

# Cohesion Policy-Making. Is There a Space for Regions?<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *Diverse regional development theories provide regional authorities with multiple ways of directing their developmental efforts. Nevertheless, money is a considerable problem, and the Central European regions therefore do not have much room: the majority of funds come from the European Cohesion Policy — the scope of which is limited. That is to say the New Member State regions would need to influence Cohesion Policy to have more discretion in European financial aid allocation and thus in choosing desirable directions for their territorial development. Will the Czech and Polish regions make their way onto the arena of Cohesion Policy-making? No doubt they have become more powerful since they were established. The game between the central governments and the regions has become matched. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the Czech and Polish regions' involvement on the European level.*

**Keywords:** *Cohesion policy, Regional policy, Policy-making, the Czech Republic, Poland*

In mid-2004 nine post-socialist countries joined the EU. For most of them the changes in regional policy were massive. Under socialism central planning included mega-regions and was concentrated on industrial development. Later, economic

transformation allowed almost no space for regional policy. This was a time of success, however, as regional structures were created. Unfortunately, although diverse regional development theories provide regional authorities with multiple ways of directing their developmental efforts, money is a considerable problem and one of the major challenges that regional authorities face nowadays (Martins and Alvarez 2007: 392). In the current Central European reality, the majority of funds come from the EU's Cohesion Policy, the scope of which is limited, with only certain types of activities being eligible. That is to say the New Member State (NMS) regions would need to influence the scope of the Cohesion Policy to have more discretion in European financial aid allocation and so in choosing the desirable ways of their territorial development. The question is, however, whether the regional authorities are strong enough to influence Cohesion Policy making. The regional policy itself becomes less important than skills on how to influence governments and the EU institutions to get as much resources as possible for growth. This article tries to address this problem by evaluating developments in two NMS: Poland and the Czech Republic. In particular, the following questions are answered: Did the Polish and Czech regions have any impact on the shape of Cohesion Policy implementation structures in those countries for the 2004–2006 programming period? What has changed in the 2007–2013 period? What are the prospects for 2014+? Do the regions have enough capacity to be actively involved in regional policy-making at the European level? What do they do to make their interest known in Brussels? And finally, do they have the power to be involved in the European arena?

## Methodology

As 'academics often haven't written up their advanced ideas or latest thinking ... but are quite prepared to enter into a discussion' (Gillham 2005: 56), The author decided to use a Delphi Panel technique to gather opinions on Cohesion Policy-making in NMSs. There is no common definition of the Delphi Panel, although many authors agree that it typically consists of three rounds of questionnaires sent to a pre-selected group of experts with the aim of reaching a consensus. Opinions on the size of the panel are very diverse, but usually it consists of 15 to 30 participants<sup>2</sup>.

The Delphi technique was originally developed as and is commonly seen as a forecasting tool<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, it has a few characteristics, which are useful for researching policy-making issues. First, Delphi Panels should deal with complex problems (Adler and Ziglio 1996: 240–241; Novakowski and Wellar 2008: 1485; Turoff and Hiltz 1996: 57, 70; Ziglio 1996: 9). Second, the technique tries to make the best use of the limited information available (Ziglio 1996: 5). This is exactly the case with the policy-making process, which is not fully transparent for the public. Third, there is

an agreement that some types of Delphi tool are not meant to reach a consensus, but to identify critical variables of a given problem and explore them (Novakowski and Wellar 2008: 1486; Turoff and Hiltz 1996: 65). Fourth, the Delphi tool is valuable ‘when objective observation of data is neither feasible nor possible’ (Novakowski and Wellar 2008: 1487). Policy-making is exactly this kind of ‘hidden truth’ where it is the very policy-makers who are the only ones able to fully explain the development of a given situation. Unfortunately they are almost never happy to do this, so an indirect way is often the only possibility to get closer to the facts. The author believes that tapping into the collective wisdom of Cohesion Policy experts is the correct way to try to explain the developments of regional-governmental relations in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The three rounds of the Delphi Panel were conducted between January and March 2008. Apart from the Czech and Polish experts, a group of ‘external’ specialists on regional development of Central Europe from Scotland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium was involved. The rationale for this was to obtain as objective feedback as possible. More detailed data on the experts are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: The Delphi Panel experts**

