

# **Positioning of Wroclaw metropolitan area in the wider European context**

**Regional work paper**

**Provided by Magdalena Belof, October 2014**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I. POSITIONING THE WROCLAW METROPOLITAN AREA IN THE WIDER EUROPEAN CONTEXT.....	7
I.1. Wroclaw Metropolitan area in the regional and national context .....	7
I.1.1. General information.....	7
I.1.2. Outline of socio-economic profile.....	7
I.2. Wroclaw Metropolitan area in the wider European context.....	10
I.2.1. International connections .....	10
I.2.2. Wroclaw Metropolitan space in national and international documents and analysis. ....	11
I.2.3. Possible direction of the international cooperation in spatial planning.....	16
PART II. RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS POSTED IN INITIAL PAPER: POSITIONING OF URBAN REGIONS IN EUROPEAN STRATEGIES' .....	21
PART III. EXPERT INTERVIEWS.....	26
SELECTED SOURCES:.....	32

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## **PART I. POSITIONING THE WROCLAW METROPOLITAN AREA IN THE WIDER EUROPEAN CONTEXT.**

### **I.1. Wroclaw Metropolitan area in the regional and national context**

#### **I.1.1. General information**

Wroclaw is a capital of Dolnoslaskie vivodeship – one of the fastest developing regions of Poland which plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of the country. The Dolnośląskie voivodship is located in the south-west Poland, it covers area of 19 947 km<sup>2</sup> (6,4 % of country total area) and the number of inhabitants is over 2,9 million (7,6 % of Polish population). The region covers a west part of historical Silesia, east part of Upper Lusatia and small part of historical Saxony. It borders the Czech Republic on the south, the free State of Saxony (Federal Republic of Germany) in the west and three Polish regions: the Lubuskie Voivodeship (north), Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (north) and Opolskie Voivodeship (east). The region is divided into 30 counties and 169 communities (36 urban, 55 urban-rural, 78 rural) and is one of the most urbanized regions in Poland.

For years the Dolnośląskie voivodeship has taken one of the highest places in economic ratings in Poland and the Wroclaw's metropolitan area is one of the most recognizable and attractive economic centers for investors, new inhabitants and tourists.

#### **I.1.2. Outline of socio-economic profile**

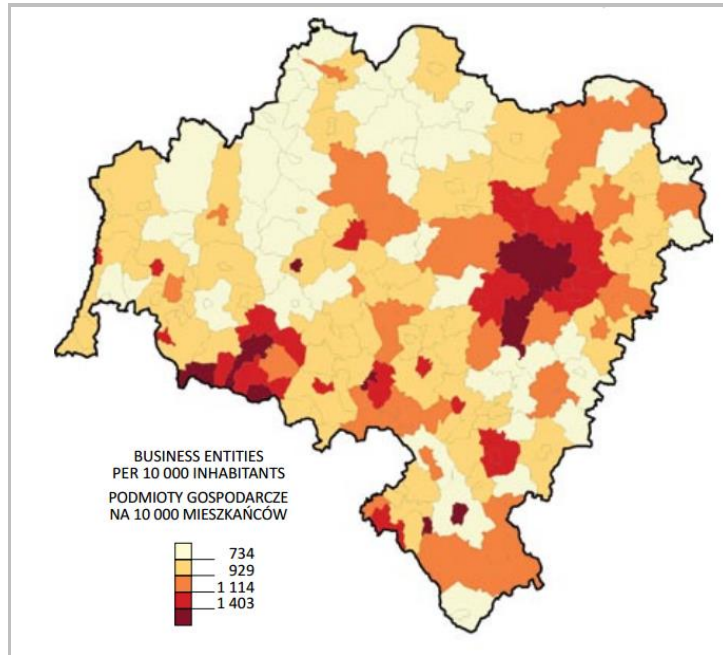
The region's capital city Wroclaw is the historical capital of Lower Silesia. It is situated at the crossroads of main trade routes from South to North and East to West. The city itself has 640 thousand inhabitants and its development is based mainly on IT, mechanical and automobile industries (i.e.: 3M, Bosch, Capgemini, Dolby, Google, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Nokia Siemens Networks, Siemens, Tieto, Volvo, Wabco, Whirlpool), and academia (28 universities and colleges, 130 thousand students). The city is also an important cultural center with number of international music and theatre festivals. In the 2012 it hosted the EURO 2012 football games, in the 2016 Wroclaw will become an European Capital of Culture and in 2017 it will host the World Games 2017.

The unemployment rate in Wroclaw subregion (NUTS 3) is at the Polish average level (around 11,8 % and 11,4 in Poland in 2014) however in the city of Wroclaw is much lower (approx. 5,3. %)

In the region a considerable spatial variation is observed in the level of economic development calculated by GDP value per one inhabitant. The city of Wroclaw next to county of Legnica and Głogów is the most developing subregion in the voivodeship and is at the national forefront (4th place), with its GDP per one inhabitant (152 % of national average).

In 2012, the entrepreneurship indicator (business entities per 10 000 inhabitants) for the Lower Silesia Region was 1 156 (the national average - 1 032) and for Wroclaw itself Wroclaw – 1 605 entities.

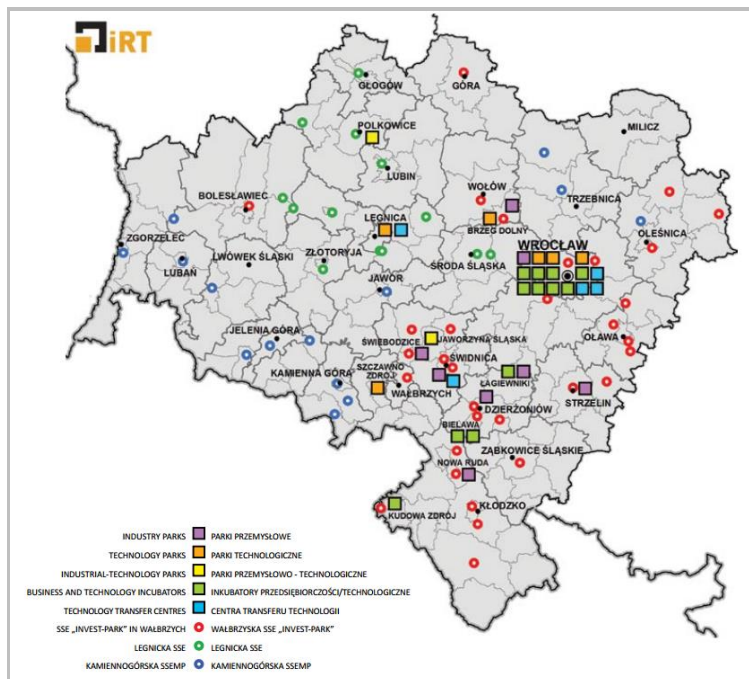
**Fig. 1 The Entrepreneurship indicator in Lower Silesia in 2012**



Source: *Economic Guide Lower Silesia after Local Data Bank, Central Statistical Office, [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl), 2013)*

Wrocław and its surroundings is the home for majority of regional economic activity centers, including Special Economic Zones in which enterprises are provided with allowances, income tax exemptions and attractive, well supplied area.

**Fig. 2 Spatial arrangements of Special Economic Zones and areas of economic activities**



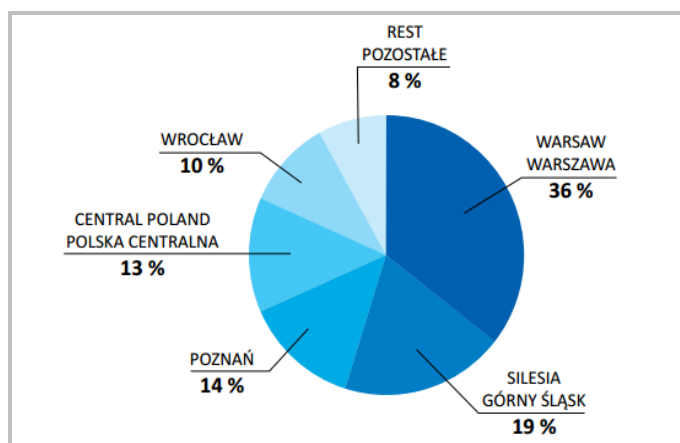
Source: *Economic Guide Lower Silesia after Diagnosis of the situation in Lower Silesia in 2011, Institute for Territorial Development.*

Wrocław also belongs to the most significant regional warehousing markets in Poland and Wrocław is the third largest market of modern office space in Poland (after Warszawa and Kraków). Its existing 795 000 m<sup>2</sup> of modern warehouse space cover 10 % of total capacity



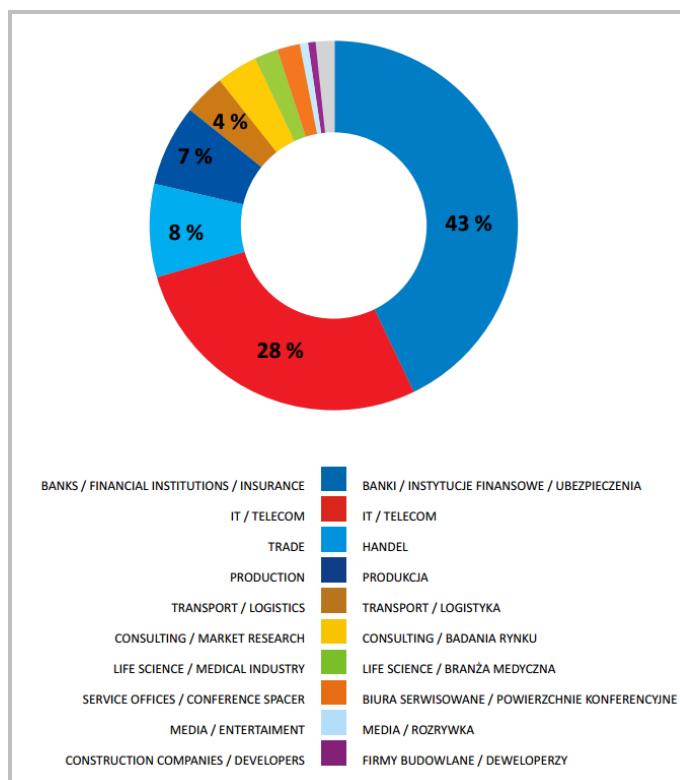
of Poland and there are 84 000 m<sup>2</sup> of new warehouses being still under construction. Warehouses in Wrocław and its surroundings are localized by around A4 highway and along national road No 8. The most active warehouse lessees in 2012 - 2013 were logistics operators and distribution companies (around 46 %); a significant share had also the chain of stores (17 %), production (15 %) and motorization (9 %). is the third largest market in Poland (after Warszawa and Kraków) with it's The total area of modern office space for rent is equal to 510 000 m<sup>2</sup>. The highest demand for office space in Wrocław is among banks, financial and insurance institutions (43 %) and IT and telecommunication companies (28 %).

