

## Socio-economic development of Lower Silesia in the period 2004-2022 (2023)

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### Abstract

**Background:** Since 2004, Lower Silesia has experienced substantial socio-economic transformation, marked by continuous improvements in key macroeconomic indicators over the past two decades. Multiple factors have influenced this positive trajectory, among which European Union funding has played a pivotal role. By the end of 2027 the region is expected to have absorbed over €6.5 billion through major EU programmes, significantly contributing to its development. Despite these advancements, the region faces persistent challenges. Disparities in the pace of development are evident across different areas, with some experiencing slower economic growth. Moreover, the region is increasingly affected by adverse demographic and environmental trends, including population decline, population ageing, and a growing frequency of natural disasters, particularly flooding. These issues pose significant risks to the region's sustainable development and long-term resilience.

**Aim:** The objective is to identify, describe and assess the most important socio-economic changes occurring in the region and its spatial structures in the analysed period.

**Methodology:** The study uses secondary data analysis, an extensive review and critical analysis of the literature on the subject, expert opinions and simple statistical methods, and in selected fragments the phenomenological method.

**Results:** The basic socio-economic trends occurring in the region in the analysed period were identified and described.

**Implications and recommendations:** Socio-economic development in the region shows large and growing disproportions, therefore, within the framework of intra- and inter-regional policies, actions should be taken to eliminate unfavourable trends.

**Originality/value:** Current research providing knowledge on socio-economic development in the region.

**Keywords:** region, regional development, Lower Silesia, EU programmes

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## 1. Introduction

Just as with the contemporary economy as a whole, spatial units are undergoing significant transformations that directly lead to the re-evaluation of the fundamental principles governing their functioning. Alongside the progressing globalisation, the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, the development of the information society, and various threats (political, climatic, etc.), a 'new' reality has begun to take shape. In this reality, the foundations of operation for different actors and elements of the socio-economic environment, including spatial entities, are evolving. These new circumstances are manifested, among other things, in the growing dominance of vertical, flexible socio-economic relationships, the accompanying dematerialisation of production factors, and the simultaneous increase in the importance of qualitative attributes of spatial units (Kozak, 2022). As a result, by the late 20th century, scholars began to suggest that this marked the onset of the fifth Kondratiev wave, in which information technology and communication would play a pivotal role (Stryjakiewicz, 2001). These transformations indicate that the traditional understanding of spatial development – focused on eliminating developmental barriers in less developed regions – no longer yield the expected outcomes. For regional interventions to be effective, there is a growing need to move away from centralist assumptions towards multi-level governance approaches.

At the same time, the emerging new economy whose formation is becoming increasingly apparent, exhibits a tendency toward the polarisation of development levels characterised by growing inequalities. As noted by Castells (2009), there is an observable "simultaneous growth at both the top and bottom of the social scale". These transformations occur across various spatial dimensions and configurations, also affecting regions. Consequently, the escalating complexity and turbulence of contemporary realities could make the third decade of the 21st century a period marked by the intensification and multiplication of unprecedented transformations in socio-economic life, such as its virtualisation and transforming local communities – originally formed to enhance social welfare – into risk communities.

By its very nature, regional development is a complex process comprising numerous diverse phenomena and activities. In practice, this is accompanied by a wide range of complex and simple events resulting from the direct and indirect actions of various entities. Moreover, we are also witnessing the rise of authoritarian tendencies and the accompanying growth of populism across different spheres of life. This may lead to implementing economic solutions fraught with errors stemming from dogmatism, incompetence, voluntarism, and arbitrariness. A practical manifestation of this situation is, among others, the phenomenon of 'unearned income' extensively discussed by Wojtowicz (2019).

The development which holds significant importance in contemporary economic realities is, according to Brodzicki (2014), inherently temporal – meaning it is a dynamic process that is not necessarily unidirectional or irreversible – and spatial in nature. When considering regional development, it is essential to emphasise that it constitutes a socio-economic process involving transforming regional resources and production factors into goods and services.

