

The changing conditioning of the growth processes creates new challenges to the regional policy. These challenges are especially important to less developed regions. The most significant challenge is related to the endeavoured enhancement of the effectiveness of the intervention of the regional policy and the changing system of the growth factors and a re-definition of their importance in the light of the crisis globalization. **The major goal** of the project is to examine the importance of the new challenges to the regional policy to the factors of socio-economic development in less developed regions i.e. NUTS 2 with the per capita GDP < 75% of the EU average. The changing conditioning of the growth processes pose new challenges to the regional policy. The most significant of them are two trends related to (1) the endeavour to enhance the effectiveness of the intervention of the regional policy and (2) the changing system of the growth factors and a re-definition of their importance in the light of the crisis globalization. In the first trend, of key importance is (a) implementation of the assumptions of the place-based approach in the regional policy, drawing attention to the need of considering the endogenous resources in territorial systems and (b) a change to the paradigm of the growth policy indicating the need of reinforcing the processes of the spread of growth from the cores to the peripheries and withdrawing from simple concentration of funds in less developed areas. In the second trend, attention should be paid to (a) the new growth factors with the institutional conditioning gaining special importance and (b) a new interpretation of the growth factors in the context of their impact on resilience to the economic crisis. The major scientific goal which presents the research issue in a more detailed way includes the methodological and cognitive aspects. **The methodological goal** of the project is developing a model system of the factors of socio-economic development in less developed regions in the context of the new challenges to the regional policy. **The cognitive goal** of the project is identification and empirical verification of the factors of socio-economic development in less developed regions in the context of the new challenges to the regional policy. The methodological and the cognitive goals will be accomplished by means of specific aims and research hypotheses. The time frame of the project is 2004-2015 while the spatial scope of the analysis refers to three spatial arrangements: EU regions, voivodeships (provinces) and poviats (counties). The adopted goals will be accomplished and the hypotheses verified by means of a seven-stage **research procedure**. Stage one consists in systematizing the body of knowledge of the factors of socio-economic development and the methods of identification thereof leading to a verification of the ex-ante adopted methodological assumptions. At stage two, the diversities in the socio-economic development in the EU regions are identified in the context of economic, social and territorial cohesion. Stage three of the analysis revolves around an empirical verification of the model system of the factors of socio-economic development in the EU regions at various growth levels. At stage four, an in-depth analysis will be conducted with reference to the diverse growth levels and growth factors in Poland's regional and intra-regional system in order to verify the model system of the factors of socio-economic development taking into account the specificity of Polish regions. The identification of the impact of the new challenges of the regional policy on the factors of socio-economic development in a less developed region illustrated with the example of Wielkopolska will be conducted at stage five of the research. At the subsequent sixth stage a forecast will be developed for the impact of the factors of socio-economic development in Wielkopolska in the light of the new challenges to the regional policy. At the last, seventh stage of the research recommendations will be put forward with respect to channelling the intervention aligned to the optimum model system of the factors of socio-economic development in a less developed region taking into account the contemporary challenges to the regional policy and the specificity of Poland's developmental conditioning. In the research procedure, primary and secondary statistical **materials** are planned to be used, quantitative and qualitative alike. This will allow for employing the classical and contemporary mathematical and statistical **methods** as part of the *Mixed-Methods Research* methodological approach. The major **reason for undertaking the research** is the fact that the constantly changing social and economic processes and the evolution in the theoretical approaches to regional growth have resulted in a re-definition of the existing importance of the growth factors and creating new factors. This justifies the need for conducting regular research with the aim of (1) identifying the most significant (at the moment) factors stimulating regional socio-economic development and (2) adjusting developmental intervention launched as part of the regional policy to the new conditioning. This project is closely connected with these needs. The project results will provide knowledge of the factors which at present determine socio-economic development in the EU's less developed regions. The project results will indicate the directions for the future intervention related to the growth factors in order to make a full possible use of the opportunities or minimise the threat related to the new challenges to the contemporary regional policy in less developed regions.