



## THE CONTRIBUTION OF EU FUNDS TO TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN THE OPINION OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE SELECTED CITIES

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**Abstract:** The main objective of the paper was to discover whether the inhabitants of Katowice and Czestochowa know which transport investments in the years 2007-2013 were co-financed from EU funds. Moreover, the authors wished to know the opinion of the respondents on the legitimacy of spending funds raised by the local government bodies. The source of the data was primary in its nature. During the study, the method of diagnostic survey, technique - questionnaire survey, and tool - survey questionnaire were used. The inhabitants of the two cities located in the Silesian Voivodeship, i.e. Katowice and Czestochowa, answered the questions on the questionnaire. The results of the survey clearly indicate that the knowledge about the spending of EU funds among the inhabitants of the aforementioned cities is poor. In spite of the lack of knowledge concerning the indicated issue, the inhabitants of the cities notice the impact of non-reimbursable grants on the development of the urban transport infrastructure. Moreover, they are convinced that local government units very well or well seized the opportunity to develop transport, which was to obtain funds from the European Union. Therefore, the results of the conducted research is valuable guidance for local authorities who, in the current 2014-2020 programming period, strive to share the information on this issue with the largest possible number of people. On the other hand, the awareness of local government units that their actions have been noticed should become an important factor stimulating the process of implementing further changes in this field.

**Keywords:** city, transport infrastructure, city transport, EU funds, local government units

**DOI:** 10.17512/znpcz.2018.4.30

### Introduction

Modern cities are areas characterized by a significant concentration of the population, which contributes to the escalation of transport problems. Local government units have been trying to resolve these difficulties for many years, however, they are as different as the cities are in terms of the size of the occupied area, landform features or performed functions. Thus, not every solution which has been successfully introduced in one location will work in another. Therefore, conducting a thorough analysis of operations which are possible in cities is so important. On the one hand, this allows better adjustment of the solutions of transport problems to the nature of the urban center, whereas on the other, contributes to a reduction in costs of implementing unsuccessful investments.

## **Transport management in cities**

In 2017, 60.13% of the total population of Poland lived in cities. In the Silesian Voivodeship, this indicator amounted to 76.87% (Local Data Bank 17.04.2018). These data should not be surprising as for many years, urban centers have been playing a significant role in social, economic and scientific-research terms (Krysiuk, Nowacki, Zakrzewski 2015, p. 7816). As a result, as noted by Szczucka-Lasota (2017, p. 158), cities are growing and people are increasingly willing to settle down in their area or in nearby locations. The significant population concentration in urban areas has made local government units strive to provide the highest quality of life in cities (Hebel 2017, p. 67; Ejaz et al. 2017, p. 84).

One of the factors determining the perception of the quality of life in cities is transport. It contributes to the local (Kabus, Nowakowska-Grunt 2016, p. 40; Grondys, Kott, Sukiennik 2017, p. 245), regional and national development both in social and economic terms (Skowron-Grabowska 2014, p. 37). Transport congestion, the growing number of road accidents and environmental pollution from transport significantly reduce the quality of life in cities (Kosobucki 2011 as cited in: Jagiełło 2017, p. 80; Taniguchi 2014, p. 310-311; Djahel et al. 2015, p. 125; Szczepanik, Besta 2018, p. 208-209). As observed by Kiba-Janiak (2015, p. 18), this is most evident in big cities since a growing urbanization rate contributes to an growth in interest in transport (Szczucka-Lasota 2017, p. 158) manifesting itself in an increase in the mobility of people, goods and information (Krysiuk, Nowacki 2014, p. 6144) caused by an rise in living standards (Hörl et al. 2016, p. 2776). Consequently, this contributes to the development and/or modernization of transport infrastructure. In many cases, however, development of the infrastructure does not solve all transport problems, thus posing a great challenge not only to local government units but also to experts from many fields, who are looking for solutions aimed at providing modern and efficient transport systems in cities (Krysiuk 2016, p. 48). Improving the quality of public transport services is also one of the methods whose aim is to prevent the use of cars in passenger transport (Wesołowski 2008 as cited in: Jagiełło 2017, p. 79; Bylinko 2017a, p. 108). Undoubtedly, the implementing infrastructure investments or ensuring efficient city transport contributes to a number of benefits (Krysiuk, Brdulak, Banak 2015, p. 887). These solutions are meant to “eliminate chaos, pathology of urban traffic and prevent transport paralysis” (Nowakowska-Grunt, Chład, Sośniak 2017, p. 80). Introducing these operations is unfortunately too cost-intensive (Brzozowska 2016, p. 97). In many cases, it is an important factor impeding the introduction of changes.