**Fig. 3: Resources of modern warehouse space in Poland**



Source: Economic Guide Lower Silesia after Cushman & Wakefeld Polska, 2013

**Fig. 4 The volume of transactions of space lease in Wrocław by sector (2012-2013)**



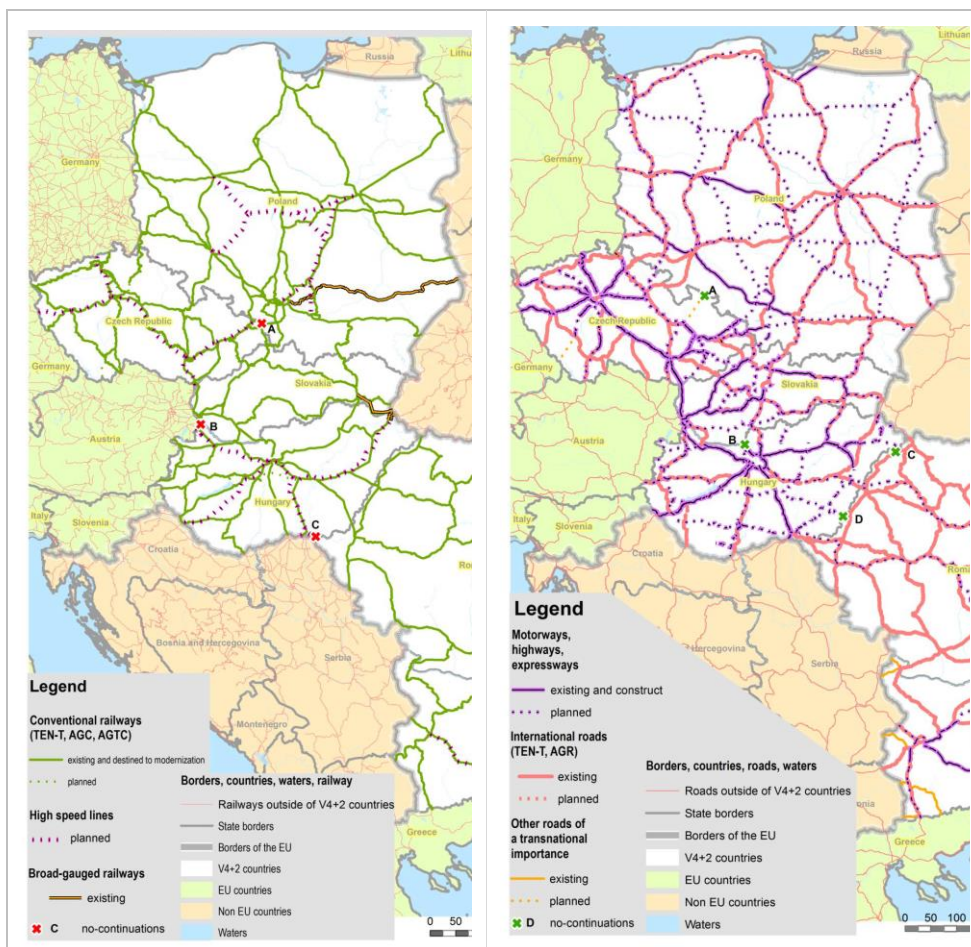
Source: Economic Guide Lower Silesia after Cushman & Wakefeld Polska, 2013

## I.2. Wroclaw Metropolitan area in the wider European context

### I.2.1. International connections

Wroclaw Metropolitan Area is situated at the crossroads of important European communication routes: the Third Pan-European Transport Corridor, the Central European Transport Corridor, (with Odra inland waterway) and which is a part of a broader Baltic- Adriatic routtrade routes from South to Baltic Sea and from West to Russia. The main transportation routes connecting Wroclaw Metropolitan Area with larger European space are the motorways A4 and A18, international road E65 and railway line E-30;

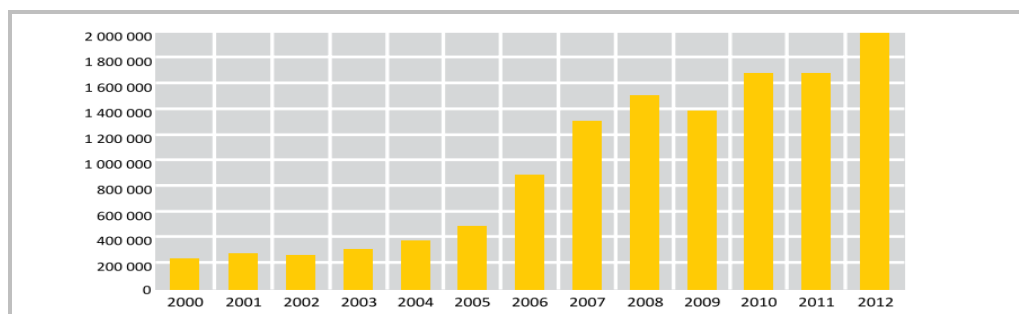
**Fig. 5: Rail and road connections of the Wroclaw Metropolitan Area in the Visegrad space**



Source: Common spatial development document of the V4 + 2 countries, 2010.

The important role in connecting Wroclaw with the European and international space plays the air transport with the Mikołaj Kopernik Airport in Wrocław (Wrocław-Strachowice). It is the fifth airport in Poland in terms of passenger traffic volume, just after Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk and Katowice. In 2012 this airport has served almost 2 mln passengers and capacity of Wrocław airport reaches around 4 mln passengers a year (ultimately, the airport aims to serve around 7 mln passengers a year). Mikołaj Kopernik Wrocław airport offers traditional and low-cost connections to 33 cities in 13 countries of Europe and 35 charter flights. Part of this airport is also applied for CARGO.

**Fig. 6: Passenger traffic volume in total 2000-2012**



Source: Source: Economic Guide Lower Silesia after Wroclaw Airport Co.

**Fig. 7: Flight connections – airport in Wroclaw**

CITY* MIASTO*	CARRIER PRZEWÓZNIK	TYPE OF CONNECTION TYP POŁĄCZENIA	CITY* MIASTO*	CARRIER PRZEWÓZNIK	TYPE OF CONNECTION TYP POŁĄCZENIA
ALICANTE (ALC)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	CRETE CHANIA (CHQ)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
BARCELONA GIRONA (GRO)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	LIVERPOOL (LPL)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
BOLOGNA (BLQ)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	LONDYN LUTON (LTN)	WIZZAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
BRISTOL (BRS)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	LONDYN STANSTED (STN)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
BRUSSELS CHARLEROI (CRL)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	MALAGA (AGP)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
CORK (ORK)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	MALTA (MLA)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
DONCASTER-SHEFFIELD (DSA)	WIZZAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	MILAN BERGAMO (BGY)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
DORTMUND (DTM)	WIZZAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	MUNICH (MUC)	LUFTHANSA, LOT	TRADITIONAL / TRADYCYJNE
DUBLIN (DUB)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	OSLO RYGGE (RYG)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
DÜSSELDORF (DUS)	LUFTHANSA	TRADITIONAL / TRADYCYJNE	OSLO TORP (TRF)	WIZZAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
EAST MIDLANDS (EMA)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	PARIS BEAUVAIS (BVA)	WIZZAIR, RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
EINDHOVEN (EIN)	WIZZAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	ROME CIAMPINO (CIA)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
FRANKFURT N. MAIN (FRA)	LUFTHANSA, LOT	TRADITIONAL / TRADYCYJNE	SHANNON (SNN)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
GDANSK (GDN)	EUROLOT	TRADYCYJNE / TRADYCYJNE	WARSAW (WAW)	LOT	TRADITIONAL / TRADYCYJNE
GLASGOW PRESTWICK (PIK)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE	WARSAW MODLIN (WAW)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE
COPENHAGEN (CPH)	SAS	TRADITIONAL / TRADYCYJNE	VENICE TREVISO (TSF)	RYANAIR	LOW COST / NISKOKOSZTOWE

**CHARTER FLIGHTS\* / CZARTERY\*:**  
 Agadir, Antalya, Barcelona, Bodrum, Burgas, Chania, Corfu, Costa Brava, Costa Daurada, Dalaman, Djerba, Dubrovnik, Enfidha, Ercan, Fuerteventura, Heraklion, Hurghada, Ibiza, Izmir, Kefalonia, Kos, Lanzarote, Madeira, Majorca, Marsa Alam, Monastir, Palermo, Paphos, Peloponnese, Rhodes, Sharm el- Sheikh, Taba, Tenerife, Varna, Zakynthos.