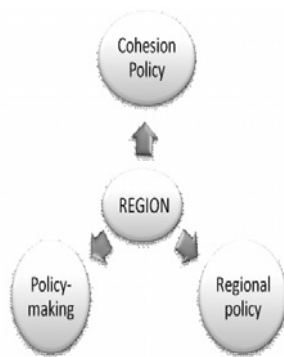
Characteristics		Experts answering Polish questionnaires		Experts answering Czech questionnaires		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Origin	External	5	45.5	6	54.5	11	100.0
	Polish/Czech	15	50.0	15	50.0	30	100.0
Academic level	Masters	3	42.9	4	57.1	7	100.0
	Doctorate	11	57.9	8	42.1	19	100.0
	Professor	6	40.0	9	60.0	15	100.0
Gender	Male	3	60.0	2	40.0	5	100.0
	Female	17	47.2	19	52.8	36	100.0
Capital/ region	External	5	45.5	6	54.5	11	100.0
	Capital	4	33.3	8	66.7	12	100.0
	Outside capital	11	61.1	7	38.9	18	100.0

Source: Author’s own calculations

## Background

In advance of making any efforts, European regions should be aware of what they want to achieve from their participation in policy-making in Europe (Martin 1993: 155). Therefore, before explaining how the regions may impact upon the Cohesion Policy, it is essential to explain why it is important to influence it. We can argue that the developmental options available to the CEE regions are trapped between regional development theories (which represent possibilities), Cohesion Policy (which represents reality) and policy-making theories (which represent possible ways to achieve desirable developmental objectives). These are summarized in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: The Challenging Position of a Region**



Source: Author's own study

### Regional – Cohesion Policy coupling

Defining 'regional policy' is a complex task, as the scope of objectives and activities, which one would call 'regional policy' has been changing according to the political economy model currently in force. A shift from traditional to modern models of regional development has been visible. The table below is an attempt to systematize those concepts, which were or are reflected or have influenced the Cohesion Policy.

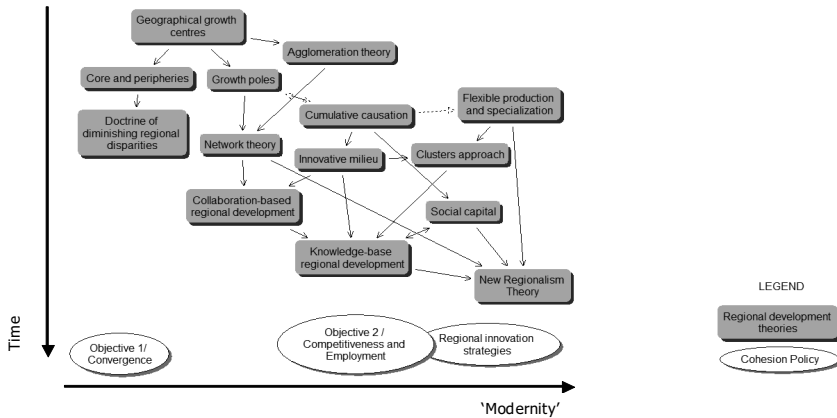
**Table 2: Simple typology of regional development theories**

	Theories	Description
Traditional	Geographical growth centres, agglomeration theory, core and peripheries, growth poles, doctrine of diminishing regional disparities	Economic growth concentrates in the most developed areas (economy of scale rule applies). Growth centres attract the most competitive companies and industrial sectors. Growth could be naturally disseminated to surroundings but most probably market forces create and increase disparities between thriving and lagging regions. These force governments to intervene in order to reduce developmental gaps.
Modern	Cumulative causation, flexible production and specialization, network theory, cluster approach, innovative milieu, social capital	Social capital (trust, common standards and institutions, cooperative culture, entrepreneurial spirit) is a key element of regional policy and the factor that determine developmental prospects. It makes cooperation and pooling resources easier and strengthens learning and knowledge transfer. The stronger the interaction, the better innovations are absorbed and the higher the productivity. Therefore metropolises are often centres of economic growth, focusing much of the economic, financial and innovative potential of the world as well as cultural and political power.
Comprehensive	Collaboration-based and knowledge-based regional development, New Regionalism	Regional comparative advantage lies in social capital. Of similar importance is innovative-creative milieu. They both allow for permanent innovation and adaptation to the changing market (learning regions).