This process occurs across three dimensions (Korenik, 2023a):

- material dimension – also referred to as regional economic growth, typically described by indicators such as the real increase in GDP over time;
- personal dimension – pertaining to individuals, encompassing changes in attitudes, values, habits, preferences, and related aspects;
- social dimension – concerning regional communities (or specific groups within them), associated with the creation of social and creative capital, among others.

Regional development, in general terms, constitutes a process of positive and relatively durable changes in the socio-economic potential of a region. This is reflected, among other aspects, in the improvement of living conditions for its inhabitants and in the enhanced positioning of the region within the international division of labour, whilst theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the socio-economic disparities in regional development levels. One of the most significant concepts describing the causes of uneven development across different areas is New Economic Geography (NEG), pioneered by Krugman. The core-periphery (CP) models developed within the NEG framework are based on the premise that regions with greater socio-economic potential tend to have a larger manufacturing sector than expected based solely on the size of their markets, since the existing demand-supply linkages make the concentration of economic activity within a specific area economically advantageous for both businesses and workers (Korenik & Miszczak, 2011). Companies benefit from better access to larger product markets and more cost-effective intermediate goods, whereas workers can negotiate higher real wages in response to increased labour demand (Krugman & Venables, 1996); such phenomena occur between regions and within the spatial structure of individual regions. Hence, contemporary theoretical approaches increasingly integrate the principles of the New Economic Geography with endogenous growth models, which suggest that the direct outcome of economic activity concentration in specific areas of a region is the acceleration of their development, which leads to growing disparities between areas within the same region, both in per capita production and real wages. Ultimately, this divergence manifests in varying growth rates, reinforcing the process of regional divergence.

The changes and transformations described above are also observable in Polish regions, particularly after 2004, following the country's accession to the structures of the European Union. This also applies to Lower Silesia which over the past two decades has undergone significant transformations across various dimensions. As a result of these changes a new region has emerged – one that holds a leading socio-economic position within the Polish context but is also experiencing numerous challenges and issues.

The aim of this article was to identify, describe, and evaluate the most significant socio-economic changes occurring in the region and its spatial structures during the analysed period. To achieve this objective, the study employed an analysis of secondary data, an extensive review and critical analysis of the relevant literature, expert opinions, and basic statistical methods.

## **2. Formation of socio-economic changes in the region**

In commencing the assessment of regional development, it is crucial to acknowledge that during the 1990s, both in Lower Silesia and across Poland as a whole, there was a marked and cumulative increase in the scale of regional disparities accompanied by a reconfiguration of the hierarchical structure of individual areas and territories.

The Lower Silesian Voivodeship was formally established on 1 January 1999, as part of the administrative reform of Poland, which consolidated the existing 49 voivodeships into 16 larger administrative units. The newly created voivodeship encompassed the territories of four former, smaller voivodeships previously functioning within this area. This reform positioned Lower Silesia as a substantial and strategically significant region within the national administrative framework. Concurrently, counties (Pl. *powiaty*) were reinstated as territorial self-government units, while the voivodeship itself acquired the status of a dual-level administrative entity, combining governmental and self-governmental functions. The Lower Silesian Voivodeship covers an area of 19,950 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 6.38% of Poland's total land area. As of 31 December 1998, the region's population was 2,982,128. By 30 June 2023 this figure had declined to 2,874,496, reflecting a demographic decrease of approximately 3.6% over a span of twenty-five years (Statistical Office in Wrocław, n.d.). At the time of its establishment, the region accounted for 7.7% of Poland's total population. Wrocław, the capital of the voivodeship, holding the status of a city with county rights, is the largest urban centre in the region in terms of population size. Over the past 25 years, Wrocław has experienced a population increase of 4.6%, reaching 673,500 residents as of mid-2023, underlining its growing demographic and socio-economic significance within the regional and national context.