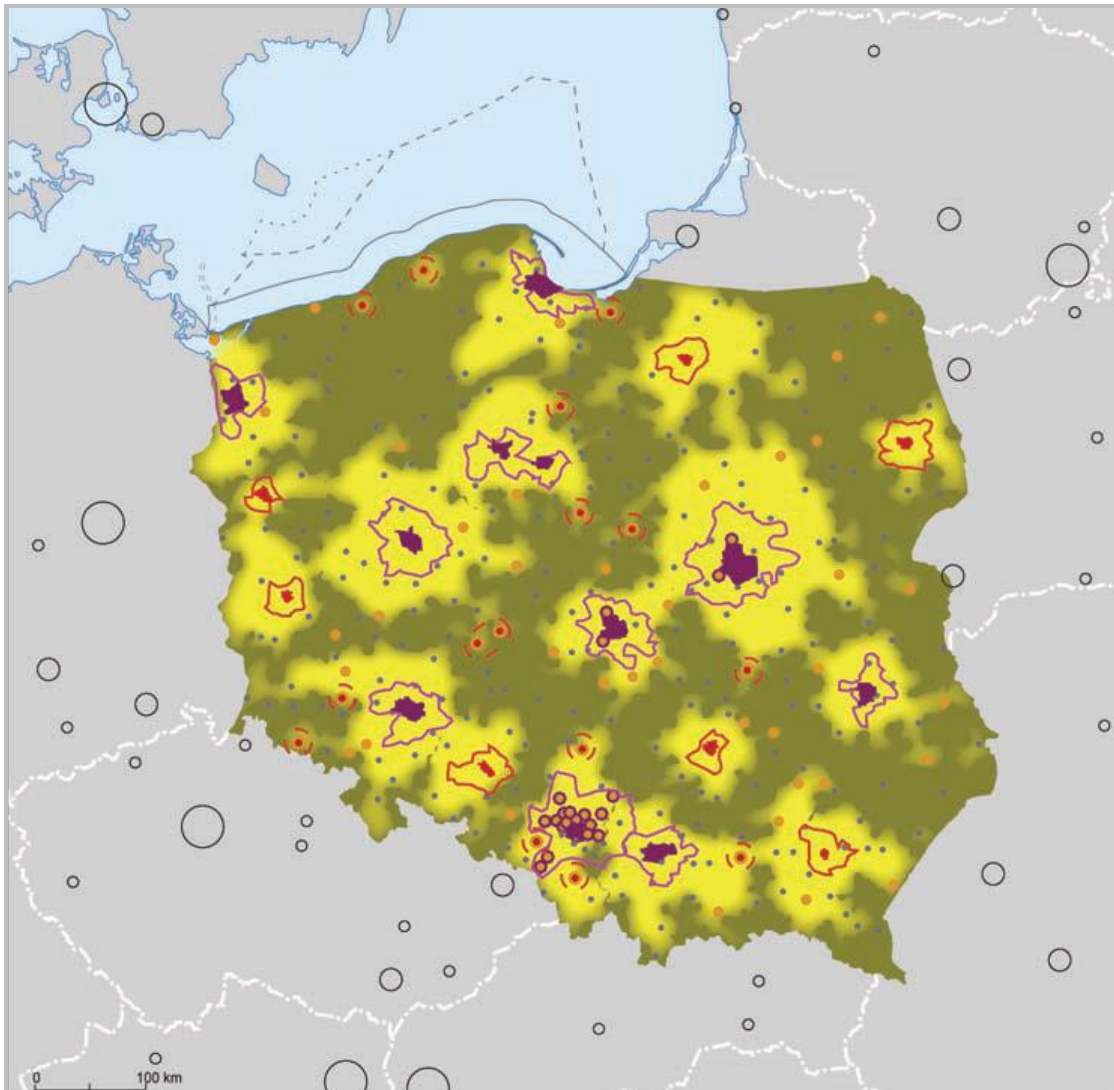
Source: Economic Guide Lower Silesia after Wroclaw Airport Co.

### I.2.2. Wroclaw Metropolitan space in national and international documents and analysis

All the past and present studies conducted at the national level (e.g. National Spatial Development Concept 2005, 2011, the Atlas of the Union of Polish Metropolises, 2007) indisputably confirm the status of the Wroclaw Metropolitan Area as an important element in the network of Polish metropolises with Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Łódź, Szczecin, Tri-City Area (Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot), Bydgoszcz and Toruń and Silesian conurbation.

The National Spatial Development Concept foresees also the Wroclaw Metropolitan Area as a node which play an important role in building better European integration of the country by developing international connections at various levels. This role should be recognized as specially significant because the general goal visibly transmitted by the NSDC is to strengthen first the national territorial cohesion, and only then the European one. This thesis is also proved by the experts interview in the Part III.

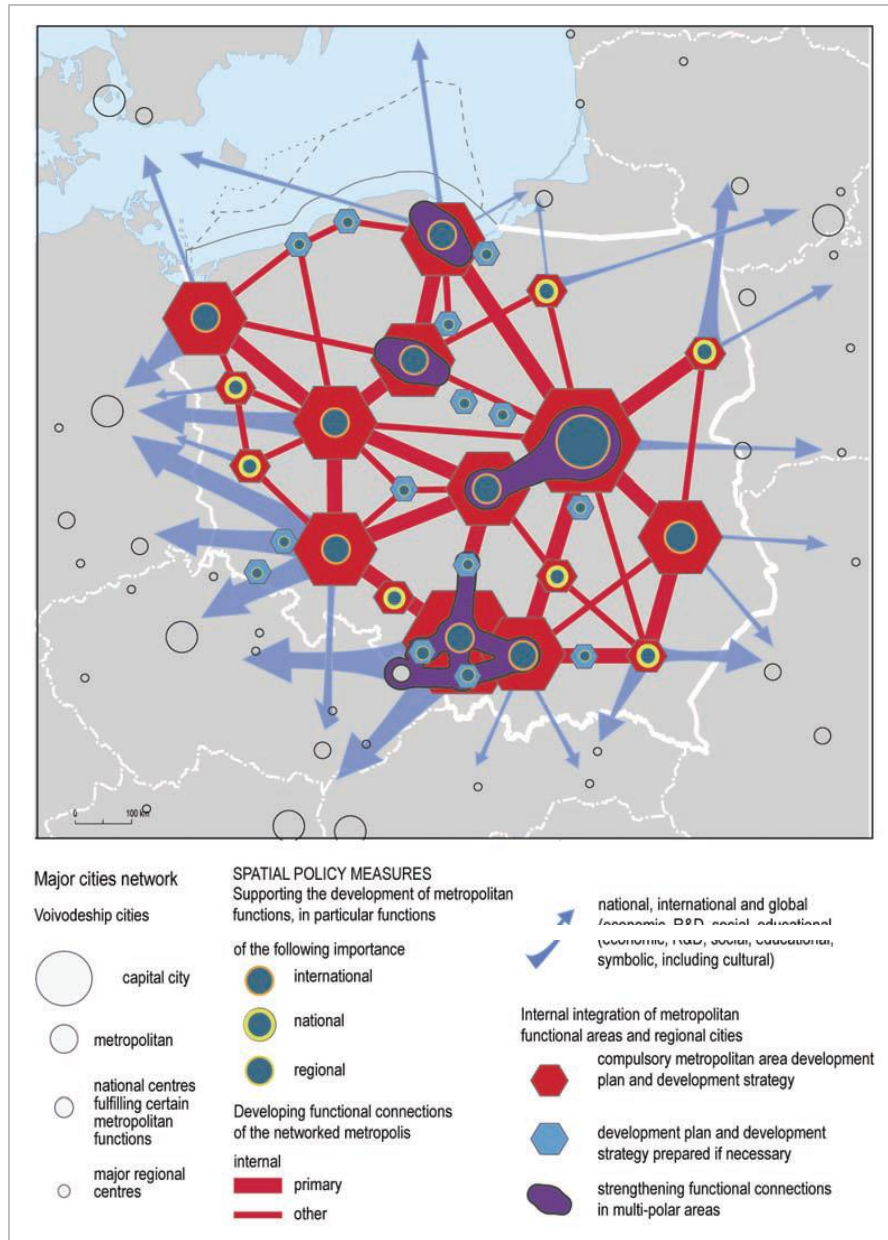
**Fig. 8: Urban and rural functional areas in Poland**