After the accession of Poland to the European Union on 1 May 2004, a chance appeared (Brzozowska, Szymczyk 2018, p. 378). It is associated with the possibility to benefit from grants which co-finance different operations conducted under specific priority areas in line with the policy of the European Union. One of them is exactly transport and granting projects related to it. One of the modern trends concerning ecology and environmental protection (Majchrzak 2007, p. 102;

Pabian 2017, p. 87), particularly promoted by the European Union is to ensure sustainable development (Miłaszewicz, Ostapowicz 2011 as cited in: Wójcik 2017, p. 144). Alonso, Monzón and Cascajo (2015, p. 578) concluded that the problems associated with sustainable development are global problems which must be solved locally (Kadłubek 2018, p. 415). Therefore, local government units have taken actions, the aim of which is to ensure the development of cities which would be sustainable (Herbuś, Ślusarczyk 2018, p. 7). Introducing changes in this area should be taken into account in the strategic development plans of cities using the available tools (Bylinko 2017b, p. 38). Therefore, the first positive effects of the changes will be visible after at least a few years (Szcucka-Lasota 2017, p. 160). Nonetheless, it should not arouse resentment against the implementation of positive changes. As stated by Malasek (2016, p. 30), strategic operations in the coming years should be directed to creating smart cities using modern information and communication techniques, the aim of which, as noted by Smółka-Franke (2017, p. 394), is to constantly improve the quality of life. Moreover, it is equally important to ensure eco-mobility in cities and to prolong the utility of transport infrastructure and vehicles.

### **Research methodology**

In the empirical part of the paper, the purpose of the conducted research has been presented in detail. Its accomplishment aimed at obtaining the answers to the research questions bothering the authors. Knowing the purpose and the research questions, the authors formulated four hypotheses. Their verification was possible due to analysis of the results of the research carried out in 2016.

### **Research purpose, research questions and hypotheses**

The primary objective of the paper is to know the opinion of the dwellers of two Polish cities on the spending of EU funds co-financing investments in the field of transport development. The author sought to obtain the answers to two burning questions. One of them is: do the city inhabitants know which of the investments aimed at city transport development were financed with EU funds? The other research question was defined in the following way: do the city dwellers think that the local government units made the most of the opportunity to develop transport which, in the years 2007-2013, was to obtain non-reimbursable grants from the European Union?

The presented purpose and research questions allowed the following research hypotheses to be defined:

- H1: The dwellers of the cities being researched have good knowledge of the EU funds available in the years 2007-2013 for the cities of Czestochowa and Katowice.
- H2: In the opinion of the surveyed inhabitants of Katowice and Czestochowa, it is difficult to say if the spending of EU funds contributed to the socio-economic development of the individual cities.

- H3: Over 50% of the respondents claim that the local government units made attempts aimed at obtaining EU funds, which, in the years 2007-2013, supported city transport development.
- H4: Over 50% of the respondents who have knowledge of the spending of EU funds in cities cannot indicate at least one investment in the field of transport which was implemented in years 2007-2013 and its result was transport development.