A high level of demographic urbanisation is characteristic of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship. In 2016, over 67.2% of the region's total population resided in urban areas (a decrease of 2% over a 25 years), while the national average was 60.3% (a decline of approximately 0.9% during the same period). In this regard, the voivodeship ranked second in the country (after the Silesian Voivodeship – 77.8%). The population density in 1999 was 146 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (a decrease of 1.9), while the national average was 123 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (a decline of 3). Based on this indicator, the Lower Silesian Voivodeship ranked fourth in the country (after the Silesian, Lesser Poland, and Masovian Voivodeships).

It should be emphasised that in the last decade of the 20th century, significant changes occurred in the economic structure of the area now constituting the new region, and in the entire country. The source of these transformations was the political and systemic transition, which led to a revaluation not only of the principles governing the functioning of the economy, but also implied a profound transformation both in the economies of individual areas of the country and in social conditions, which in turn influenced social attitudes. When analysing the changes occurring in the economic structure of Lower Silesia and its constituent areas, it is also necessary to consider the changes in the national economy. The first important issue was the assessment of changes in the ownership structure of the economy, where the observed rapid increase in the importance of the private sector in the national economy played a significant role in shaping development processes (another notable phenomenon was the emergence of the so-called municipal sector<sup>1</sup>). The following parallel processes influenced the socioeconomic changes in individual regions during this period:

1. Decentralisation of the state and the emergence of a new public entity – local self-government (Pl. *samorząd terytorialny*) – with the establishment of municipal self-governments in 1990, followed by county self-governments and the governmental-self-governmental voivodeship in 1999.
2. Changes in the labour market and the emergence of unemployment.
3. Changes in the ownership structure of the national economy.
4. Distribution of foreign capital.
5. Increased importance of market mechanisms in determining the efficiency of individual elements of the economy.
6. Development of business environment institutions.
7. Implementation of pre-accession reforms.

The various components of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship responded differently to the changes occurring in the economic environment. Areas characterised by a monofunctional economic structure, such as the Lower Silesian Coal Basin, exhibited a complete lack of adaptability to the new economic

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of the introduction of local self-government administration at local level in 1990.

realities (Koreník, 1992). In contrast, these processes were less severe in the Wrocław agglomeration area where a modern and, above all, diversified economic structure enabled the rapid adaptation to ongoing changes and the turbulent external environment.

A particularly significant event for the functioning of both the region and the entire country was Poland's accession to the structures of the European Union on May 1, 2004, which opened unprecedented development opportunities (Miszczak, 2010). The utilisation of EU funds has proved to be a driving force for many regions nationwide. Undoubtedly, considerable efforts were undertaken in the region to secure EU funding and to modernise the voivodeship across various sectors. It is important to stress that during the previous programming periods, the region effectively capitalised on the opportunities provided primarily through financial resources allocated to different areas of socio-economic life. The region continues to benefit from EU funds to this day. As indicated by the Marshal's Office of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship, between 2004 and 2024 the region received over €4.2 billion under major EU programmes which facilitated the implementation of nearly 13,000 projects. In 2004-2006 this support was provided through the Integrated Regional Operational Programme, during 2007-2013 – through the Human Capital Operational Programme and the Regional Operational Programme for the Lower Silesian Voivodeship, and in 2014-2020 (with settlements extending to 2025) through the Regional Operational Programme of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship. In the latest financial perspective for 2021-2027, the European Funds for Lower Silesia amount to over €2.3 billion (PAP, n.d.). Thus, the total allocation of core funds from the EU budget since accession has exceeded €6.5 billion. It should also be noted that the overall volume of funds was even higher as additional resources originated from various sector-specific funds such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the Just Transition Fund, cross-border cooperation programmes, and others.