Source: Author's own study<sup>4</sup>

The theories presented above make up the methodical sources of the Cohesion Policy. Figure 2 attempts to present the interrelations between those two. It makes clear that the traditional regional development theories correspond to the Convergence Objective (aimed at the lagging regions) and the others (the more modern) to the EU competitiveness goal. *Being eligible for the Convergence Objective, NMS regions are limited to implementation of more traditional tools of regional development only.*

**Figure 2: Interrelations between Regional Development Theories and Cohesion Policy Objectives**



Source: Author's own study (on the basis of Table 2)

## Cohesion Policy Regulations

The Treaty on European Union that is currently in power makes the Member States (but not their sub-national bodies) partners of the Community institution. Along with the Treaties, there are regulations governing the Structural Funds' implementation. These are much clearer about the role of sub-national actors and the regions' authorities in particular. Two principles are of special importance from the regional involvement in the Cohesion Policy-making point of view: subsidiarity and partnership.

Subsidiarity means that 'decentralized allocation of power is to be preferred unless there are compelling reasons for centralization' (Seabright 1996: 62). According to Suchacek (2008: 50, 120) this rule should guide the power division between different levels of territorial administration and protect the regions from interventions by higher levels. Subsidiarity has proven to be a very ambiguous concept (Andersen and Eiliasen 2001: 11; Chryssouchoou et al. 2003: 73; Bauer 2002: 775; Preston 1994: 44). Bauer (2002: 775, 779) claims that all these misunderstandings related to subsidiarity are intentional: while the partnership principle keeps the Commission 'in business,' the subsidiarity principle clearly suggests transferring power as far down the administrative level as possible. This is, however, a matter of policy-making.

A tool for the implementation of the subsidiarity principle was another Maastricht principle: that of partnership (Bauer 2002: 775). This states that all decisions on Cohesion Policy must be made in close consultation with the subnational authorities<sup>5</sup>. Although there were some uncertainties about what ‘partnership’ means in practice, there is no doubt that regional authorities are part of the process, but it is up to the particular Member State to decide who exactly to include and in what form. As a result, the partnership principle triggers substantial power re-allocation between the national governments and regional authorities (Yesilkagit and Blom-Hansen 2007: 503–507, 511). Furthermore, the partnership principle gives the regions physical access to the Commission’s representatives (e.g. during monitoring committees) when they can raise their concerns, opinions and suggestions.

### **Implementation of Structural Funds in 2000–2006 and 2007–2013**

The programming period 2000–2006 was the first in which the New Members partially participated. All of the Polish and all but one<sup>6</sup> Czech regions were eligible for Structural Funds (SFs) support within the ‘basic’ Objective which aims to support the poorest European regions: it was called ‘Objective 1’ in 2000–2006 and is called ‘Convergence’ in 2007–2013. The programming structures for both periods were similar:<sup>7</sup> the National Development Plans (for 2004–2006) and National Strategic Reference Framework (for 2007–2013) were developed at the national level supplemented by a number of Operation Programmes<sup>8</sup>. There was, however, a significant difference between 2004–2006 and 2007–2013 implementation structures from the regional point of view. While in the previous programming period the Joint and Integrated Regional Operation Programmes were developed in the Czech Republic and Poland respectively, in the current programming period each region<sup>9</sup> has its own Regional Operational Programme (ROP).

### **Regional policy-making in the EU**

Subsidiary and partnership principles create a basis for multi-level governance (MLG) that states that decisions are made between actors from various administrative levels<sup>10</sup>. It is even suggested that sub-national actors, including regions, could try to bypass their central governments and deal with Brussels independently (Andersen and Eiliasen 2001: 17; Chryssouchoou et al. 2003: 50–51) especially as accession to the EU has raised regional aspirations for political influence<sup>11</sup> (Bache 1998: 100–102; Brusis 2002: 534). However, ‘faith in own capacity of political exchange’ (Jouve and Negrier 1998: 570) is what they need to play at the European level and not all of the regions have this confidence, or even the capacities themselves (Sidaway 2006: 5). Therefore, although MLG opens the possibility for the regions to be involved at

European level (Martin 1993: 155), they may not be ready for that. Even more importantly, the member state governments are very reluctant to transfer decision-making power to regional level and try to play the role of gatekeepers. As a result, the power of the central governments is not affected that much<sup>12</sup>.

In the NMSs the power division was not decided between the national governments and regional authorities only. There was a third actor too: the EU. The transformative power of its institutions was more pronounced during Eastern enlargement than during earlier accessions<sup>13</sup> (Goetz 2001: 1038, 1041). Although Brusis claims that CEE governments intended 'to enable regional administrative bodies to participate in the management of the EU Structural Funds' (2002: 531), Kulcsar and Domokos notice that it was actually the EU that 'put pressure on the national governments with regard to the principles and practice of the territorial development' (2005: 556)<sup>14</sup>. It was the accession countries that were more interested in joining the EU, meaning that the bargaining position of the Commission was very strong and it was able to impose the rules (Brusis 2002: 533, 535). The policy-making at this point was closer to neo-functionalism<sup>15</sup> and the distributional model<sup>16</sup> than MLG.