Source: National Spatial Development Concept, 2011



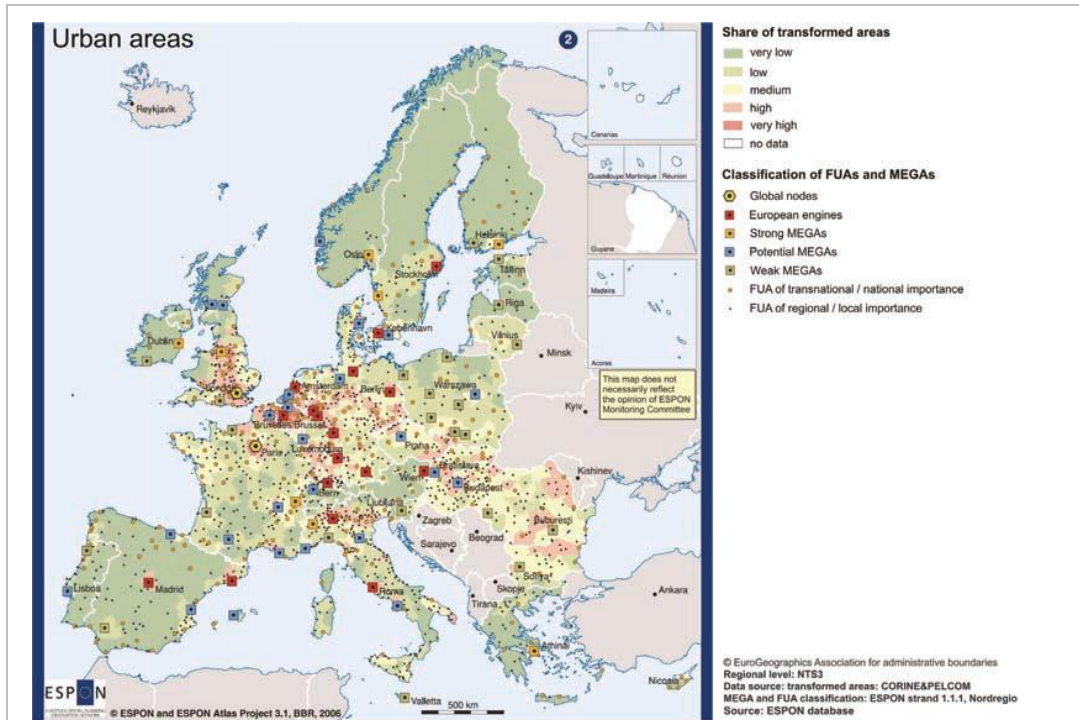
**Fig. 9: Outline of spatial policy measures to improve the competitiveness of major urban centres.**



Source: National Spatial Development Concept, 2011

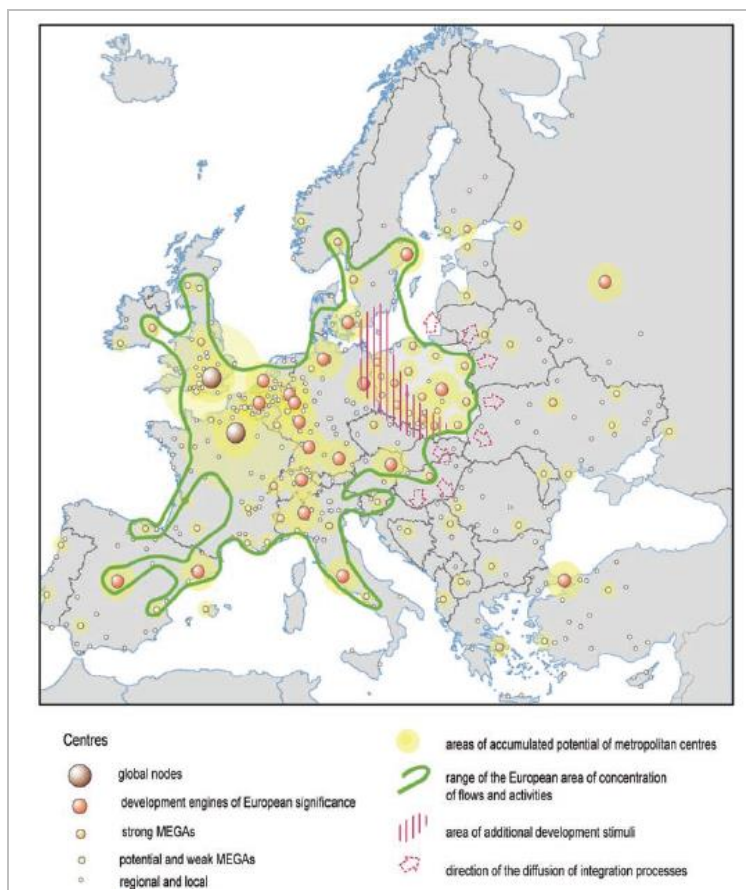
From the international perspective the Wrocław metropolitan area is also noticeable at the European pace background. The research carried out in 2004-2008 in numerous ESPON, Eurostat and Interreg projects identified Wrocław Metropolitan Area as "weak MEGA" or weak metropolitan area, which than was likely to become an equal partner in the network MEGA's. The ranking was based on the indicators related to strong external functional relationships of the core city and issues like transport, labor and knowledge (including the access to education and scientific activity).

Fig. 10: Urban Areas in Europe



Source: National Spatial Development Concept based on ESPON Atlas Project 3.1., 2006

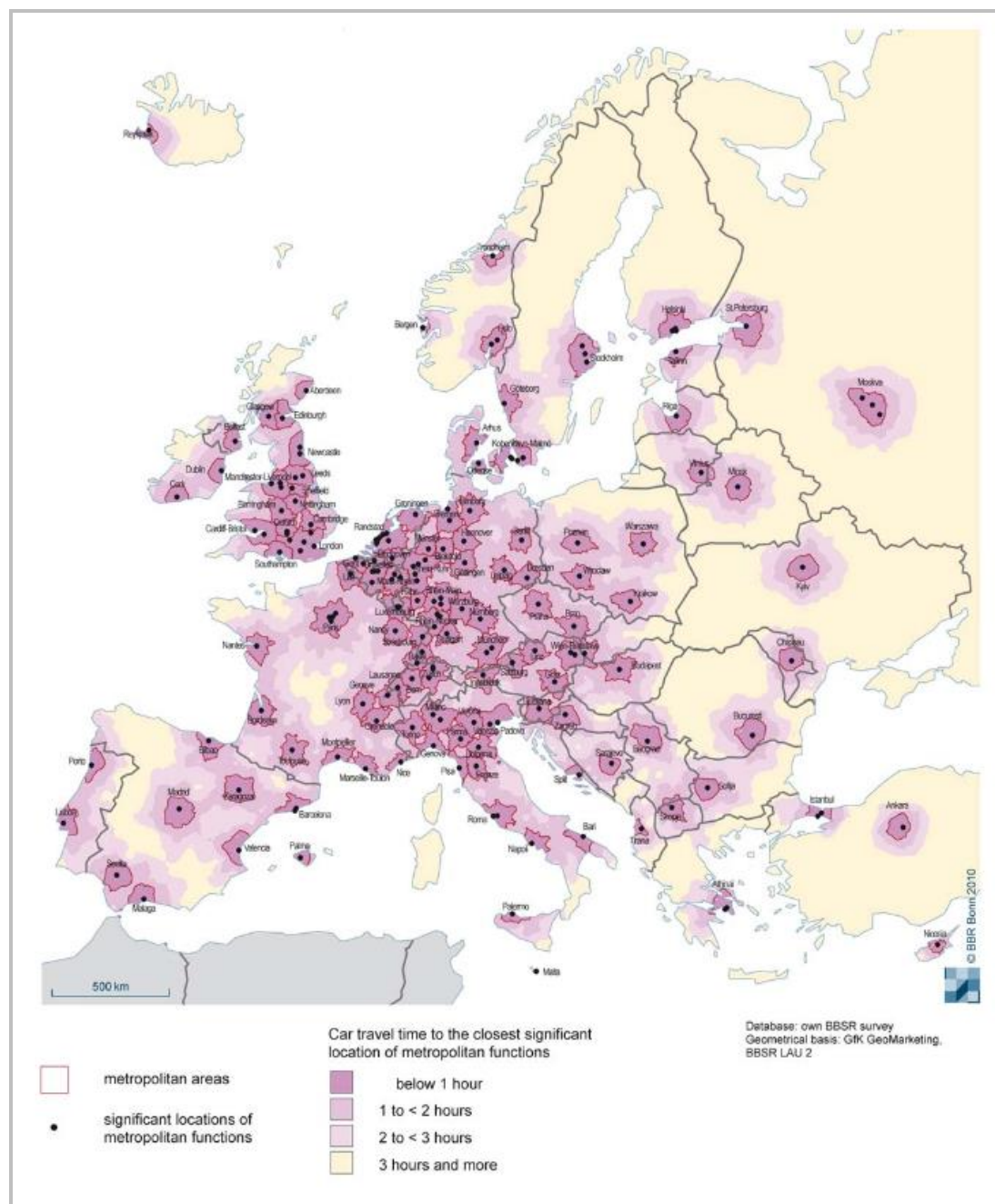
Fig. 11 European metropolises in 2030



Source: National Spatial Development Concept based on ESPON Scenarios on the Territorial Future of Europe, Project 3.2., 2007

More recent analysis also notify the important role of Wroclaw Metropolitan Area in Europe, specifically stressing strong interdependence of the core city Wroclaw and its surroundings. The ESPON 2013 Database Dictionary of Spatial Units puts Wroclaw Metropolitan Area among 153 European MetroRegions. Basing on an urban nomenclature created by the ESPON SGPTD Project the MetroRegions are constructed from the boundaries of the LUZ (OECD/DG Regio 2012) and appear in the areas where 50% or more of the population of a NUTS3 is in a LUZ.

