

Funding for the development of regions and cities from European Union funds in Slovakia

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Author's team, led by E. Výrostová, examines in the monograph the possibilities of financing the development of regions and cities from the EU budget, as well as other European sources, particularly repayable resources from the European Investment Bank, the European Investment Fund and Next Generation EU. The main focus is on EU cohesion policy funds, an evaluation of their implementation during the 2014–2020 programming period and the setup of these funds in the new 2021–2027 programming period.

The publication presents the results of the VEGA 1/0837/21 project: „Spatial and Temporal Aspects of EU Cohesion Policy: Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives“.

The authors focused in the monograph on addressing primarily the following research questions: Does the EU cohesion policy fulfill its primary goal of reducing regional disparities in the conditions of Slovakia? Does the spatial allocation of EU funds in the Slovak Republic correspond to the main goal of cohesion policy, i.e., reducing regional disparities? What impact do changes in the allocation of funds have on the cohesion policy in relation to addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises on achieving the fundamental goal of cohesion policy? Do the EU cohesion policy funds contribute to increasing the competitiveness of regions in the Slovak Republic and to the sustainable development of cities in the Slovak Republic?

In the first chapter are analyzed various European funding sources for development projects in municipalities, cities, and regions in Slovakia, comparing the implementation of EU funds during the 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 programming periods. The analysis shows that EU funds are a significant source of public investment in Slovakia, making it one of the largest recipients of EU funds. However, during the 2014–2020 period, there was no noticeable reduction in disparities between less developed and more developed regions. The authors also examine the impact of changes in the allocation of cohesion funds due to the COVID-19 and energy crises, concluding that these changes did not contribute to achieving the policy's primary goal.

The second chapter evaluates changes in regional competitiveness in Slovakia during the 2014–2020 period using the economic polygon method, examining the relationship between the absorption of EU cohesion policy funds and changes in regional competitiveness. During the observed period, the expected increase in competitiveness due to the significant absorption of EU funds in Slovak regions was not recorded.

The third chapter focuses on the urban dimension of cohesion policy, including its financing. It highlights the issues faced by urban areas, such as unemployment, segregation, poverty, demographic changes, migrant inclusion, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and the impact of climate change. It describes how EU cohesion policy, through the European Regional Development Fund, supports integrated strategies for the sustainable development of cities.

The fourth chapter analyses the use of cohesion policy funds by cities in Slovakia, maps trends and challenges faced by cities, and identifies opportunities for financing sustainable urban projects during the 2021–2027 period.

A significant contribution of the monograph, particularly from the perspective of the societal impact of the conducted research, can be seen in the summarized results of the analyses and the proposed recommendations for the next programming period. These proposals focus on the process of absorbing funds from the EU structural funds, the identification of strategic areas for financing with regard to long-term sustainability, and the implementation of integrated territorial development tools.

The authors have addressed the issue of the specifics of financing regional and urban development from EU funds in the context of the Slovak Republic with professional precision. The monograph provides important theoretical insights into EU cohesion policy and offers specific recommendations for improving its implementation. The publication has practical significance for policymakers as well as for local governments, particularly due to its proposals for more effective fund absorption, supporting the long-term sustainability of regional development in Slovakia, and integrated urban development.

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