## Research Findings

The Delphi Panel sections corresponded with the research questions presented at the beginning of this article. The experts' opinions expressed during the second and third rounds of the Panel<sup>17</sup> are presented below.

### **Regions' impact on the shape of Cohesion Policy in the country for 2004–2006**

The panellists' opinions on what impact the regions had on the implementation arrangements of the SFs for 2004–2006 were miscellaneous. Overall, they were able to agree that regional impact was limited at best. The majority of Czech specialists agreed that the regions had been very immature when the debate on NDP 2004–2006 started, so they did not have any major influence on the structures established. In Poland, respondents were unanimous when saying that regional impact was limited and that the regions only participated in preparation for NDP 2004–2006. Although 16 separate regional operational programmes had been anticipated at the initial stage, the government decided on one standardized Integrated Regional Operational Programme. As its preparation and implementation were centralized, its priorities did not respond to the particular region's needs.



In both countries far more theories have been elaborated to describe and explain regions' behaviour when preparing for the 2004–2006 phase. Except for those mentioned above, none of them was commonly supported by the majority of respondents. Therefore they were transferred to the third round, which proved to be disappointing, as it brought no major conclusion. There was only one further clarification regarding the level on which the decisions concerning 2004–2006 were made: Polish experts were of the same opinion on the fact that all issues were agreed between Warsaw and Brussels and so the regions had limited impact.

### **Regions' impact on the shape of Cohesion Policy in the country for 2007–2013**

As was mentioned before, the situation of the regions differed between the two EU budget perspectives in which Poland and the Czech Republic were involved. The panellists were asked to explain the objective change in the regions' position, namely the emergence of separate ROPs for 2007–2013.

There were similarities between the two countries regarding the assessment of the regions' impact on the shape of the Cohesion Policy: the most certain fact on which they agreed was that the national governments' impact on implementing structures for 2007–2013 was still stronger than the regions' impact. Similarly, both in Poland and the Czech Republic panellists were in agreement that the regions were only consulted on strategies and programming documents, although in Poland that involvement was seen in the wider context of the formal impact the regions had as regional representatives were engaged in consultations and were able to express their concerns during various meetings. Furthermore, the Polish experts were able to agree upon the factors, which were responsible for this increased impact. Two reasons were mentioned on which the specialists were almost unanimous. First, increased experience and capacity had made the Polish regions more influential. Second, the Act on Development Policy of December 2006 made the regions partners in creating and implementing this policy. Although they had no doubts on the regions having an impact on the shape of Cohesion Policy arrangements for 2007–2013, the Polish panellists evaluated the extent of this impact in different ways. For some of them it was significant, as the regions had managed to secure their own ROPs, while for the others it was moderate as, although the regions had their own programmes, the ROP outline was developed by the Ministry for Regional Development. Round 3 confirmed that the regions had some impact on programming document preparation. Nevertheless, they had to haggle over the level of regional support, which was no easy undertaking.

Round 2 did not explain what kind of influence the Czech regions had on arrangements for 2007–2013. During the following round only few clues were suggested: neither administrative burden with other tasks, nor weak regional political

representation, nor their passive role were to be blamed for the minor influence the Czech regions had.

### **Regional involvement in 2014+ preparations**

The question about regional involvement in 2014+ preparations was the only one in the whole Panel where the respondents were in agreement on a single answer. They believed that the regions were too involved in preparations for 2007–2013 to think about 2014+ at the time the Panel was run. Indeed, this could in fact be a sensible excuse. In Poland the last ROP was agreed to with the Commission in December 2007<sup>18</sup>. At the same time all seven Czech ROPs were signed<sup>19</sup>. Discussion on the future of Cohesion Policy had already been taking place, as it had started in May that year with the publication of the provisional version of the Fourth Cohesion Report. At the beginning of 2008, when the Delphi Panel was conducted, the Czech and Polish regions were heavily occupied with setting up managing structures. This was particularly visible in the Czech Republic, where new sub-regional bodies had to be established at the level of the Cohesion Regions. Furthermore, the regional authorities were under public pressure as the 2007–2013 programming period had already been running for a year but it was not possible to access any money from the new ROPs. In these circumstances it is possible to excuse prioritisation of their efforts on launching the regional programmes first before engaging in the very general — as they were at that stage — debates on funds to be available in six years' time.

