

INNOVATIVE ACTIVITY OF POLISH SMALL ENTERPRISES AND SOURCES OF ITS FINANCING

Summary

Economic competition on a global scale forces countries, regions and entrepreneurs to seek new sources of competitive advantage. The effects of the recent financial crisis and the weakening market position of the European Union on the international stage point to increasing difficulties in meeting current economic challenges. The literature on the subject is dominated by the view that, in addition to the varied activities undertaken by international and national authorities or enterprises themselves, and **increase in the level of innovation is a factor necessary to overcome the difficulties**. Therefore, it is not surprising that innovative activity is currently of interest to Polish representatives of science, politics and business practice. The small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector is seen as an important element of the economic landscape of most countries.

This work addresses the aspects related to the conduct and financing of innovative activities by the Polish small enterprises. Analyses of this issue should allow to fill the **cognitive gap in the scope of research carried out in the area of identification, conditioning factors and sources of financing of innovative activity conducted by small business entities in Poland**. Therefore, the main research problem related to the aforementioned gap can be presented in the form of the following research question: **What factors influence the innovative activity carried out by small enterprises and what are the sources of its financing?**

The main goal of this dissertation is to develop a model explaining the undertaking of innovative activities by Polish small enterprises. Achieving the main research objective of the dissertation requires achieving specific goals of epistemological and cognitive-explanatory character.

The main part of the dissertation consists of five chapters. The first three of them are theoretical, while the fourth and fifth chapters are methodological and empirical. **The first chapter** presents the basic issues related to enterprise terminology and organization theory, including criteria enabling the separation of small enterprises in the structure of business entities. The remaining chapters present a collective statistical approach to the condition of small businesses in Poland and they also characterize specific socio-economic tasks that smaller entities perform in the development of modern economic systems.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive approach to the issues of managing innovation activities. The starting point was an in-depth analysis of dozen definitions of innovations presented in the literature over the past decades. The criteria for the classification of innovations were discussed, and their place in contemporary management concepts was indicated. The next part of the chapter describes the components of the innovation management system in the organization, as well as the elements that shape the undertaking of innovative undertakings by business entities – including the accompanying conditions, the sources of information used, and barriers to innovative activities. The ending of the second chapter is a comparison of basic innovation indicators of small enterprises in EU countries.

The last theoretical chapter is devoted to issues related to the financing of innovative activities. The spatial dimension of the modern innovation system was also described, including assumptions and programs implemented as part of the innovation policy. The next part of the third chapter describes a number of conditions determining the choice of financing for innovation by small business entities, as well as reviews the available sources of financing for innovation activities and lists the advantages and disadvantages of their use.

The fourth chapter focuses on discussing the research methodology, including the main research problem, the assumed objectives of the work, and the research procedure, as well as characterizes the research sample and indicates the limitations accompanying the study. The next part of the fourth chapter contains quantitative and qualitative interference of the results obtained as part of the conducted research procedure, related with particular aspects of the innovative activity of enterprises and the types of innovative solutions implemented by them.

In the fifth chapter, after describing the theoretical assumptions of the logistic regression method used, the characteristics of the variables used are presented, as well as the results of estimation and interpretation of the results obtained.

Finally, in this dissertation two conceptual logit models were proposed. They define the main internal and external determinants influencing the innovative activity of Polish small enterprises (the general model) and key financial factors translating into innovative activity of Polish small enterprises (the detailed model).