### **Research methodology and technique**

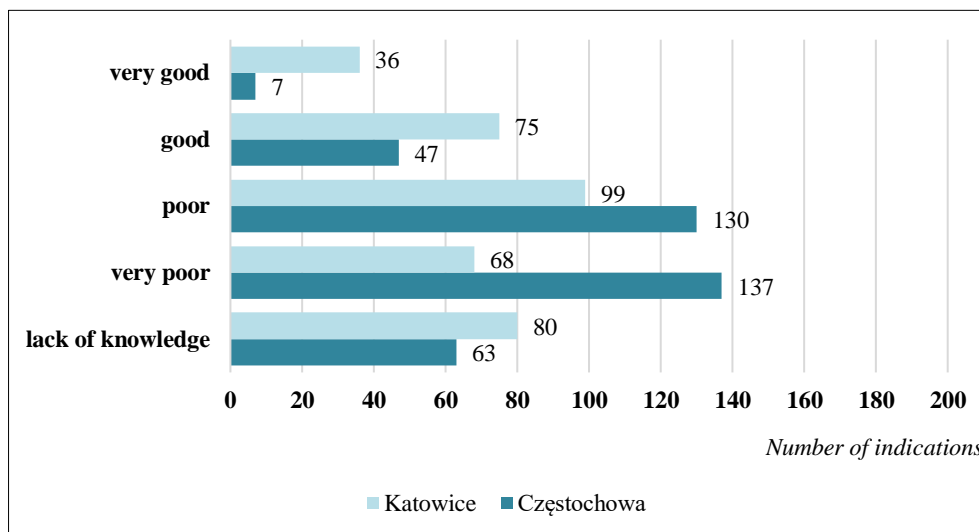
In order to obtain the answers to the research questions and verify the research hypotheses, the diagnostic survey method was applied. In this case, it was a questionnaire survey, whereas the research tool was a survey questionnaire. The research conducted by the authors was anonymous and one-off. While carrying out the study there was direct contact of the researchers with the respondents. Conducting supervised research allowed the number of errors in the questionnaires to be reduced. The person having direct contact with the respondent was able to provide additional explanations in the case when a formulated question was unclear.

Characteristics of the research sample Selection of the research sample was random. Taking into account the number of inhabitants of each city (i.e. Czestochowa and Katowice) and assuming the fraction size of 0.5 and the maximum error of 5%, the size of the research sample was estimated. As a result, 768 questionnaires were collected, i.e. 384 for each of the cities. Due to errors, 26 questionnaires completed by the inhabitants of Katowice were found invalid by the authors. They amounted to 6.8% of all the questionnaires collected in this city. The study was carried out in 2016 and was directed to groups of the inhabitants of Czestochowa and Katowice who were in strategic locations of each city at the time of the conducted research. They were city centers, the surroundings of shopping centers as well as streets situated mostly along bus and tram stops, and railway stations. The average age of the respondents in Czestochowa was 35, the standard deviation of age - 17.54. On the other hand, in Katowice, the average age was 34.67 (two inhabitants of Katowice did not give their age), in turn, the standard deviation of age amounted to 16. In each case, more women than men took part in the study. In Czestochowa, 220 women and 164 men answered the questions included in the questionnaire and, in Katowice, the proportion was 190 women and 168 men.

### **The contribution of EU funds to the development of transport infrastructure in the opinion of the inhabitants of the selected cities – authors' own research results**

EU funds undoubtedly contribute to the development of transport infrastructure both in Czestochowa and Katowice. Information on the investments co-financed by the European Union is widely available. It can be obtained on official websites -

the so-called European Funds Online Services. Moreover, the location of the project must be each time properly marked with information boards. Additional sources of information on ongoing and completed investments are also newspapers, the television or the radio. Therefore, it can be concluded that each citizen who wishes to acquire information about EU funds will have access to it. The research results indicate, however, that the knowledge of EU funds among the inhabitants of Katowice and Czestochowa is rather poor (*Figure 1*).