Note that the region had undoubtedly been developing prior to this period; however after 1 May 2004, this process experienced rapid acceleration and acquired a stable foundational basis. Practically overnight the region began transforming into a modern spatial unit, with nearly all socio-economic indicators improving. Lower Silesia has consolidated its position as an economically strong region nationally. In 2015, a decade ago, with an 8.5% share of the national GDP, it ranked fourth after the Mazowieckie (Masovian) Voivodeship (21.9% of GDP), the Śląskie (Silesian) Voivodeship (12.5%), and the Wielkopolskie (Greater Poland) Voivodeship (9.7%). As of 2022 (see Table 1), the region has maintained its position, and holds a strong second place in terms of GDP per capita, with a value of 48,402 PLN per capita.

**Table 1.** Gross domestic product by regions in 2022 (current prices)

Regions	Total			Per capita	
	in mln. zł	in percentages	previous year = 100	in zł	Poland = 100
POLAND	3 067 495	100.0	116.6	81 093	100.0
Lower Silesian (Dolnośląskie)	263 119	8.6	118.2	90 980	112.2
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	133 869	44	116.5	66 547	82.1
Lublin	112 047	3.7	114.9	55 182	68.0
Lubusz	65 163	2.1	116.1	66 313	81.8
Łódź	181 851	5.9	113.9	76 228	94.0
Małopolskie	246 895	8.0	114.4	72 004	88.8
Mazowieckie (regional)	168 057	5.5	121.4	74 460	91.8
Opole	60 854	2.0	112.7	64 383	79.4
Podkarpackie	114 747	3.7	113.0	1 55 125	68.0

Regions	Total			Per capita	
	in mln. zł	in percentages	previous year = 100	in zł	Poland = 100
Podlaskie	68 542	2.2	117.4	59 818	73.8
Pomorskie	191 386	6.2	121.3	81 149	100.1
Silesian (Śląskie)	371 166	12.1	118.0	85 131	105.0
Świętokrzyskie	66 800	2.2	110.6	56 507	69.7
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	77 218	2.5	114.0	56 368	69.5
Warsaw Capital Region	536 261	17.5	117.8	164 776	203.2
Wielkopolskie	300 216	9.8	115.5	85 867	105.9
Zachodniopomorskie	109 303	3.6	113.2	66 443	81.9

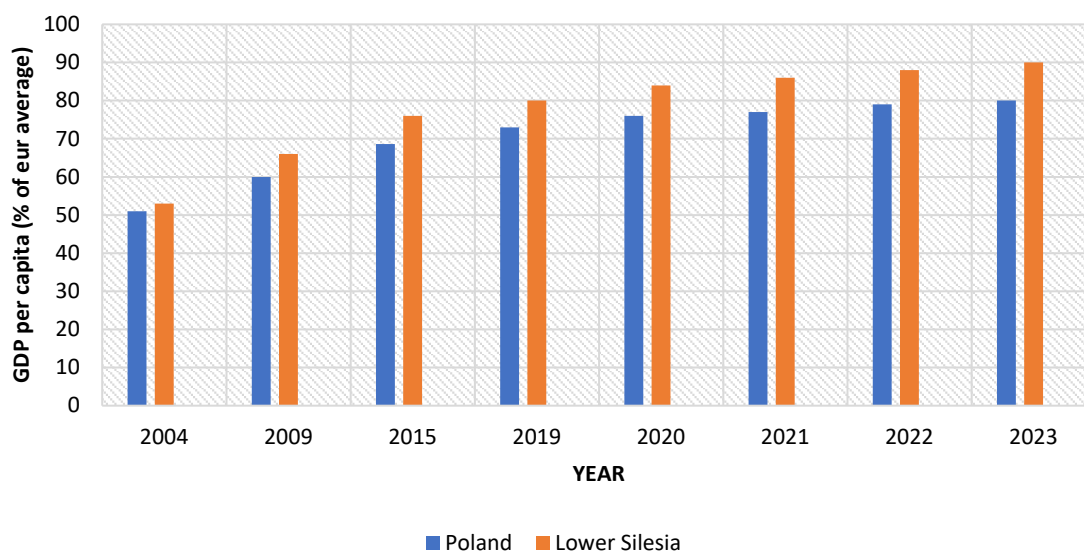
Source: GUS. (2023). Wstępne szacunki produktu krajowego brutto, p. 1.