**Fig. 12 Metropolitan areas and significant locations of metropolitan functions (cores)**



Source: Metropolitan areas in Europe BBSR-Online-Publication Nr. 01/2011



Fig 13 Metroregions in Europe



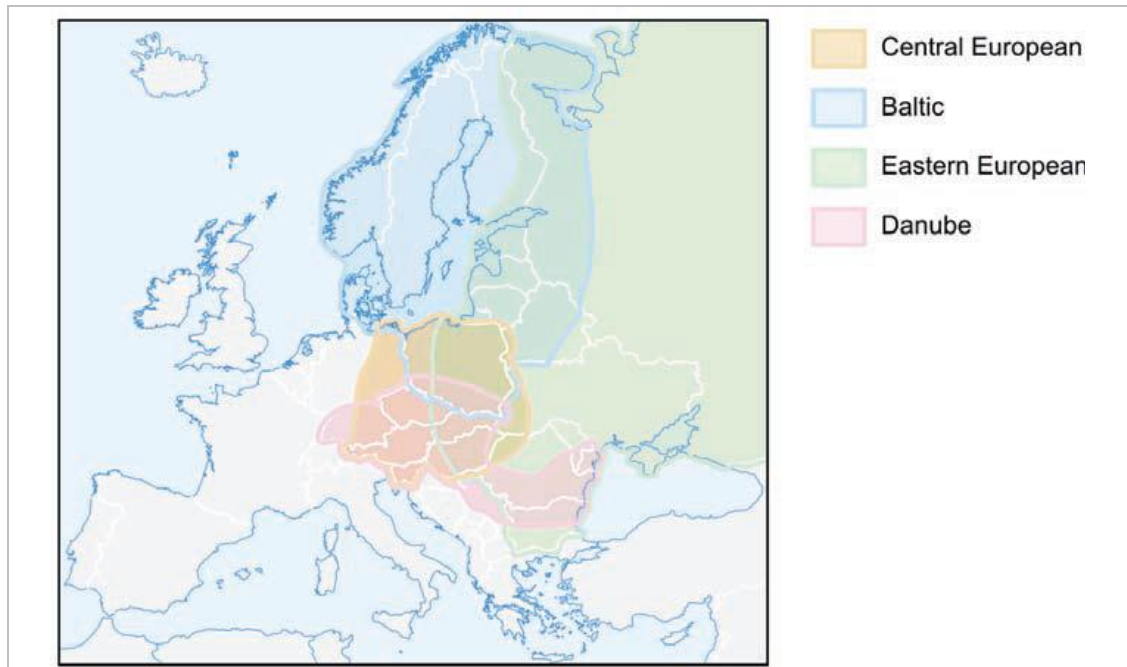
Source: ESPON 2013 Database Dictionary of Spatial Units

### I.2.3. Possible direction of the international cooperation in spatial planning

The identification of the best suitable international cooperation platforms regarding spatial planning for Wroclaw Metropolitan Area is not an easy issue. Like majority of modern metropolis, Wroclaw develops the network cooperation with many distant cities and territories. Already existing networks as for example the METREX opens up the possibilities of thematic cooperation with other European cities and obviously the Programs of the European Territorial Cooperation give an excellent stimulus for building the international cooperation in wider European space. Wroclaw Metropolitan Area is eligible to apply for projects in two 'territorially oriented' Programs: Central Europe and Baltic Sea Region and in the 'network oriented' UrbAct Programme.



**Fig. 14 European integration areas involving Poland - the context of Wroclaw Metropolitan Area location.**

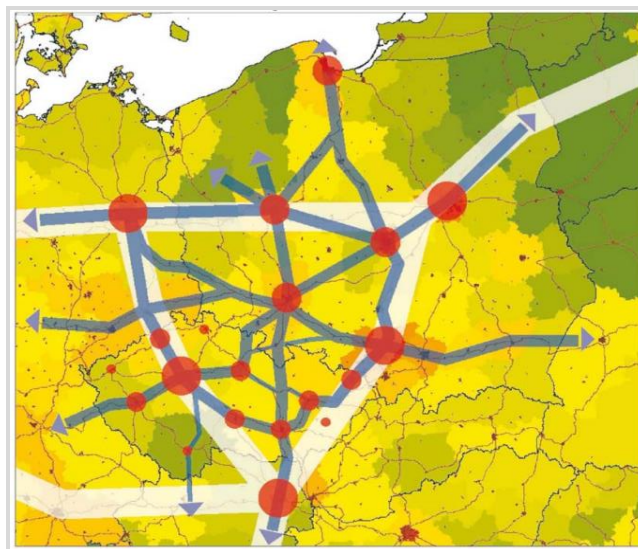


Source: National Spatial Development Concept, 2011

The spatial planning cooperation is however the activity that in majority of cases is stimulated by the geographical proximity or at least by the functional trajectories (roads, rail, infrastructure, rivers). In this context Wroclaw Metropolitan Area can play a significant role in variety of platforms. Some examples are indicated below:

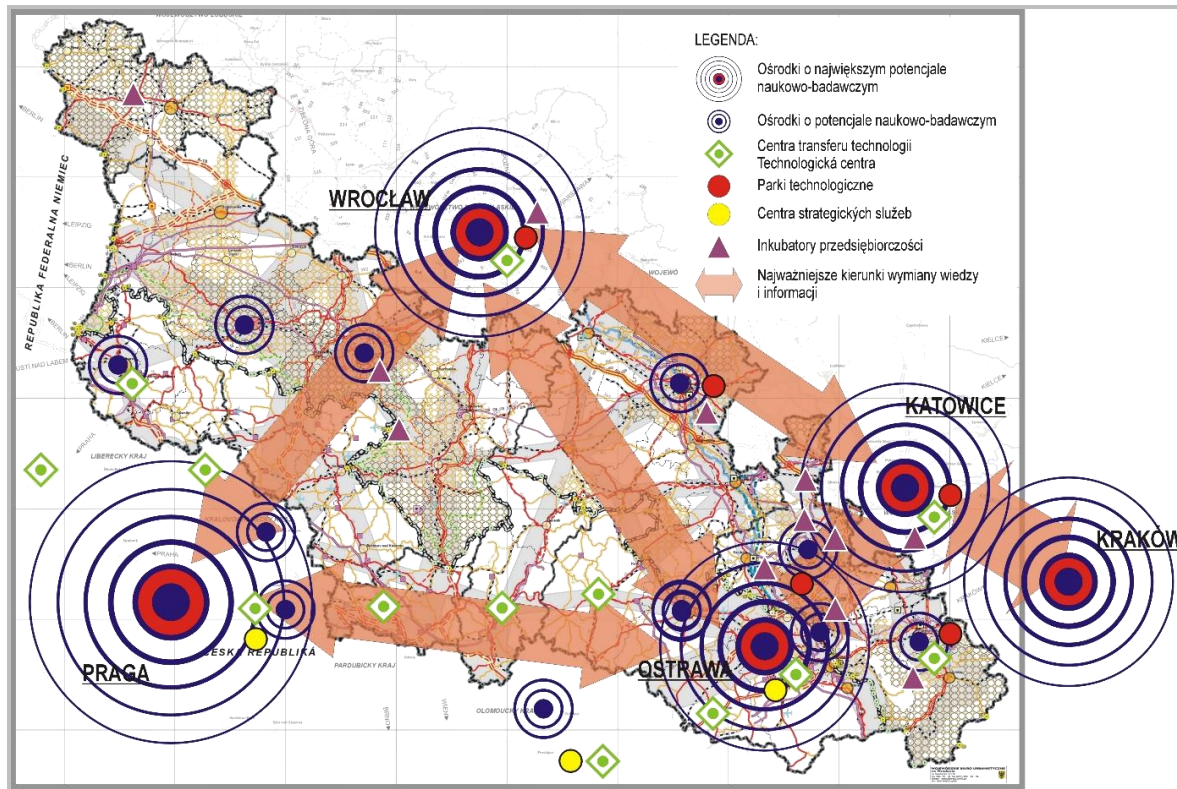
- Polish – Czech – German Borderland** in which Wroclaw Metropolitan Area Plays an important crossroad point between Warsaw, Berlin and Prague and also is a pillar of the urban and metropolitan network in the foreseen new economic zone in Central Europe.

**Fig. 15. The main connection axis linking the Wroclaw Metropolitan Area with Czech Republic and Germany.**



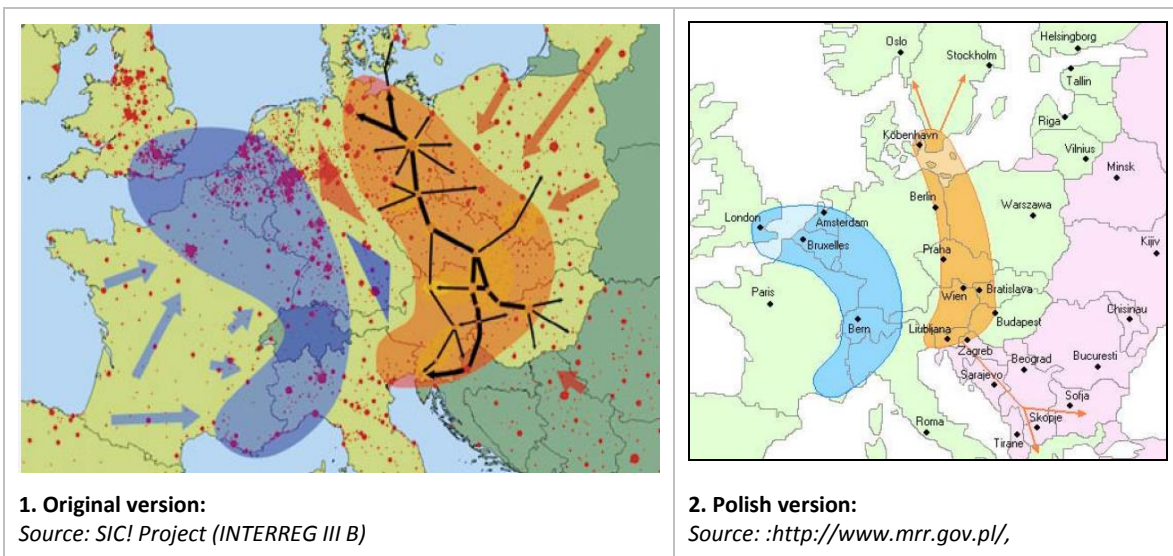
Source: Conditions of Poland's development related to the neighbourhood of the Czech Republic, (Belof, Mironowicz, Mlek, Zipser, 2008)

**Fig. 16. Innovation potential at the Polish-Czech Borderland**



Source: Spatial Development Study of the Polish –Czech Borderland, 2006

**Fig. 17: Interpretations of the territorial scope of new European Growth Area („New Banana”)**



- b) The Third Paneuropean Transport Corridor linking Berlin/Dresden – south Poland and western Ukraine. In longer perspective this transportation axis may play a crucial role in connecting Western Europe with Black Sea region.