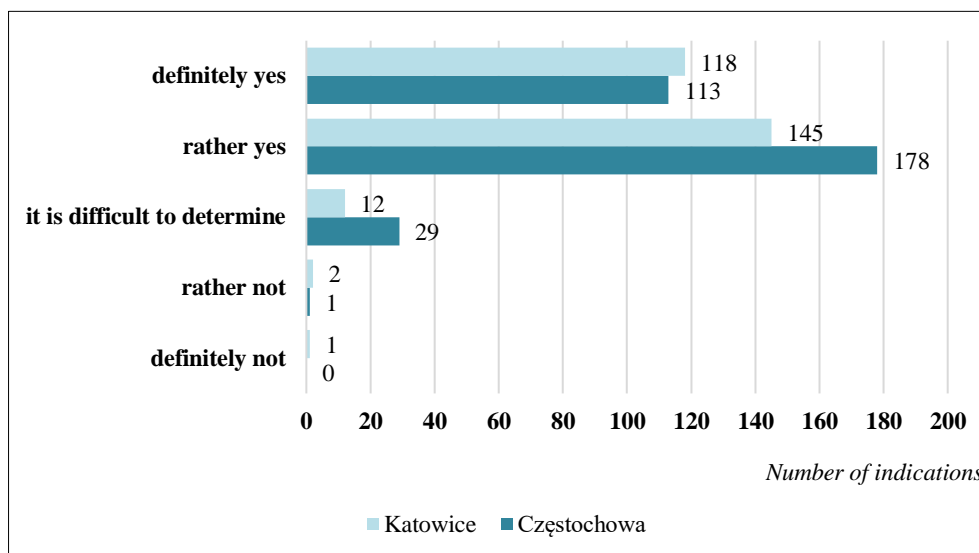
**Figure 1. Level of knowledge of EU funds of Czestochowa and Katowice inhabitants**

Source: Based on own study

130 inhabitants of Czestochowa admitted that their knowledge of EU funds is poor, 137 - that it is very poor, 47 - good and only 7 - very good. 63 respondents do not have any knowledge on the issue. In the research carried out in Katowice, the distribution of the responses is slightly different. More than in Czestochowa, 80 people admitted that they knew nothing about EU funds. In the case of the other responses, the number of indications for the options: "poor" and "very poor" is significantly lower than in the other studied city. The numbers respectively amounted to 99 and 68. As a result, the answers: "good" (75 indications) and "very good" (36 indications) were selected more often. Therefore, it can be concluded that the inhabitants of Katowice have better knowledge of EU funds than the inhabitants of Czestochowa.

The information on EU funds is obtained by the inhabitants of Katowice mostly from the Internet, the television or the radio. 26 of those questioned admitted that the knowledge comes from those three sources altogether. In Czestochowa, the television, the Internet and the radio as well are the media which the inhabitants gain their knowledge of EU funds from. All three presented options were chosen in as many as 63 questionnaires. This implies that the Internet, the television and the

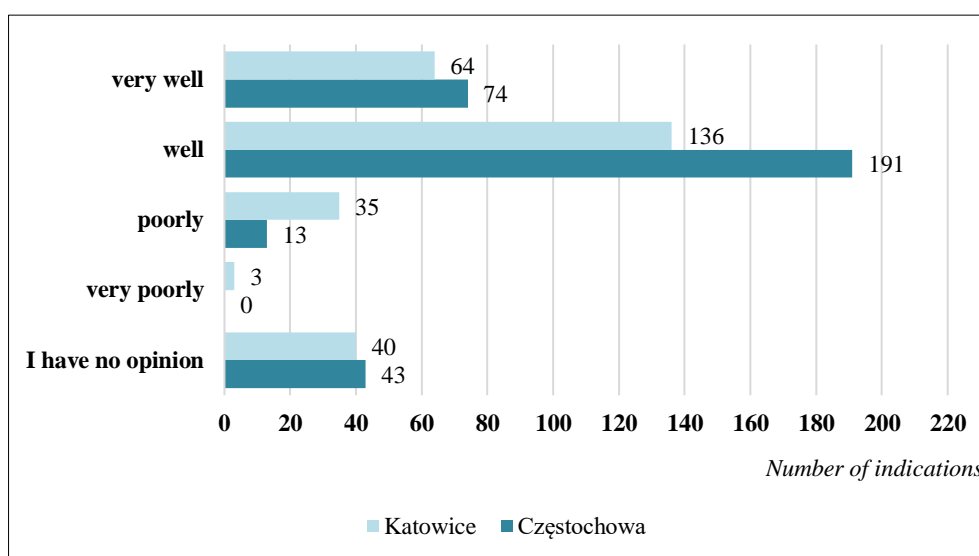
radio are currently the media which the the information on various issues is gained from, including that associated with EU transport projects. The different levels of knowledge of EU funds did not significantly affect the opinion of the respondents concerning their contribution to the socio-economic development of the cities in the years 2007-2013 (*Figure 2*). It should be explained that the answers to this question, among the people who in the previous question indicated the response: “I have no knowledge”, were not collected.