The contribution to GDP generation in Lower Silesia by sector was as follows: 55% from entities operating in the services sector, 35.4% from those in the industrial sector, 7.5% from the construction sector, and 1.9% from those in the agricultural sector. Regarding the region's share in the national production of key products, the Lower Silesian Voivodeship accounted for:

- 100% of the national production of copper ore,
- 50.6% of the national production of household refrigerators and freezers,
- 43.7% of the national production of household washing machines,
- 16.5% of the national production of lignite.

The most important role in the region's economy is played by the extraction of copper and silver ores in the Legnica-Głogów Copper District. The company responsible for this activity, KGHM Polska Miedź S.A., is one of the global leaders in producing electrolytic copper, silver, and rhenium; regarding lignite extraction, the Lower Silesian Voivodeship also holds a prominent position. The volume of raw material extracted from the Turów Mine in the municipality of Bogatynia ranks the region third in the country, after the Łódź and Wielkopolskie Voivodeships. Lower Silesia is also a major producer of road and construction stones, refractory clays, and natural aggregates. Additionally, approximately 95% of all magmatic and metamorphic rock resources in Poland are located in Lower Silesia.

Therefore, it is justified to state that Lower Silesia is the region that has made the most effective use of the opportunities provided by Poland's membership in the European Union. As early as 2011, GDP per capita calculated in euros, had increased by 114%, the highest growth among all Polish voivodeships (the national average was 92%) (Kolany, 2014). This observation is confirmed by Figure 1, which illustrates the development of this indicator from 2004 to 2023. In relation to the EU average, the region's GDP per capita increased from 51% in 2004 to nearly 90% over the course of 20 years. As shown in Figure 1, this indicator has been steadily rising, albeit slightly. The gap, compared to the national average, has also widened. When analysing the trends presented in Figure 1, and performing a simple extrapolation, taking into account forecasts from institutions such as the IMF (Business Insider Polska, 2025) which projects Poland's GDP growth at over 3.5% in 2025 compared to less than 1% for the entire EU, it can be expected that in the coming years the region will reach 100% of the EU average GDP per capita.



**Fig. 1.** GDP per capita in Poland and Lower Silesia in selected years (EU GDP per capita = 100%)

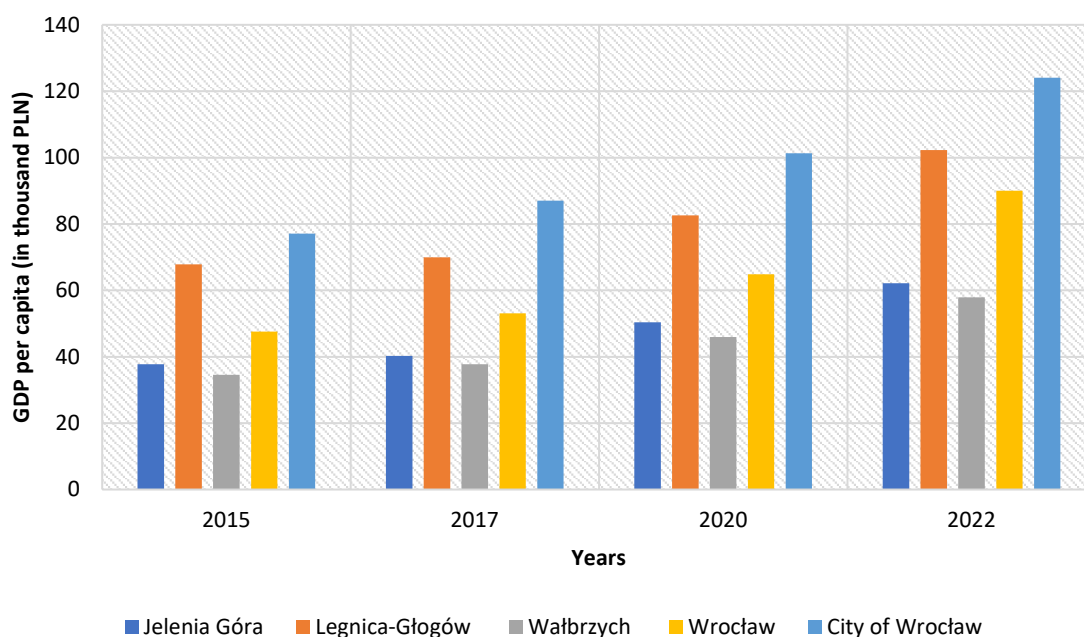
Source: own calculations based on data from Statistics Poland (GUS).