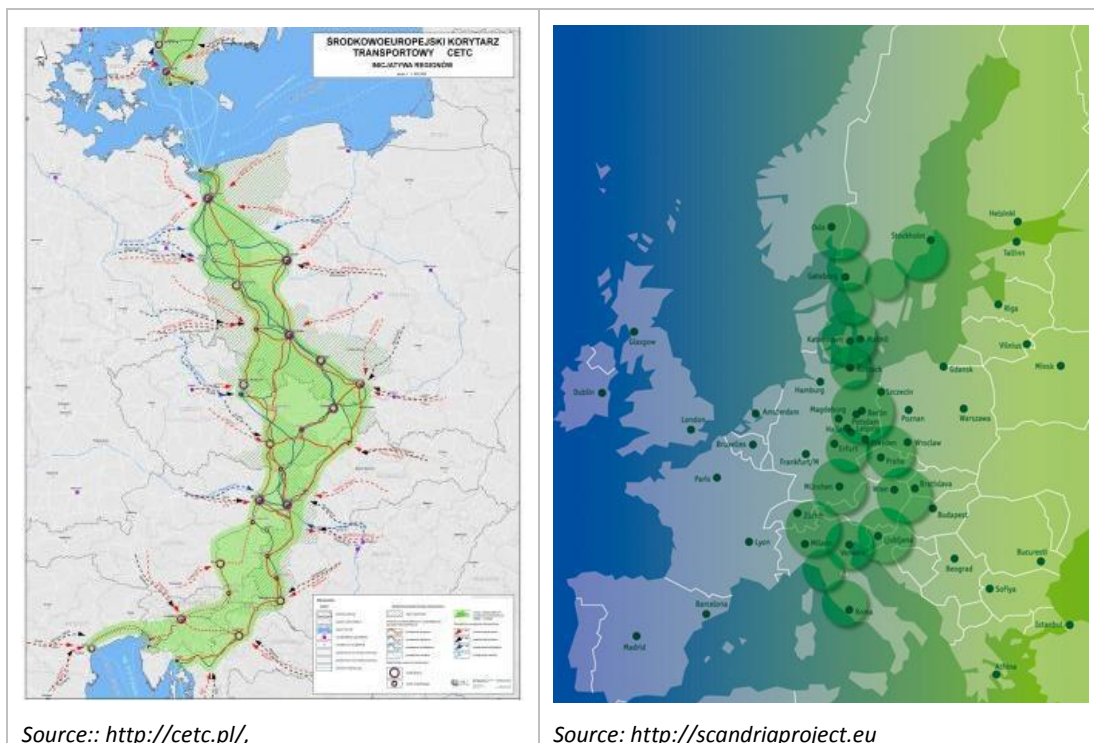
**Fig. 18: Cooperation partners and the study area of the Via Regia Plus Project (Central Europe)**



Source: Via Regia Plus

- c) Baltic – Adriatic connection: Wrocław Metropolitan Area is an fulcrum between Polish Baltic Ports (Gdansk, Szczecin-Świnoujście) and South-Western Europe. The connection between Swedish region Scandria via Szczecin and western part of Poland to the south of Europe has been intensively lobbied by the initiative of Central European Transport Corridor.

**Fig.19: Central European Transport Corridor (left) and Scandria Corridor (right)**



Source: <http://cetc.pl/>,

Source: <http://scandiaproject.eu>

- d) The Odra – Labe – Danube channel: the idea of connecting the main inland waterways in Central Europe is strongly sported by certain groups of European visionaries , however by some other is perceived rather unrealistic. However for the decades already it has drawn the attention of planners and politicians. Wrocław Metropolitan Area cold plan and important role in supporting such vision, having particular interest in becoming an important inland port and multimodal node.

Fig. 20. The vision of Odra – Labe – Danube Channel



Source: <http://geoinzynieria.inzynieria.com/cat/5/art/17298/kanal-odra---dunaj---laba>

## **PART II. RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS POSTED IN INITIAL PAPER: POSITIONING OF URBAN REGIONS IN EUROPEAN STRATEGIES.**

### **Question 1:**

#### **Would it be beneficial to create further macro-regional strategies? What could be their delimitation?**

The idea of macro-regional strategies has been implemented as the response for the need of cooperation in large, supranational areas in order to solve certain problems beyond national borders, but not necessary at the level of the whole EU territory. This idea is in line with general demand of the Strategy Europe 2020 and supports the territorialization of instruments and policies and integrated place-based approach to means and measures.

From the strategic and spatial planning perspective, creating European macro-regional strategies can be beneficial for engaged territories (states, regions). The focus on the larger geographical areas which share specific problems and features from one side guarantees better recognition of the needs and required tools, from other side enables acting beyond administrative borders, connecting territorial potentials, and improve the performance, especially in the field of environmental protection and enhancing connectivity. Macro-regional level seems to be the right perspective for coordination of sectoral policies, both vertically and horizontally. Therefore the answer to the question: Would it be beneficial to create further macro-regional strategies? must be positive, however conditioned.

#### **1. Condition one: provision of better implementation tools**

Initially, the macro-regional concept have been proposed as purely “mobilization tool” which would indicate common goals for the given area but at the implementation level would be anchored only in existing financial, organizational and legal structures (three “no” rule). For efficient implementation these rules should be deeply reconsidered in order to provide macro-regional strategies with necessary set of tools which will made them “living strategies”. First of all the strategies should be linked with specific programmes and funds. Otherwise there is a threat that the macro-regional strategies will remain only artificial, bureaucratically triggered activity and their achievements “fake” which means that with great probability they could be as well expected as a result of national and regional Operational Programmes and activities of existing international macroregional organizations.

#### **2. Condition two: focus on uniqueness and differentiation.**

The comparison of existing macro-regional strategies (EUSBSR, DS) demonstrates quite a big generality and similarity of their main goals. This very general approach generating almost identical goals everywhere suggests that the macro-regional strategies are the tools of decentralization of the EU policies, which to large extent ignore the uniqueness and specificity of the particular area. However this supposed-to-be decentralized role cannot be operationalized because the strategies are not equipped with any implementation package.

Macro-regional strategies should be rather treated as very specific instrument to support problem solving in diverse areas. To fulfill such a role the macro-regional strategies should be narrower, much more differentiated among each other and strictly focused on the most characteristic problems of the area, leaving implementation of general European goals to all existing operational levels. Otherwise this model can be easily criticized for multiplying bureaucracy and as mentioned before - fake achievements.



### 3. Condition three: engagement of all levels and actors.

So far the addressee of the macro-regional strategies are most of all the national governments and to some extent the existing international organizations active in the given areas. The engagement of the towns and regions is also noticeable but it weakens with the distance to the core of the area (in case of the EUSBSR with the distance to the Baltic Sea shore). There should be more knowledge and transparent message for all actors in the area about the strategy, its merits and the method of its implementation.

### 4. Condition four: keeping the macro-regional strategies high on the EU agenda.

It is important to keep the EU macro-regional strategies constantly high on the EU agenda. Only this way the involved actors (nation states, regions, organizations, citizens) can be motivated to constant and efficient cooperation.

Since the macro-regional strategies have clear geographical roots the answer for the question: *What could be their delimitation?* must indicate such factors as: geographical proximity or common geographical specificity (i.e. belonging to mountain areas, sea basin, large river trajectory, etc.,) sharing common geographical and geopolitical features, sharing common problems related to geographical and geopolitical location (and not general European problems!).

An example of the macro region where involved countries share some “geopolitical heritage” is the area called “Vysehrad +” (Vysehrad Group plus other countries of the ex-Eastern Block). Since 2009 the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania are engaged in elaboration of the Common Spatial Development Strategy, which is financed only by individual countries with no support of the EU.

