovation System in Lower Silesia: Key role of Wrocław Research Centre EIT Plus Ltd.

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge Based Economy is the key to realize the Lisbon strategy for Europe on global and regional scale. Wrocław's EIT Plus strategy will stimulate knowledge-intensive growth of Wrocław and the Lower Silesia region by concerted effort of the knowledge triangle stakeholders. The cooperation with the neighbouring regions will contribute to establishing a significant knowledge-based economy region in this part of Central Europe and, consequently, should also lead to strengthening the economic position of Poland. EIT Plus Programme refers to the goals of the visionary EC initiative to establish the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. Initial financing for the EIT Plus Programme of ca 200 Mio. € comes from the EU structural funds for 2008-2014. Several core projects for implementation of the EIT Plus programme have been prepared by a new entity, Wrocław Research Centre EIT Plus Ltd being a company established in 2008 by the City of Wrocław, the Lower Silesia Region and Wrocław universities.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge-intensive jobs are the key to realize the Lisbon strategy for Europe on global and especially regional scale (Babiak, Baczko, 2011). Allocating resources, particularly structural funds, for the knowledge triangle sectors

(education, research and business) may provide the necessary leverage to achieve the target and to assure viability of solutions. The City of Wrocław, Poland, prepared a comprehensive regional development strategy, EIT Plus, whose goal is to stimulate knowledge-intensive growth of Wrocław and the Lower Silesia region by concerted effort

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of the knowledge triangle stakeholders (Langer, 2011). This should lead to a positive economic and social transformation of the Wroclaw region and, due to direct cooperation, of other regions in Poland. The cooperation with the neighbouring regions (including trans-border cooperation) will contribute to establishing a significant knowledge-based economy region in this part of Central Europe. Consequently, the implementation of the Programme should also help in strengthening the economic position of Poland (Kaleta, Miller (1), 2006), (Kaleta, 2006).

The core financing for EIT Plus comes from the EU structural funds for 2007-2013. Other sources are: national schemes, EU initiatives, public-private partnership and a key commitment from business. The name of the programme purposely refers to the goals of the visionary initiative of the EC and its President to establish the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), whose mission is to contribute to Europe's economic growth and competitiveness by creating a model for synergetic development of education, research and innovation (EC, COM (2006) 604).

THE EIT PLUS PROGRAMME: WROCLAW AS A EUROPEAN CITY OF SCIENCE

On 14th February 2006 the Government of the Republic of Poland adopted an allocation strategy for the EU cohesion funds available for Poland in the years 2007-13. The EU funds are expected to significantly strengthen the pro-innovative nature of Polish economy. For this to happen, the development strategy of Poland has to be closely linked to the regional development strategy. The EIT Plus programme developed in Wroclaw (Langer, 2011) is a concrete implementation proposal of the national development strategy on both the metropolitan and regional level.

An important part of the programme was to develop Wroclaw infrastructure to potentially host

the EIT's head office as well as at least one of the nodes of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. This has been reflected in the proposed name of the programme – „EIT Plus”. The key objective of the programme is to optimise the use of the city's and the region's social and financial resources in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy, i.e. adapting development strategies to knowledge-based economy and knowledge society goals.

Poland was one of the first Member States of the EU that actively supported the idea of setting up the European Institute of Innovation and Technology as early as in April 2005. Soon after the initial proposal was formulated, Wroclaw community embedded the EIT bid with a broader context of a development programme integrating scientific, education and innovation sectors. The regional strategy provides for using the EIT principles as a basis for its own operations (the three elements of the knowledge triangle). Wroclaw finally lost its battle to host the headquarter of EIT, but this goal was not a precondition for the implementation of the EIT Plus programme. The development of research institutions, higher education system and business sector regionally under EIT Plus was actually the key goal of the initiative (Kaleta, Miller(2), 2006), (Kaleta, 2007). It should be mentioned, that from 2011 Wroclaw is hosting another prestigious scientific organization, Academia Europaea (http://www.wroclaw.pl/academia_europeae.dhtml). Wroclaw's office, apart from the one in London, was opened in December 2011.

The EIT Plus Programme consists of several projects aiming at development of a knowledge-based economy in Wroclaw and the whole region. The projects are addressed to different social groups playing an important role in the education-research-innovation triangle: pupils and teachers, engineers, students, academic circles, business and innovative enterprises. Some of the flagship projects being implemented within the framework of the EIT Plus Programme are listed below:

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