Negative aspects were also observed in the voivodeship during the analysed period. Firstly, it is important to mention the recurring flood risks in the region, which resulted in significant damage across numerous areas (e.g. the flooding September 2024). A major issue, visible at national level but particularly pronounced in this region, is depopulation and population ageing. The average age has been steadily increasing, reaching 43.2 years in 2023, representing an increase of 2.6 years compared to 2015.

According to Statistics Poland (GUS), between 2015 and 2023 the population of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship decreased by 0.9%. Population growth was recorded in six counties, with the largest increases observed in Wrocław County (+39.5%), Środa Śląska County (+11.8%), and the City of Wrocław (+6.0%). Conversely, in 24 counties the population declined, with the most significant decreases recorded in Wałbrzych (−13.1%), Kamienna Góra (−9.7%), and Ząbkowice Śląskie County (−9.6%). Out of 169 municipalities (pl. *gminy*), 38 experienced population growth, particularly in Czernica (+73.0%), Długołęka (+54.3%), and Siechnice (+52.4%). In the remaining 131 municipalities, population declines were recorded between 2015 and 2023, with the most pronounced decreases observed in Duszniki-Zdrój (−16.4%), Złoty Stok, Szklarska Poręba, and Karpacz (each −13.8%) (Report on the Socio-Economic Situation of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship, 2024).

These data indicate that the phenomenon is not evenly distributed across the region, with the most severe depopulation trends occurring in the southern areas. Furthermore, the natural population growth rate per 1,000 inhabitants remained negative in the region since 2010. In 2023 this indicator reached −4.4, representing an increase of 0.2 percentage points compared to 2022, but a decrease of 2.6 percentage points compared to 2015. Spatially, a positive natural growth rate was recorded only in Wrocław County (+2.4), while the lowest values were observed in the counties of Wałbrzych (−10.6) and in Dzierżoniów (−9.5) and Kłodzko (−9.1). Among the 169 municipalities in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship, 13 recorded positive natural growth, primarily in municipalities within Wrocław County, such as Czernica (+5.5), Długołęka (+4.3), and Żurawina (+3.0). In the remaining municipalities the growth rate was negative, with the lowest values recorded in Ruj (−16.6), Polanica-Zdrój (−15.5), and Duszniki-Zdrój (−13.6). This confirms the earlier findings regarding demographic challenges and depopulation in the southern part of the region. Additionally, the region's spatial structure of wealth distribution shows little variation from previous trends. There is a significant spatial disparity in the level of economic development measured, among other indicators, by GDP per capita. In 2022, the lowest GDP per capita values were recorded in the Wałbrzych subregion (just under 58,000 PLN), while

the highest values were noted in the City of Wrocław (over 124,000 PLN). In 2022, the difference in GDP per capita between the City of Wrocław and the Wałbrzych subregion exceeded 53%, as illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 2.



