

Foreword

The year 2014 will be a momentous one. It has been 25 years since the transformation of our country's system and 10 since Poland's accession to the EU. These symbolic moments make one reflect on the condition of our economy, its accomplishments and weaknesses and compare our aspirations with the level of advancement achieved and the resulting standard of living for Polish people.

One of the key areas of this assessment is undoubtedly the level of innovation in the Polish economy. It is certain that the state of our economy is a key indicator of its future growth. It has been estimated that as much as two thirds of the economic growth of developed countries are linked with the introduction of innovations.

According to official data, we are the sixth largest economy in the EU. This is significant but undoubtedly our aspirations are still higher. What is worrying is the fact that as far as innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology from science to business is concerned, we find ourselves near the bottom, among EU countries, above only Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria and Rumania.

According to the annual Innovation Union Scoreboard (published by the EU), namely the list assessing the advancement of EU members, average EU innovation stands at about 0.540 on the scale from 0 to 1. Poland scores 0.300, which places it far below the average and it is classified among the group of moderate innovators, sadly, at the very bottom of it.

More innovations in the economy, through commercialisation of knowledge and technology, also seem to be the key to solving our social problems. The recent emigration of over 2 million, mostly young, people was triggered predominantly by economic reasons: lack of employment and low remuneration. The low salary rates in Poland (salaries are about 30% of the gross national product compared with highly developed countries) is one of the consequences of the low level of innovation in the Polish economy. Obviously, there is no single remedy for achieving success in innovation implementation. Our country should consider it a priority to dismantle the barriers hampering innovation advancement and the creation of favourable conditions allowing a speedier achievement of: at least the mean level of EU innovation, the construction of an economy based on knowledge, which is able to generate new places of employment and ensuring sustainable social development.

It is clear that the most innovative economies exemplify the strong link between the economy and science. A key indicator of EU innovation

leaders is also the effective commercialisation of their technological innovations.

Such an approach to the undoubtedly multi-faceted topic of innovations, a discourse focused on the commercialisation of knowledge and technologies are included in this monograph, which is a collection of works by a number of authors who, while representing mainly academic centres, also include experienced business people. This book is their contribution to finding solutions to the pressing socio-economic problems. This monograph has been structured around four topical issues.

The first deals with the issue of commercialisation and knowledge transfer, analysed in the context of cooperation between science and business. The authors identify how to bridge the gap between a business or organisation and the academic and scientific world as well as how to transfer knowledge from academic laboratories to the market. It is commonly believed that Polish science develops without any connection to the economic reality which is presented in the papers. The lack of understanding, and frequently trust, between science and business is one of the main challenges of the commercialisation of knowledge and technologies. Despite this, the authors emphasise the positive examples. Analysis of the Chartered Institute of Marketing operations proves that institutions which develop and promote personal qualification can become an effective mechanism of integration and transfer between the worlds of theory and practice.

The next problem area was entitled: innovations and new technologies. It focusses on the concept of open innovations and innovative solutions that support the procurement process, agri-sector innovations and eco-innovations. All the analysed areas of innovation implementation are interesting examples of innovative solutions in a variety of sectors of the economy, significant from the point of view of the search for optimal solutions.

Further on, the monograph is devoted to identifying the factors which determine cooperation between science and business and the results of frequently extensive and empirical research is presented. It is worth emphasising that the ability and motivation of entrepreneurs to constantly seek out and practically apply the results of scientific research are the essence of innovation. The authors also attempt to assess the effectiveness of the innovation processes. This part, to a degree, recommends actions that could be implemented by companies.

The monograph is concluded with a chapter in which the authors analyse the role of European integration and business support institutions

in the commercialisation of knowledge and technology. It would be interesting to compare the deliberations in this section with the controversial and discussion-provoking thesis of Prof. Krzysztof Rybiński who claims that the influx of EU resources into the Polish economy destroys innovation. However, the reasons do not stem from the assistance given but in the Polish mechanisms of aid distribution. Moreover, Prof. Hauser strongly supports this thesis and asserts that EU assistance has become a kind of tool for usurping and gaining power and that bureaucratic proceedings have replaced strategic leadership. The authors of this monograph are obviously fully aware that the issues covered are not a comprehensive and effective recipe for the solution to problems in innovating the Polish economy, yet it is another voice in the ongoing discussion conducted in Poland and is worth discussing and extending as the future of our country, its competitiveness on the international market and, as a consequence, the wellbeing of the Polish nation is at stake. Each and every voice is valuable and may bring us closer to a better solution. Enjoy the read.

Prof. dr hab. Jacek Otto