

## Description for the general public

Due to the growing global economic changes the former proud industrial cities have been forced to seek new paths of development. Information, knowledge and creativity replaced traditional development factors, such as land, raw materials and physical work. At the same time, national economic policies promoted the growth of student populations in the majority of European countries. Thus, it intensified an influx of young people to university cities making students an important group of their users.

It is important to note, that young people willing to start higher education have flocked not only to university towns and cities of long traditions, since they also have emerged in the cities having industrial past. Consequently, many post-industrial cities decided to develop higher education sector believing that it will foster their economies: Birmingham and Glasgow in the United Kingdom, Lille in France, Eindhoven in The Netherlands, cities of Ruhr region in Germany, Turin in Italy and Lodz in Poland might be mentioned.

The project main objective is to determine the impact of academic function on the post-industrial cities development through the analysis of students' spatio-consumer behaviours. The detailed objectives of the project are listed below:

1. To specify the sources and amounts of students' spending.
2. To identify the sectors of the post-industrial urban economies that benefit from students' spending.
3. To identify the areas of post-industrial cities, where students spend money.
4. To indicate the variables that differentiate spatio-consumer behaviours of students.

An important advantage of the project is a merger of two perspectives – the economic and the spatial ones – and the multidisciplinary of the topic, that relates to urban studies, urban economics, urban geography and higher education research. The survey research will be conducted among the representative samples of students attending to public universities in Lodz and Turin in a cooperation with Italian researchers.

The proposed project addresses several research gaps identified in the state of the art. First of all, the relation between a development of post-industrial cities and the impact generated by higher education institutions and their students, has not been studied intensively. Secondly, the project aims to capture the intra-urban spatial distribution of students' consumer behaviours, what has been studied only to some extent. Finally, the ongoing scientific debate on students' impact on cities employs mostly findings from the research projects made in particular cities. Thus, the project delivers a data from a comparative study that bring more complex information on students impact on the post-industrial cities of different geographical, institutional and cultural contexts.