### **Regional capacity to be involved in policy-making at the European level**

Although the Commission's willingness to act indirectly (Bauer 2002: 781–782; Brusis 2002: 544) makes space for multi-level governance, the 'game' is tough and the regions have to master their 'capacity for acting at the European level' (Jouve and Negrier 1998: 566). The experts were asked to assess if the Czech and Polish regions have such capacity.

The Polish specialists had very robust views on the problem right from the second round. They strongly agreed that the capacity was gradually growing<sup>20</sup> but that the situation varied among the regions. However, they were quite sure that organisational culture and civil servant mentality had to be changed to allow the Polish regions to be active at the pan-national level. Their Czech counterparts were also convinced about growing capacity in the regions, which they understood as improvement of staff qualifications. The human factor seemed to be of key importance for them, as the other proposition they openly supported was that some personal decisions could be questionable. The manning of Brussels regional offices was given as an example.

Round 3 gave a distinctive assessment of how strong those capacities, which could permit active involvement in policy-making at the European level, were. The Czechs admitted they were weak but added what the Poles had already said in the previous round: that this situation was diverse among the regions. In Poland, the evaluation of the state of affairs was similar but the opinion was expressed more gently. The experts assessed the capacity as 'limited' and explained what they meant by that: the regions lacked knowledge as well as competent people due to high staff turnover, inadequate leadership and poor language skills. Furthermore, they noticed that some regions had the capacity but did not have either a strategic vision of their future in Europe or the political will to act. It seems that they were unfamiliar with Martin's (1993: 155) advice that regions should be aware of what they want to achieve from participation in policy-making in Europe before taking any actions. Finally, the issues of financial power emerged in Round 3. While in the Czech Republic it was a controversial topic, half of the Polish panellists confirmed that scarce financial resources were a serious problem.

Generally speaking, although the importance of some of Martin's (1993: 155, 159–161) capacities (like partnership-working, appropriate human resources, pro-activeness and searching for direct contacts with the Commission) was noticed by the panellists, they were not able to agree upon them.

### **Regions' activities to make their interest known in Brussels**

Bearing in mind that the Treaty on European Union currently in force makes the Member States partners of the Community institution, it is astonishing how much the NMS regions do to make their interests known in Brussels.

According to the Czech panellists, the most obvious way to be heard was to be represented in the Committee of Regions. Their Polish counterparts were not so convinced about the effectiveness of acting in this Committee or other similar bodies. For them, the most advantageous activity was cooperation with stronger European regions<sup>21</sup>. This is promising information taking into account Martin's opinion (1993: 161) that coalition-building capacity is one of the biggest challenges in the context of European policy-making. Similarly important for Poles was self-promotion. This could be done while attending various meetings, Open Days, Cohesion Forums, trade shows etc. It was obvious that in order to promote their interest, the Polish regions had to be active. It was not surprising, therefore, that the notion that Warsaw had dealt with almost everything was rejected by the respondents.

Both groups of experts were consistent in their opinion on the usefulness of the regional offices in Brussels. The Czechs revealed a bit more information on their activities that included supporting preparations for SMEs and ROPs as well as regional marketing. However, at the same time they were equally convinced that the

offices were to transfer information rather than influence political decisions as they had no access to important Brussels networks. Furthermore, it must be remembered that, when discussing regional capacity for EU policy-making, some caveats were raised on personal decisions regarding the manning of those offices with the suggestion that political connections were sometimes more important than knowledge and experience. This problem was particularly visible in the Czech Republic. In the light of this information the effectiveness of other activities undertaken by the Czech regions have to be considered with caution. For example, although regional officials travelling to Brussels could theoretically help in advancing the regional interests in Brussels, this could be also seen as political figures' touring around Europe at the expense of the taxpayers.

The Czech specialists shared the Polish point of view on the necessity of self-promotion and being visible during various meetings, Open Days, Cohesion Forums, trade shows, etc. Similarly, they indirectly appreciated the coalition-building capacity by declaring that the Czech regions did some networking with other European regions. Finally, they admitted that the *kraje* (Czech self-governing regions) had some personal contacts in Brussels. It was just one step from stating clearly: the Czech regions did some lobbying.