**Figure 2. Distribution of answers to the question: In your opinion, did the use of EU funds contribute to the socio-economic development of the city of Katowice/Czestochowa in the years 2007-2013?**

Source: Authors' own compilation based on study data

The data presented in *Figure 2* clearly indicate that most inhabitants of Katowice and Czestochowa claim that EU funds contributed to the socio-economic development of both cities. The respondents, despite their poor knowledge of the funds co-financing transport investments, can see their positive impact on the environment. Additionally, in the opinion of those questioned, the local authorities in Katowice and Czestochowa well (respectively 136 and 191 indications) or very well (respectively 64 and 74 indications) seized the opportunity to develop transport due to acquiring funds coming from the European Union (*Figure 3*).



**Figure 3. Distribution of answers to the question: How do you assess the degree of the use of EU funds for city transport development in years 2007-2013?**

Source: Authors' own compilation based on study data

It should be emphasized that only 38 inhabitants of Katowice (14%) and 13 inhabitants of Częstochowa (5%) are not satisfied with the policy conducted by the local government units in the researched field. They ticked the answers “poorly” or “very poorly”. The majority of those people had very good or good knowledge of EU funds.

The population partaking in the study who had knowledge of EU funds were also asked to indicate at least one investment implemented thanks to the support from the European Union. In each case, more than half of the respondents (52% each) were not able to indicate at least one investment. Among the inhabitants of Częstochowa and Katowice who were able to list examples of such investments, they most often named the project which contributed to the purchase of the city transport fleet (buses, trams). In Częstochowa, this type of investments was indicated in 91 cases whereas, in Katowice, in 66 cases. Subsequently, the respondents listed the modernization and/or development of the linear infrastructure of road transport (roads, sidewalks, bike lanes). Among the inhabitants of Częstochowa, this answer was indicated 66 times and 38 times in Katowice. Subsequently, the respondents also paid attention to the investments which contributed to the development of the linear infrastructure of rail transport. In Częstochowa, this type of investment was indicated in 15 cases and in 20 cases in Katowice. Moreover, the inhabitants of Katowice also indicated the investments which, in the years 2007-2013, were directed to development of the nodal infrastructure of passenger transport - 9 times.

## **Conclusions**

Transport plays a significant role on the national, regional or local level. Recently, issues related to city transport have become increasingly relevant since the city transport system must meet the reported demand. Along with an increase in the number of citizens, transport problems arise and accumulate, some of which cannot be solved without costly investments. The limited budget of local government units in many cases does not allow the expected changes to be introduced. In this case, EU funds come with help. Their spending, with the municipalities' simultaneous own contribution, enables the development and/or modernization of linear and nodal transport infrastructures as well as modernization of the public transport fleet. Undoubtedly, the contribution of EU funds to transport investments in many Polish cities is significant.

The study conducted by the authors allowed them to accomplish the research purpose and obtain the answers to the research questions as well as verify the suggested research hypotheses. One of the hypotheses was the following: the inhabitants of the studied cities have good knowledge of the EU funds available in the years 2007-2013 for the cities of Czesochowa and Katowice. Unfortunately, the research results clearly indicate that in most cases this knowledge is not good but rather poor or very poor. The respondents gain the information in this field mostly from the television, the Internet or the radio. The research hypothesis was therefore not confirmed by the results of the conducted study. The results of the survey may be a valuable indication for local government authorities on how to disseminate information about EU funds to reach as many people as possible.

