
Editorial: Development problems of small and medium enterprises in Central and East Europe

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The economy of Central and East Countries (CEE) started in 1989 the transformation of its management systems, after almost a 45-year period of central steering. These countries had to overcome certain, sometimes even unexpected problems, which were called transformational.

Leaving details out, we can state that in the wider scope they referred to problems of lack of past patterns, and therefore adapting the positive experience of developed countries were not at all, or only partially possible.

Accompanying (and in every country of the region) transformation process recession of economy were the results of the lack of proper preparation for solving transformational processes.

Additionally, the above-mentioned recession caused the essential crisis in financing the basic branches steered by the state, especially research, although the situation would have demanded the increase of the cost of scientific researches.

To the essential problems of transformation we should add the change of structure for creating the national income of these countries. In state steered economies, preferential treatment was given to major industries, however small and medium enterprises were not of major interest for government, and private enterprises could count for even smaller support.

In the transformational processes mainly covered the unprofitable, state companies of industrial character, which caused the creation of enterprise forces for organising new companies to the parcelling out of state property from large companies on the basis of which they established new companies, mostly of small and medium size.

Because the Central and East Europe countries did not have research results at their disposal, the processes of creating small and medium enterprises, and after some time their liquidation, took place without any logic and very impulsively. This situation mostly relates to CEE countries.

At the same time, foreign companies and those with foreign capital showed a great interest in the creation and activity of small and medium enterprises in CEE countries. From here the experience gained in this area in cooperation with certain foreign partners became very valuable.

Especially it concerned the enterprises acting upon energy and environmental problems. Priority given to heavy industry in centrally steered economies caused amongst others, a very low priority being given to the processes of petrol and energy, and a poor regard for the results of energy use upon the environment.

Following the need for development of small and medium enterprises, manufacturing certain machines and networks, as well as the enterprising servicing within heat, electric, gas, water and sewage instalments, became especially wanted.

This tendency became especially close for the enterprises located in our city, and this is because Ruda Śląska has always led in solving energy problems. Then, when the industry was developing in England, in Ruda Śląska the changes connected with proceeding technical revolution were implemented. Our city has always been connected with mining and metallurgy. After World War II, these plants were visibly modernised. At the beginning of the 1960s in our city two additional industrial plants were established which were a modern power station (on pit-coal) and an industrial power station rebuilt into heat and power generating plant with long distance network on hot water.

Achievements of enterprises from our city were meaningful within rationalisation of using energy especially the achievements in POKÓJ steelworks, and not only in the scale of our city. It is enough to say, that in our steelwork, which used to be a forge of metallurgy staff, the following solutions were created: first systems of automatisations of scorching metallurgy furnaces and work of huge furnaces, new types of recuperator for industrial furnaces, pioneer methods of researches dynamic of modern driving systems (especially different types of rolling mills), improving the electric engines management and management of measure devices, modern devices for cleaning industrial sewages, as well as modern methods of energy and environment protection management.

Energy and environment staff in our city became major problem-solvers of Polish metallurgy energy and also within rational using energy policy in EEC countries.

It became visible in participation of Ruda Śląska specialists in such organisation as: World Energy Council (WEC), UNIDO, World Bank and UNO.

As the effect of these actions, research institution of Polish Government and Polish Science Academy was established in 1981 in Ruda Śląska for carrying on basic researches, within rationalisation of energy usage, and state policy especially in this area.

This institution, after some years of work, gained the leading position in CEE countries, which caused the development of intensive cooperation, as well as with other CEE countries and with leading developed countries, and especially with the USA, UK and Germany. As the effect of this cooperation in our city the Centre of Energy and Environment Policy – ICEEP was established, especially directed on the CEE countries problems.

ICEEP is a virtual organisation and unites the experts of all CEE countries and representatives from the USA and Germany. The effects of its work, ICEEP publishes in its own scientific magazine *Energy Conservation Policy* and in many other foreign magazines.

In recent years in Ruda Śląska a friendly atmosphere has prevailed for research and scientific works, a group of sponsors of ICEEP activities was created. Thanks to it, experts from 14 countries, cooperating with ICEEP were proposed to be used to reanalyse gained experiences within the small and medium enterprises development in CEE countries.

In 2003 it was possible to carry out the proper researches, and next to prepare synthetic research results for individual CEE countries. Simultaneously ICEEP experts positively reacted on invitation of ICEEP management to prepare proper papers, discussing the problem from the point of view of particular CEE countries and carried out researches, the results of which could be published in chosen international magazines.

Acknowledgements

Keeping this in mind, I would like to especially thank all members of ICEEP and simultaneously authors of the papers for the present special edition of *International Journal for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management* and management of ICEEP, especially its chairman Prof. Dr. Hab. Inż., Dr. H.C. Jerzy Michnia, for the great contribution in preparing the researches, their realisation and description.

We would like to dedicate special words of recognition to the Editor-in-Chief of the publication, Dr. M.A. Dorgham, for the positive reaction to the proposal that the ICEEP research results would be published as a special edition of this well-known journal.

I would also like to thank the people especially meritorious in creating and acting ICEEP and supporting the realisation of researches Dr. Detlef Frommann from 'Europa Management Akademie Düsseldorf' Vice President of Latvian Science Academy Prof. Dr. Hab. Inż. Yuri Erknanis, former Director of IPIS PAN, Dr. Hab. Inż. Jan Kapala, former Director of Department of Polish Energy Economy by Ministry of Economy Mgr. Inż. Franciszek Krawczyński and management of Silesian Higher School of Management in Katowice, with its Rector Prof. Dr. Hab Joachim Meisner.