In the Polish case, Round 3 proved further similarities to the Czech situation. It was admitted that the Polish regions did some lobbying and had some personal contacts, as several Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) could be regarded as regions' representatives.

### **Regions' power to influence EU policy-making**

Although the Polish and Czech regions have some capacities — or at least they are growing — and experience, they seem not to have the power to influence the Cohesion Policy-making. Among the possible explanations for regions' weak power were a lack of resources and capacities, intense involvement in 'domestic' problems<sup>22</sup> and the weak position of even the national governments in Europe.

In the Czech Republic the influence of the regions was limited to the regional representatives being consulted on technical issues during debates on Cohesion Policy at the national level. The panellists noticed what they had admitted earlier: to be successful in influencing EU policy, any European region would have to cooperate with other regions of similar interests. Only in the last round did the Czechs admit that the regions could exercise some influence through the Committee of Regions and — as mentioned above — they already used this channel to make their interests known in Brussels. Sadly, Round 3 also suggested that the regions were unable to influence not only key issues, but even less important matters at the European level. They could try to influence domestic policies, at best.

The Polish panellists stressed that in order to be successful in influencing the EU policy, regions would have to cooperate with other regions of similar interests (not only the Polish ones). Describing the real power of the regions to influence EU Cohesion Policy-making, the specialists used the term ‘policy-takers,’ but added that the situation was varied among the regions. Following their Czech counterparts, they suggested that the regions could try to exercise some influence through certain organisations (e.g. the Committee of Regions).

### **The European institutions’ impact on shaping regional policy**

As was mentioned earlier, there were three major actors involved in the Cohesion Policy-making in the NMSs. So far the behaviours of two of them have been described: the governments and the regions. What about the EU institutions?

In Poland opinions on the impact of the European institutions on shaping regional policy were particularly strong and stable (all options were agreed in Round 2 and Round 3 brought no further explanations). Poles were very convinced that among the European bodies it was the Commission that had a major impact. They identified a few ways through which this influence was exemplified. First, almost all money for the development of Polish regions came from the European Union, so it was necessary to adjust to the donor’s rules. Objectively speaking, the Commission was the main creator of Cohesion Policy, the body that determined the rules and approved all operational programmes at the end. Therefore the notion that prospective EU membership had been a driving force for decentralisation of Polish administration — seen as a preparation for the implementation of future SFs — was unquestionable by the Poles. Furthermore, they admitted that a number of policies and institutional structures had been changed in preparation for European assistance. On the other hand, they were not able to reach agreement on the role of the EC in imposing a centralized approach to ROPs in 2004–2006. In addition, the Polish specialists noticed that the Council of the European Union had had an impact on the regional policy in the country as it had decided on allocations of financial assistance.

Although in the Czech Republic there were far more suggestions regarding the EU institutions’ influence on Czech regional policy, the overall picture of this impact was similar to the one the Poles presented: strong and stable. The Czechs convincingly reject the suggestion of a lack of impact of the European institutions’ on their regional policy. On the contrary, this impact was strong. It was the EC (and DG Regio in particular) that had ‘a say’ in the Czech Republic, as it was the main creator of Cohesion Policy, the body that determined the rules and approved all operational programmes in the end. This was not the only one similarity to the Polish assessment of the European impact on the domestic policy. The Czechs, too, admitted that a

number of policies and institutional structures had been changed in preparation for SFs, and they were slightly more convinced about this than the Poles. This could be explained by the extent of those changes: artificial sub-regional units were created in the Czech Republic for implementation of SFs, while in Poland the system was based on 'real' administrative units.

## Conclusions

The Czech and Polish regions have a lot to do before they can become powerful. Their position described during the Delphi Panel was not favourable. Their impact on 2004–2006 implementation structures was limited at best and, although they had some formal impact on 2007–2013, the governmental influence was still stronger. In spite of this, their position has changed as they have managed to win their own operational programmes (mainly due to growing experience and capacities), although developed under control of the governments. On the other hand, they were too busy to get involved in 2014+ programming at the time the Panel was conducted, so, potentially, they 'voluntarily' limited their developmental options in a few years' time. Although capacity was growing in some of the regions, the staff turnover and various personal decisions were still problematic. As a result the regions were unable to play in the European arena, but they did try: they had offices in Brussels, promoted themselves, did some lobbying, had a few personal contacts at the European institutions and, probably most importantly, tried to cooperate with other European regions. Nevertheless, the evaluation of this situation should not appear to be so critical if we take into account the fact that the panellists were not sure if the national governments were able to influence EU policy-making. In this situation it is not a surprise that the Commission was a major player when shaping regional policies in both Poland and the Czech Republic.