**Fig. 2.** GDP per capita (in thousand PLN) by subregions in selected years

Source: own calculations based on data from Statistics Poland (GUS).

**Table 2.** Percentage contribution to the region's GDP by subregions in selected years

Subregion	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2020	2022
Jelenia Góra	16.5	14.8	14.7	14.3	15	14.2	14.1	13.4	12.8
Legnica-Głogów	20.1	24.4	21.8	25.0	23.4	20.6	19.1	17.9	17.1
Wałbrzych	18.9	17.5	16.9	15.7	15.1	15.2	15.0	14.0	13.5
Wrocław	13.9	13.2	15.1	15.3	16.8	17.3	18.8	20.3	22.5
City of Wrocław	30.6	30	31.4	29.7	29.7	32.0	33.4	34.4	34.2

Source: own calculations based on data from Statistics Poland (GUS).

Both Figure 2 and the earlier observations confirm the presence of dispersion within the region. These disparities are intensifying despite the fact that both the region as a whole and its individual areas are generally experiencing processes of growth and development. However, specific units are developing at varying rates. Such spatial patterns of development ultimately lead to increasing differences in the level of development and, consequently, in wealth. From the perspective of the entire region this is an unfavourable phenomenon as it hinders the full utilisation of all the local potential and resources. Moreover, it fosters the unjustified dominance of the metropolitan area within the region's spatial structure. This dominance may result in the concentration of economic activity and wealth within the metropolitan area, leading to the extraction of mobile resources from more peripheral parts of the region.



### 3. Conclusion

Lower Silesia is a region that has achieved significant economic success over the past two decades, accompanied by a remarkable civilisational leap. Since 2004 it has undergone profound transformation, becoming one of Poland's most important economic areas. The dynamics of socio-economic processes and the pace of change suggest that the region will continue to achieve even better results in the near future, however, despite these positive developments, it also faces significant developmental challenges. The escalation and accumulation of these issues could potentially hinder or even reverse the current positive trends in the future.

During the analysed period, socio-economic development in the region exhibited an overall upward trend, yet the sources of this growth and its intensity varied across different parts of the voivodeship. At the same time, changes in demographic processes and economic activity were also observed. The decline in economic activity in the southern part of the region (Podgórze Sudeckie) continues, whereas an increase in activity around Wrocław and in the central belt of the region has been noted. Global economic conditions during this period have led to a greater dependence of the copper-producing counties on the operations of KGHM Polska Miedź S.A. The recent economic fluctuations and growing uncertainty in global markets have had a notable impact on the economic landscape of both the Legnica-Głogów subregion and the voivodeship as a whole.

The dichotomous division of the region in terms of the pace and scale of development is expected to persist. However, the sources of socio-economic phenomena will differ, and it appears that the emerging Wrocław Metropolitan Area will play an increasingly significant role in the region's economic landscape. Despite the positive trends mentioned above, the region also faces developmental challenges, yet without addressing these issues, sustaining the current positive growth trajectory will be difficult.

The most significant challenges include:

- Lower Silesian Voivodeship is one of the two regions in Poland with the highest number of post-industrial and degraded areas. The legacy of industrial activity includes devastated environments, land devoid of functional value, and depreciated and derelict industrial structures (often referred to as 'ghost buildings'). The scale of this problem in Lower Silesia is substantial, highlighting the urgent need to revitalise degraded urban areas.
- Development within the region is uneven. There is a marked internal disparity, with the subregional GDP per capita dispersion index exceeding 50% in Lower Silesia. This high level of internal differentiation illustrates a clear division within the region.
- Strong growth areas, such as the regional capital Wrocław and its functional urban area.
- Underdeveloped areas with a high concentration of economic, social, and infrastructural developmental barriers are primarily located in the southern part of the voivodeship, including two major regional centres: Jelenia Góra and Wałbrzych.
- Spatial disparities are evident between urban and rural areas and across subregions, counties, and municipalities. The region's moderately polycentric settlement structure and the non-centrally located Wrocław agglomeration hampers spatially balanced development. This situation leads to an increasingly pronounced gap between the metropolitan area and the remaining parts of Lower Silesia.

