

Activation of the internal potential of the region, determined by the resources owned, constitutes a factor of regional and local development. The contemporary regional policy making pays a particular attention to the ways of effective utilisation of internal resources, and the so-called smart specialisation became the new paradigm of regional development in the countries of European Union.

Local resources, in most general terms, may have material character (raw materials, products, environmental qualities, etc.) or the non-material one (interrelations, skills and capacities, interconnections, culture, etc.). Thus, we deal with a very wide spectrum of factors, having diverse origins and influencing the local and regional development in a variety of ways. These factors display also high spatial differentiation.

Diversity of the local resources and of the places of their appearance, as well as the differentiated forms of influence, exerted by these resources on territorial development, constitute essential study issues, which have not been explored sufficiently by the scientific community. In this domain one uses, in the majority of cases, the common knowledge, which has been acquired by the practitioners. That is why the objectives formulated for the proposed project are primarily of the cognitive and methodological scientific character.

The fundamental cognitive objective of the project shall be constituted by the spatial identification and diagnosis of the specific resources in the regions of Eastern Poland, as well as by the assessment of their development-related potential. Identification of resources shall consist in indication of the places of their appearance and the nature of the resource, while diagnosis will provide the description of the origins and properties of the resources, as well as their role in the local and regional development (based on the assessment of their uniqueness and utility). Within each of the particular categories of the specific (local) resources examples shall be selected, meant for deeper analyses. These analyses shall allow for an insight into the significance of the resources considered for the development of the territorial unit, the degree of their actual use, and the products associated with the given resources.

The methodological objective of the project shall be constituted by the elaboration of the ways to identify the local resources. It is planned to carry out desk research (scientific literature, strategic and planning documents, internet sources, etc.), and to make use of the social methods (individual interviews, group interviews, expert analyses, etc.). In this manner the most effective instruments and methods of searching for the specific resources shall be determined. The second, equally important methodological objective shall be constituted by the elaboration of the method and the instrument of evaluation of resources, that is – generally speaking – estimation of the levels of their significance (utility) for the territorial development. Side by side with the cognitive and methodological objectives, the project shall also serve an important applied purpose. This will be first of all done by provision of the practical knowledge, and through collecting and making available a rich database on local resources. Such materials will be helpful for the territorial units in the course of preparation of new development strategies and in applying for the external funds.

The study encompasses with its spatial reach three eastern provinces of Poland: Podlaskie, Lubelskie, and Podkarpackie. The choice of Eastern Poland is associated with the specific features of this territory, being a melting pot of cultures and religions, having belonged in the past to various political and administrative systems. This has had a highly significant influence on the development of social behaviour patterns and on formation of specific assets. The project shall bridge the gap in the studies on recognition and diagnosis of the concrete local resources in the eastern regions of Poland. The methods of identification of resources, elaborated within the project, will be made available for use in science and practice regarding analogous undertakings in other regions of the country.

The diagnosis of the local resources and the assessment of their role in territorial development constitute an important issue for the eastern regions, which have been treated for a long time as problem and peripheral areas. An adequate identification of the local competitive advantages should contribute to a more effective development, or to the modification of its directions, adopted by the units of territorial self-government.

The subject matter undertaken is innovative in its practical dimension, since until now the studies of specific resources have not been carried out in the domain of geography for the area so wide as in this case (three provinces) and on so detailed a spatial scale (villages and municipalities). The material collected shall constitute the basis for other detailed studies on the same subject, while the results obtained will complement the knowledge, useful for the representatives of other scientific disciplines.