

### **Differentiation of special economic zones impact on the labour market in Poland**

Special economic zones (SEZs), established in Poland in the mid-90s, are an example of a territorially oriented approach to the implementation of intervention measures, inscribed in the so-called concept of territorialisation of public intervention, that is, place-based policies. This tool was seen among other opportunities as a remedy for mitigating the negative effects of economic transformation, including labour market tensions.

Scientific literature provides many comprehensive analyses devoted to the effects of SEZs on particular areas of regional economies. A significant number of studies were devoted to, among others, on the impact of zonal investments on employment and unemployment rates. However, empirical evidence of their effectiveness in this area in different countries and regions is inconclusive. So far, it has not been possible to clearly determine whether the forms of support used in this type of intervention contribute to solving problems on the labour market.

A review of the literature and a critical analysis of previous empirical evidence on the effects of zonal operation in the context of the labour market allows to indicate research gaps and justifies the need for undertaking further research in this area. Previous studies have identified the effects of SEZs combined for all regions only. These studies were based on the assessment of overall effects of SEZ operations. They did not take into account the heterogeneous nature of the areas being subject to intervention (poviats or communes), nor the heterogeneity of the economic entities to whom this intervention was addressed.

Therefore, in this dissertation it was assumed that the scale of employment effects of SEZs varies depending on the contextual conditions being analysed. It was recognized that the heterogeneous nature of the areas subject to intervention and the heterogeneity of entities benefiting from public support may significantly differentiate the effects of the zones operations in the context of their impact on the local labour market and employment growth in firms. To date, these issues have not been analysed in Polish scientific literature.

The main purpose of the work was to identify the heterogeneous impact of the SEZs on the labour market in Poland (employment and unemployment rate), taking into account the features potentially differentiating the effects of this program, i.e. the structural characteristics of poviats, the origin of incoming capital as well as sectors and subsections of economic activity. To that end, a series of econometric models were estimated, including the ones using a counterfactual approach. The scale of the effects and their diversity was estimated at two

levels of data aggregation: poviats and firms. To the knowledge of the author, this is the first research approach of this kind used to analyse the operation of SEZs in Poland.

The analysis of the data and the results of the estimates, allowed to accomplish the goals set in the work and verify the main as well as detailed hypotheses. The effects of SEZs impact on the labour market were positive and statistically significant. However, the econometric results only partially confirmed the main hypothesis. The scale of employment effects of SEZs varies depending on the contextual conditions analysed, namely the structural features of the areas subject to intervention (poviats) as well as sectors and subsections of economic activity. However, it was not possible to unequivocally determine whether firms with domestic and foreign capital generate different employment effects.

This dissertation contributes to the scientific literature on the assessment of economic effects of the SEZs operation and the effectiveness of public intervention. The conducted research indicates the presence of factors differentiating the effects of the zones in the context of their impact on the labour market, which is an important source of implications not only for regional policy, but primarily for investment support policies. The obtained results and formulated conclusions constitute the foundation for further analyses and identification of those features and conditions that would allow increasing the employment effects of public aid.

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