In conclusion, the Lower Silesian Voivodeship has experienced intensive development since 2004, establishing itself as a leader among Polish regions. This process is not limited to selected areas but encompasses integrated phenomena, as confirmed by various studies employing diverse models and applying different statistical and econometric methods. The overwhelming majority of these studies supported the thesis of Lower Silesia's rapid development and its transformation into a leading region at national level. Examples of such studies include Michoń (2017) and Malina (2020), which indicated that Lower Silesia's development has outpaced that of other voivodeships in Poland during the analysed

period. As a result, it can be stated that Lower Silesia has achieved significant success in socio-economic development after 2004, becoming a leader in this process. Nevertheless, it is essential to remember, as highlighted throughout this article, that the region faces challenges and threats that may negatively impact its development in the future, both endogenous and exogenous in nature. Therefore initiatives are required at regional, national, and EU levels to mitigate the effects of these adverse factors.

It should also be acknowledged that the creation and implementation of such initiatives within the region are inherently selective processes, meaning they will be carried out with varying intensity across different areas of the region. Areas that possess adequate knowledge resources and capital, including highly qualified human capital (Korenik, 2023b), become leaders in this process and serve as nodes within the regional network – typically large urban centers with modern economic structures (see Diebolt & Hippe, 2022). In the case of Lower Silesia, the Wrocław Metropolitan Area naturally functions as the region's growth hub. For these reasons, future actions should focus on initiatives facilitating the diffusion of positive impulses across the entire region. This can be achieved by developing and strengthening socio-economic networks encompassing the whole region, promoting balanced and sustainable growth.

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## Społeczno-ekonomiczny rozwój Dolnego Śląska w latach 2004-2022 (2023)

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### Streszczenie

**Tło:** Region Dolnego Śląska przeszedł po 2004 roku długą drogę w rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczym. W trakcie dwudziestu lat ustawicznie rosły jego podstawowe wskaźniki makroekonomiczne. Wpływ na to miało wiele źródeł, jednak do istotniejszych należy zaliczyć fundusze Unii Europejskiej. Tylko w ramach głównych programów unijnych do końca 2027 roku region zaabsorbuje ponad 6,5 mld euro. W przestrzeni regionu obserwuje się także zjawiska negatywne, związane z wolniejszym tempem rozwoju niektórych obszarów, oraz takie jak spadek liczby ludności i starzenie się społeczeństwa czy wzrost częstotliwości występowania katastrof naturalnych – np. powodzi.

**Cel:** Celem jest zidentyfikowanie, opisanie i ocena najważniejszych zmian społeczno-ekonomicznych zachodzących w regionie i jego strukturach przestrzennych w analizowanym okresie.

**Metodyka:** W badaniu wykorzystano analizę danych wtórnych, obszerny przegląd i krytyczną analizę literatury przedmiotu, opinie ekspertów i proste metody statystyczne oraz w wybranych fragmentach metodę fenomenologiczną.

**Wyniki:** Ustalono i opisano podstawowe tendencje społeczno-ekonomiczne zachodzące w przestrzeni regionu w analizowanym okresie.

**Implikacje i rekomendacje:** Rozwój społeczno-ekonomiczny w przestrzeni regionu wykazuje duże i narastające dysproporcje, dlatego należy w ramach polityki intra- i interregionalnej prowadzić działania zmierzające do niwelowania niekorzystnych tendencji.

**Oryginalność/wartość:** Aktualne badanie dostarczające wiedzę na temat rozwoju społeczno-ekonomicznego w przestrzeni regionu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** region, rozwój regionalny, Dolny Śląsk, programy unijne

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