Börzel (2001: 137) suggests three theoretical developments of cooperation structures for European policy-making. As far as the NMS regions are concerned, the following scenario is the most promising: emergence of a system of multilevel governance with European, national and sub-national authorities sharing the power. The Central European regions will be involved in Cohesion Policy-making in the future. They are in the process of acquiring the capacity necessary to 'play this game.' As capacities are at the heart of regional power<sup>23</sup>, one could expect the regions to become powerful enough to be a respected player sooner or later and to make decisions on the directions of Cohesion Policy (as long as it still exists) and thus their own developmental options.

As Ziglio puts it, 'between knowledge and speculation is a grey area which is often called "wisdom", "insight" or "informed judgement"' (1996: 6). This is exactly

what was expected from the panellists who were too knowledgeable to speculate but too detached from politics to have precise information on unobserved processes of policy-making. The Delphi method has proved its usefulness in naming the major issues related to Cohesion Policy implementation in NMSs. Furthermore, although the analysis presented in this article revealed a few areas, which would need further clarification, they can possibly be explored by the same Panel. Round 1 was of a qualitative character and an in-depth investigation of its results could possibly fill those gaps. The scope of this article did not allow for such examination, however, and one of the major advantages of the Delphi technique<sup>24</sup>, namely its double character (qualitative and quantitative at the same time), was not exploited.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This article is based on papers presented at two conferences: “Brussele – national government power sharing. Is there a place for regions in European Cohesion Policy making?” (ECSA Canada Biennial Conference “The Maturing European Union”, 25–27 September 2008, Edmonton, Canada) and “Multilevel governance versus cohesion policy. The Central Europe case” (EUSA Biennial Conference, 23–25 April 2009, LA, California).”
- <sup>2</sup> Annells et al. 2005: 37, 41; Choi and Sirakaya 2006: 1278; De Villiers et al. 2005: 639–640; Evased 2003: 1, 3; MacCarthy and Atthirawong 2003: 798–799; Marsden et al. 2003: 598; Mason and Alamdari 2007: 306; Nowakowski and Wellar 2008: 1486; Powell 2003: 377–379; Saunders et al. 2007: 27, 206; Sori and Sprengle 2004: 481; Wisniewski and Stead 1996: 92.
- <sup>3</sup> Evased 2003: 1; Mason and Alamdari 2007: 305; MacCarthy and Atthirawong 2003: 796; Nowakowski and Wellar 2008: 1485; Turoff and Hiltz 1996: 56; Ziglio 1996: 5.
- <sup>4</sup> On the basis of: Aay and Langevelde 2005: 187–188; Cumbers and MacKinnon 2004: 960–961; Etkowitz and Klofsten 2005: 248–253; Fromhold-Eisebith 2004: 751–752; Grosse 2002: 26–33; Kuklinski 2003: 7–10; Lambooy 2005: 1148; MacLeod 2001: 801–810; Pike 2004: 2143–2144.
- <sup>5</sup> Bache 1998; Bauer 2002: 770–776; Brugman 1997: 3–4; Brusis 2002: 534, 552; Chryssouchoou et al. 2003: 73–74; George and Bache 2006; Mitchell and McAlevey 1999: 182–184; Molle 2007: 200; Preston 1994: 31–37, 50; Yesilkagit and Blom-Hansen 2007: 503.
- <sup>6</sup> The area surrounding Prague was the only exception. With its GDP per capita well above the European average, this city region was supported by the ‘Regional Competitiveness and Employment’ Objective.
- <sup>7</sup> Compare Council Regulations (EC) No. 1260/1999 and 1083/2006.
- <sup>8</sup> Operational Programmes are long-term plans that specify the developmental priorities, the structure of implementing them, the financial allocations and the way of control, monitoring and evaluation of the EU assistance.
- <sup>9</sup> In the Czech Republic the NUTS2 regions (units eligible for the SFs) are usually made up of two or three self-governing administrative regions.
- <sup>10</sup> Bauer 2002: 770, 773–776; Chryssouchoou et al. 2003: 50–51; Molle 2007: 6; Paraskevopoulos 2006: 6; Yesilkagit and Blom-Hansen 2007: 507.