The second research hypothesis was not confirmed, either. It was defined in the following way: in the opinion of the surveyed inhabitants of Katowice and Czesochowa, it is difficult to say if the spending of EU funds contributed to the socio-economic development of the individual cities. Most inhabitants of the cities of Katowice and Czesochowa claim that EU funds definitely contributed to the implementation of transport investments. The third research hypothesis was: over 50% of the respondents claim that the local government units made attempts aimed at obtaining EU funds, which, in years 2007-2013, supported city transport development. 72% of the inhabitants of Katowice and 83% of the inhabitants of Czesochowa stated that the local government units very well or well seized the opportunity to develop transport in the tested period which was to acquire funds from the European Union. At the same time, the third research hypothesis was confirmed as well as the fourth one. It was assumed that over 50% of the respondents who have knowledge of the spending of EU funds in the city cannot indicate at least one investment in the field of transport which was introduced in years 2007-2013 and its result was transport development. In each case, the share of these people in the total number of the respondents amounted to 52%. The other respondents mostly remembered the investments which were made to purchase a modern fleet of city transport, to construct and/or modernize the linear infrastructure of road and rail transport and also to modernize nodal infrastructure.



Summing up, the poor knowledge of EU funded projects of the inhabitants of the researched cities does not prevent them from perceiving the positive effects of the implemented changes. In their opinion, the local authorities attempt to use this source of funding in order to implement transport projects. This definitely contributes to the socio-economic development of the cities of Katowice and Czestochowa. The awareness of local government units that their actions have been noticed should become an important factor to stimulate the process of introducing further changes in this field.

At present, another program period for the years 2014-2020 is in force. Therefore, it would be reasonable to re-conduct the research described above. It would enable reflection upon the current situation and comparison of the obtained research results. However, in order to make the research useful, it is necessary to delay it (until the end of 2020). This is the only way to obtain some reliable results and compare them with the previously obtained findings.

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## WKŁAD FUNDUSZY UNIJNYCH W ROZWÓJ TRANSPORTU W OPINII MIESZKAŃCÓW WYBRANYCH MIAST

**Streszczenie:** Głównym celem artykułu było zbadanie, czy katowiczanie i częstochowianie wiedzą, które inwestycje transportowe w latach 2007-2013 zostały współfinansowane z funduszy unijnych. Poza tym autorki chciały poznać opinię respondentów na temat zasadności wydatkowania pozyskanych środków finansowych przez organy samorządowe. Źródło danych miało charakter pierwotny. Podczas przeprowadzania badań wykorzystano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego, technikę – badanie ankietowe, narzędzie – kwestionariusz ankiety. Na pytania zamieszone w kwestionariuszu odpowiadali mieszkańcy dwóch miast zlokalizowanych w województwie śląskim, tj. Katowic i Częstochowy. Wyniki ankiety jednoznacznie wskazują, że wiedza na temat wydatkowania funduszy unijnych wśród mieszkańców ww. miast jest słaba. Pomimo braku wiedzy na wskazany temat mieszkańcy miast dostrzegają ingerencję bezzwrotnych dotacji w rozwój miejskiej infrastruktury transportowej. Co więcej, są oni przekonani, że jednostki samorządów terytorialnych bardzo dobrze lub dobrze wykorzystały szansę na rozwój transportu, jaką było pozyskanie funduszy pochodzących z Unii Europejskiej. Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań stanowią więc cenną wskazówkę dla władz samorządowych, które powinny w obecnym okresie programowania funduszy unijnych, przypadającym na lata 2014-2020, dążyć do tego, aby informacje na ich temat dotarły do jak największej liczby osób. Z drugiej strony świadomość jednostek samorządowych, że ich działania zostały dostrzeżone, powinny stać się ważnym czynnikiem stymulującym proces wprowadzania dalszych zmian w tym zakresie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** miasto, infrastruktura transportowa, transport miejski, fundusze unijne, jednostki samorządu terytorialnego