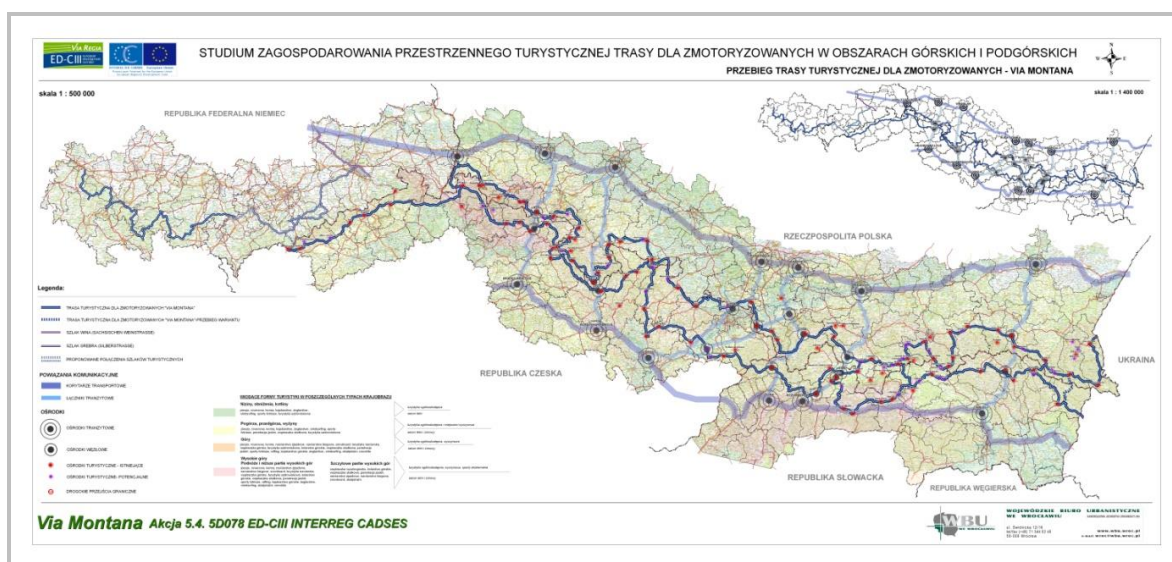
**Fig. 21: The identified nodes and development axis on the territory of the V4+2 countries. The map indicates so-called “no-continuations”.**



Source: <https://transpotr.gov.pl>

The examples of transnational area that share specific features related to geographical location are the Carpathian Region and Carpathian-Sudeten Mountain Stripe (delimited in the project *Via Montana* – the part of *Via Regia* – ED C III, Interreg III B CADSES)

**Fig. 22: The trajectory of the transnational touristic rout Via Montana**



Source: <http://www.wdc-viaregia.eu>

## Question 2:

### What could be the topics for cooperation?

As mentioned before the topics of cooperation in the macro-regional strategies should clearly respond to unique problems identified and agreed by the actors in the specific areas. Due to geographical nature of macro-regions the general topics of co-operation should be focused on solving the problems of spatial nature and transnational dimension. The classic spatial planning issues such as environment, risk prevention, security issues, adaptation to climate change, connectivity (transport) will be probably at the core of all strategies, however they should be modified according to the specific needs in different areas. Also the topics related to networking of the economy and institutions in the area and integrated response to global competitiveness are not to be missed. The identification of main barriers slowing down development processes as well as smart specialization of larger European macro-regions might be of a great importance for the design of future European policies. In this context the cooperation in macro-regions may yield with proposals to the EC for introducing specific tools and policies on certain territories (as for example some environmental relaxation in the infrastructure investment processes in Central European countries to enable them catching up with “Old” Europe).

## Question 3:

### Which governance structures could be activated?

The effectiveness of macro-regional strategy cannot be achieved without reassuring decent financial tools and governance model.

If the “no new money” rule is to be supported there is a need of connecting macro-regional strategies with the programmes of European Territorial Cooperation (as it is already exercised in the Danube Region). Additionally some seed money should be considered for triggering specific

pilot actions and activities among non-state actors (regions, universities, NGOs, etc.). A bank loans and other instruments could be also designed.

As to organizational issues it must be said that pure networking makes problems with identity, authorship of the strategy and controlling it's achievements. The governance of the macro-regional strategy should be stronger, easier and more transparent and at the same time based on multi-level principle. For example the model of the rotating presidency between involved governments can be discussed. Such model is known and practiced both at the EU level (EU presidency) as well as in supranational organizations and groups (e.g. Vysehrad Group). At the lower level the interregional but also inter-ministerial, inter-sectoral agreements should be built for specific action plans, because next to crossing national borders the sectoral borders crossing remain very important issue.

#### **Question 4:**

##### **What about the neighbourhood dimension?**

The specificity of some European macro-regions are rooted precisely in their close dependency or proximity to the non-European territories. Therefore the neighbourhood dimension is critical and must be taken into consideration in macro-regional strategies. The engagement of the third countries in macro-regional strategies will surely differ very much depending on specific case. It will depend on the number of cooperating parties, their size, economic development level, political system etc. As hard as possible effort should be made to take neighbouring countries "on board" during the process of deciding the goals, flagship projects, activities, etc. In the situation where the third countries cannot participate financially in implementation of the strategy some effort should be made to reassure their presence at least in visioning, planning and governance.

#### **Question 5:**

##### **What could be the role of urban regions in this process? Are there differences between different strategy areas?**

At present the urban regions are key driving forces of Europe's development. In many cases rich metropolitan regions have influence equal to the nation states on the EU policies. The macro-regional strategies cannot be efficient without the active voice and engagement of urban regions. So far however the message transmitted to urban regions from the level of existing macro-regional strategies is unclear as is their present role.

This role of metropolitan and urban regions as the actors of the macro-strategies should be substantially strengthen. They can have slightly different position depending on different strategy areas, but their importance cannot be denied. Urban regions can act individually as well as in specific organisations and networks (i.e. Union of the Baltic Cities)

#### **Concluding reflections:**

##### **What are the benefits of the development of macro-regional strategies, in particular for urban regions?**

The benefits of the development of macroregional strategies depends to large extent on the concept that will prevail in future EU approach. Will the macro-regional strategies remain simply a mobilizing tool or in other words: the network-platform for the dialog over strategic goals and development issues in the area? Or will they be converted into real and efficient tool supporting specific features and development ways of specific supranational areas? The second option opens the door to the macro-regional strategies being developed into a vital steering documents for cooperation among involved actors from various level.



Today macro-regional strategies rely very much on official authorities and institutions mostly of national level. In such model the expectation of wide engagement of the representatives of different levels, branches and organizations including urban areas administrations is unreal.

### PART III. EXPERT INTERVIEWS.

Within the framework of this study the opinions of three selected Polish national experts in the fields of international co-operation have been collected using the direct interviews method. The interviews focused mainly on three general questions: what are the most important problems which need international cooperation in Central Europe from Polish point of view? Does the organization of international co-operation in Central Europe need any changes? Is there any special role that the Vysegrad Group may play in the international cooperation in Central Europe? Are there some arguments for establishing the macroregional strategy for Central Europe?

The interviews have provided good background for the discussion on positioning the Wrocław Metropolitan Region in the wider European context.

#### Interview 1

with **Mateusz Gniazdowski, Ph.D. Head of the Central European Department in the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), carried on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2014)**

*The Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) is an independent public research institution monitoring the events and analyzing the socio-political and economic processes taking place in Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, the Visegrad Group states, the Balkan states and Turkey. The Centre also carries out regional research projects focused on security, integration of energy markets, migration and integration processes in Germany, Central Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Nordic-Baltic and the Black Sea regions.*

The Central Europe is difficult to identify precisely in space. The Visegrad countries however form a visible and relatively coherent group of countries in there. They share common history (previously being a part of so called “soviet bloc”) and they jointly orchestrated the way to the EU and NATO accession for the larger group of countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Many common development problems can be identified as specifically characterized in this group. In terms of urban and spatial development we can indicate for example:

- housing problems, in particular the problem of large prefabricated real estates which here have the status of ordinary neighborhoods (not a social housing as in majority of western countries). These neighborhoods require some structural (state?) help which cannot be qualified as eligible costs in the EU supported projects.
- Problems of bottlenecks and no-continuation in infrastructure networks among countries. These problems have been seriously neglected for long time long time and require serious consideration.

Other problems characteristic for Central Europe and Visegrad group:

- security policy, especially in the context of recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict and general fiasco of the Eastern Partnership goals.
- Climatic policy,
- The CAP, especially the problem of unification of direct payments.

We can observe some very positive signals in development in Central Europe, as for example:

- free human and stock flows have very positive impact on the development, especially for Romania (Hungary is the core actor in this regard);

- the Central European countries co-operate strongly in the field of implementation of the cohesion policy,

Examples of cooperation and fields of potential co-operation:

- Gas as the natural recourse and gas market generally are the core issues for Central Europe co-operation – also in the V4 countries. Currently in Visegrad Group the flagship projects is being realized: “The Gas Target Model for the Visegrad 4 region”. It is based on the already completed study: “Analysis of the current state of market liquidity in the V4 region - state of play and challenges ahead”. The study has been completed in the co-operation of National Co-ordination Organs responsible for this particular field.
- The common Development Strategy for V4+2 countries is the important example of determination of the V4 countries to co-operate
- The Carpathian area is also an interesting issue, however it has never gain the strong position as an “independent” transnational region. Its problems and development goals are often mentioned in the discussions on the Danube Strategy (for example it is included as a topic in the debates on the Danube Strategy Forum).
- The UE pressure for investing in the railway can perhaps trigger the new infrastructural co-operation ideas in Central Europe.
- The most realistic field of co-operation in Central Europe is still the transport infrastructure. It can be based on the corridor concepts (as far as there are not competing) – even to Turkey. The competition of ports Koper and Rijeka may cause some problems though.
- The common market opportunities should be better utilized. In recent years we already observe the increase of export-import exchange within V4 + Bulgaria + Romania. In Romania for example the very good climate to build trade and economic co-operation with Visegrad Group countries, especially Poland.
- Creating new functional areas. From Polish perspective, the most promising area for creating a new growth node in Central Europe is the border region of Katowice (PL) – Ostrava (Cz.R) – Zilina (SLR), due to its strong international automobile and mining industry.