- <sup>11</sup> A few examples are identified in the literature (Barber 1997: 20–21; Jouve and Negrier 1998: 569–570; Martin 1993: 155–160; Silva and Syrett 2006: 101–102, 107)
- <sup>12</sup> Bauer 2002: 775; Brugman 1997: 37; Jouve, Negrier 1998: 565; Mitchell, McAleavey 1999: 189–190; MacLeod 2001: 818; Preston 1994: 60; Silva, Syrett 2006: 100–101; Suchacek 2008: 56.
- <sup>13</sup> In general, pressure for compliance to EU rules is stronger in case of acceding countries than in current member states (Brusis 2002: 534; Glenn 2004: 4)
- <sup>14</sup> Molle (2007: 202) partially explains these variant opinions on the role of the Commission. He believes it was definite only in regard to setting up regional structures but then left more room to the national governments.
- <sup>15</sup> According to this model, the majority of decisions are made at the European level with the Commission playing, often informally, the role of rigid policy-broker (Andersen, Eiliassen 2001; Pollack 2005: 15–16; Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier 2005: 406).
- <sup>16</sup> The EU distributional mode also places the key role on the Commission with its bargaining power in the form of financial instruments, including SFs. It may, actually, promote MLG and have an impact on domestic territorial structures (Bache 1998: 100; Chryssouchoou et al. 2003: 50; Wallace et al. 2005: 82).
- <sup>17</sup> The first round was composed of open-ended questions. They were subsequently synthesized in a form of statements and sent back to the panellists as the second round questionnaire. A 5–point Likert scale was used to determine the degree of agreement. The statements on which the experts were in agreement (both in positive or negative terms) were identified. The cut-off points were tough: 2.25 (close to agree; scored at 2) and 3.75 (close to disagree; scored at 4). The remaining inconclusive statements were transferred to the third round. This time the experts were asked to choose up to three statements in each section they agreed the most with and consensus was defined at the level of 50% (at least half of the respondents considered the given statement as ranked within the first three in importance).
- <sup>18</sup> [http://www.mrr.gov.pl/Aktualnosci/Archiwum/Strony/rpo\\_swietokrzyskie\\_przyjete.aspx](http://www.mrr.gov.pl/Aktualnosci/Archiwum/Strony/rpo_swietokrzyskie_przyjete.aspx) (Accessed on Apr 13, 2009)
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.mmr.cz/Pro-media/Tiskove-zpravy/2007/Regionalni-operacni-programy-OP-Podnikani-a-inova> (Accessed on Apr 14, 2009)
- <sup>20</sup> Until the late 1990s all the Commission's institutional building projects were concentrated at central level, which was supposed to manage the development aid (Brusis 2002: 541). The effect was that administrative capacity was limited to top-level bureaucrats at the ministerial level who were ready to interact with supranational institutions rather than with a lower level of administration (Goetz 2001: 1038).
- <sup>21</sup> Collaboration seems to be the most effective method of influencing European matters – not only because of increased power to lobby for common interests but also for sharing experience and costs (Martin 1993: 159–160).
- <sup>22</sup> This was probably a reference to the 2007–2013 programming period preparation that was described above.
- <sup>23</sup> Applebaum 1989: 100; Brusis 2002: 538–359; Cawley et al. 2007: 417; Drahokoupil 2008: 198, 220; Goetz 2001: 1043–1044; Harik 1984: 55, 57; Jouve, Negrier 1998: 563–568; Kincaid 2001: 85–86, 88; Kulcsar, Domokos 2005: 551–552, 556; MacKillop 2003: 518, 522, 526, 527; MacLeod 2001: 806–807, 815–817; Martin 1993: 153; Martins and Rodriguez Alvarez 2007: 392, 396–397, 399, 402, 404, 406; Raco 2003: 75, 78–82, 88; Seabright 1996: 62, 65; Silva and Syrett 2006: 102–103, 108, 114, 117; Sondakh and Jones 2003: 296; Stone 2002: 25, 32, 34, 262; Suchacek 2008: 45, 50, 156; Tansey 2004: 5; Walker and Walker 2008: 156, 158–159, 161.



- <sup>24</sup> Adler and Sainsbury 1996: 189; De Villiers et al. 2005: 642; Sori, Sprenkle 2004: 480; Powell 2003: 376, 377.
- <sup>25</sup> The questionnaire presented here was the one used in the second round – the most comprehensive of the three conducted. Only those sections whose results were used in this article are presented. In addition, only the Czech case is presented here – the questionnaire on the Polish case was slightly different (as a result of different answers to the Round 1 open-questions) and was circulated in both Polish and English versions.

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