When observing Poland and its positioning in wider European context we may come to conclusion that Poland in many points is closer to the Baltic Countries than to Romania or Bulgaria (regarding the climate for example). It is worth noticing that the co-operation between the Central Europe (and V4 area) and the BSR countries is very weak. Poland perhaps could play a role of a ‘connecting point’ but in fact for the recent decade such an idea hasn’t dominated the political positioning. We have been deeply concentrated on building internal cohesion in our relatively big and economically diverse country and we were against fragmentation of thinking about cohesion. Therefore the enthusiasm towards EUBSR was rather moderate. We haven’t manage to position ourselves well enough in the EUBSR when the discussions about Danubian strategy started. The Polish attitude towards macroregional strategies can be described as ‘cautious’, but our participation of course is undeniable.

The Danube Strategy (DS) is very visible as a debate platform in Central Europe. So far it is no sign that it may weaken the cooperation in larger Central Europe. The DS is run in very pragmatic way and the West-East connections are particularly important. The DS can be called the renaissance of the idea of “Danube Europe”. Germany (Bavaria) and Austria play very important role in the DS, Czech Republic remains rather cautious and Poland – as not being an official partner – is not included in the debate. The North – South linkages (so important for Central Europe are

practically ignored in the Danube Strategy – the internal connections of the area are much more important.

The economic crisis (2009) increased largely the awareness of common problems in the Central European countries and especially accentuated the value of the North – South connections.

The question if there is a need for overall common strategy for Central Europe remains open. Perhaps what we need first of all is the “network co-operation strategy” that would give the general guidance on what issues and who should co-operate in Central Europe area in particular sectors. Now the sectoral co-operation is not co-coordinated or triggered from above and it much depends on the activities of particular ministries in the involved countries.

Who should than animate the co-operation in Central Europe from the Polish national level? Probably the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development is the best addressee. What is interesting, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs is not active in supporting co-operation activities (not only in Poland though). For nearly a decade the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a special department for coordination of transborder cooperation, but the structure has been changed and the department does not exist anymore. Probably some coordination would be helpful though, since the sectoral activities are sometimes incompatible. It must also stressed that the strong focus of the border regions towards cooperation is absolutely crucial in activating the national level. And we should not forget that geographical proximity matters the most!

## Interview 2

**with Anna Świątecka-Wrona, Head Specialist in the Unit of Spatial Planning, Department of Spatial Policy, Ministry of Infrastructure and Development , carried on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2014**

*Department of Spatial Policy serves as strategic institutions and is responsible for the execution of tasks in the field of spatial planning policy and urban policy, including their integration with regional planning. Department's tasks include in particular:*

- *preparation, implementation, monitoring and updating of government documents( the concept of spatial development of the country and national urban policy; etc.)*
- *cooperation with international,. regional and local governments and institutions in the field of spatial planning and urban policy;*
- *initiating and supporting research, studies, programs and pilot projects in the field of spatial planning and urban policy.*

*Mrs. Anna Świątecka-Wrona since mid 90-ties has been responsible for co-ordination of the transborder co-operation from the national level. Among other she has been responsible for co-ordination of the works of bilateral Working Groups for Transborder Co-operation at all Polish borders, the elaboration of the the Common Spatial Planning Studies at Polish borders and elaboration of the Common Spatial Development Study for V4+2.*

The cooperation in Central Europe in the field of territorial development / spatial planning inevitably brings about positive effects. First of all it allows better understanding of constrains resulting from different and autonomous planning systems in co-operating countries, especially the recognition of the level of responsibilities in particular cases. It also forms a good and unique platform for the exchange of opinions. Sometimes this leads to the formulation of documents and statements addressed to higher European Level. The Territorial Agenda can serve here as an example (in this context the Polish – Hungarian co-operation should be specially noticed). Also the joint activity of the Central European countries helps to draw the EU structures to the particular problems of the region such as transport connection, which from the higher level

is underestimated. The example here is the Via Carpathia corridor leading from the Baltic Counties, along southern border of Poland to the Black Sea ports.

The mutual connectivity among Central European countries are still very weak. Regardless strong EU support for developing railway transport, in fact the passenger rail connections among Central European countries constantly are being reduced. Also the flight connections are very weak, especially among regional centers.

The environmental issues is another field which calls for stronger co-operation in Central Europe. For example the course and real condition of transnational ecological corridors should be assessed and possibly revised in Central Europe. We have to remember that during the EU accession process the delimitation of Nature 2000 sites was sometimes too fast and not thoroughly debated. The fulfillment of the the EU requirements regarding the percentage of protected land was a main goal than not the best quality of the sites not always was a priority. The observed tendency than was to declare possibly large number of the Nature 2000 sites next to the national borders in order not to “disturb” potential investment in the core regions which were crucial to build internal cohesion of the countries. Today perhaps this need a serious revision.

The transborder / transnational cooperation should be best coordinated by the ministries responsible for regional/territorial development. In Poland (and generally in Central Europe) we have very good experience in works of bilateral working groups for transborder co-operation. These groups in many cases supported bilateral spatial development studies for borderland areas (very good example: Czech-Polish Borderland Spatial Development Study, 2006) and also initiated elaboration of the documents: “Common Spatial Development Study for V4+2 countries” (2010) and “Spatial Development Strategy for V4+2 countries” (2014) and other.

For the question if Central Europe should have its own macroregional strategy, the answer is: no. The macroregional strategies may serve the best in the areas which really possess a set of strong common features. The work over the Document V4+2 unveiled strong disparities in the approach to spatial-strategic views in the Visegrad Group countries. The discussion on commonly agreed development axes in this part of Europe was extremely difficult and an agreement impossible to reach. So what would be actually the “common feature” for Central Europe? The Carpathian region is not strong enough to constitute the basis. The Baltic Sea Region – even as a counterpoint is not much noticed. The conclusion may be that what is a real fundament for co-operation in the larger areas is simply the money. Where is no money – the cooperation – even if its assets are acknowledged – is very difficult to maintain. The good example in the Polish-German border area. All important actors are aware that this area should have one common strategic vision of its development. However the European Territorial Cooperation programs do not offer mechanism to enable cooperation in the whole area – on the one hand the transborder cooperation (brand A) is divided into three separate programs and on the other hand the transnational cooperation program (brand B) is too wide and requires at least the third party. For better territorial co-operation the ETC should be strongly revised to provide better tools for cooperation in wider border areas. Transborder dimension is too narrow – transnational is too wide. The intermediate level is required (Functional Areas? / Nuts 2?). The example of V4+2 Document proves this thesis. From the Polish, Slovak and Czech perspective the problems of Bulgaria are somehow blurred.

However the framework strategic documents for larger areas (as V4+2) are also very important and their elaboration makes sense. They diagnose and illustrate the border problems among countries in the wider European context, they may indicate the functional areas. Now we have the situation when the Danube Strategy strongly dominates the spatial positioning of cooperating countries, marginalizing the cooperation with other neighbors in Central Europe.

## Interview 3

**With Mr. Olgierd Dziekoński, The Secretary of State, The Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, carried on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2014**

*The Chancellery of the President serves at the supportive body to the President of the Republic of Poland. Olgierd Dziekoński graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at Wrocław University of Technology. After the democratic transition of 1990, he took part in the formation of Warsaw local-government and served as the Deputy Mayor of the capital city of Warsaw in the periods 1990-1994 and 1999-2000. Dziekoński is a member of many professional organizations including the National Council of the Architects Chamber IARP, the Board of the National Council of the Architects Chamber, the Board of the Foundation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, the Board of the Union of Polish Metropolises (1998-2006) and the National Spatial Development Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1998-2005).*

The Central Europe can be described as an area between three Seas: Baltic, Adriatic and Black Sea. To large extent it is formed by the group of countries that in its development differ from other “western” European countries. This fact can be simply proved by comparison the GDP per capita.

Some questions are specific and common for this part of Europe as for example:

- Political issue: how to treat the countries being in the accession process – larger such as Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina and smaller such as Macedonia and Montenegro? Poland always has been interested in being engaged in such a disputes and decision making processes.
- Lagging behind in transportation network (mainly railway)
- Energy supply / energy safety (!) – bearing in mind that this problem is not specific for Central Europe only, but has a crucial meaning for the development and functioning the whole Europe. Here the co-operation mechanisms seem to be most important.
- Water supply – as above – this is one of the most important problems in Central Europe and in Europe as a whole and in some countries is dangerously underestimated.

How the co-operation should be build? The answer id simple: on all levels, however institutional cooperation, as well as research and planning cooperation play here the most important role. The current problems are probably caused by the fact that the tools (based on Inttereg concept) do not fit anymore to the contemporary challenges. Perhaps something called the “European Perspective of Competitive Development” should be elaborated. This would be a framework document which would give a guidance for solutions in particular sectors and areas. It would also answer the questions: what can be based on full competitive rules and what in particular requires common agreements among countries and regions. It could give a coordinated basis for the decisions and solution applied in particular sectors. Such an approach would enable the partner countries finding in relatively easy way the “hot” issues and build the necessary agreements. We should not try to start again from spatial planning perspective. This has been exercised already in the past.

For planning we do need a new paradigm which will take into consideration the wider territorial context. We need to answer the question: what is planning serving to today? Perhaps only to help distributing the financial sources in particular territories (for infrastructure investments, for example). But maybe something should be done to make planning serve better to the coordination among various sectoral policies (rather obvious postulate, but it seems not really fulfilled so far).

Macroregional strategies do not answer many questions important for general development of Europe as for example new trans European development corridors and its role (i.e. connecting Baltic Countries with the EU, or the role of Lithuania – Latvia – Estonia axis.). But first of all they do not answer the most important and hot question nowadays: what is the justification for Europe today? And what form of cooperation should Europe aim at. How in practical terms to make Europe operating on the basis of the “network logic” and how the sustainable development should be guarded.

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