

PATHS OF THE URBAN REGENERATION PROCESS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AFTER EU ENLARGEMENT - POLAND AND BULGARIA AS COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

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The enlargement of the EU towards Central-Eastern Europe in the years 2004 and 2007 and the related EU funds provided new opportunities and created new challenges to both big metropolitan cities and smaller settlements. One of the particularly important challenges was to define appropriate national and local policies for the urban regeneration of neglected areas, which were abundant in this part of Europe. The objective of the paper is to analyze and evaluate actions taken in Bulgaria and Poland at the national and local level in the field of urban regeneration after the countries' accession to the EU. The paper compares the general national and local planning approaches and capacity building for urban regeneration in the context of regulative and procedural issues. The local case studies represent two types of urban areas under regeneration: the metropolitan core cities Poznań and Sofia and medium-sized non-core towns of Piła and Gabrovo. The results are in the form of a concurrent evaluation of both the achievements and negative effects resulting from the national and local processes in the envisaged and the recently implemented activities with regard to the regeneration of deprived urban neighborhoods and areas.

Key words: urban regeneration, EU funds, Central and Eastern Europe, Poland, Bulgaria.

INTRODUCTION

Common urban policy activities in the European Union have been going on for many years. This has not yet been reflected in community law, but instead in numerous instruments in the form of grants, loans and consultancy influence initiatives undertaken in the field of the sustainable and integrated development of European cities (Dąbrowski, 2014). The EU accession of Central and Eastern European countries in 2004 and 2007 coincided with the intensification of activities in this area. The New Athens Charter was adopted in 2003 and the Leipzig Charter in 2007. New Community initiatives such as URBAN, URBACT and JESSICA were implemented. As a result, the new EU member states had a broader range of possibilities for supporting urban development. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the needs in this area, especially in relation to urban regeneration, were very high. Systemic transformation after 1990 led to the decline of city centers,

the outflow of people to the suburbs, and the creation of numerous post-industrial and post-military areas (Scott and Kühn, 2012; Kubeš, 2013; Tsenkova, 2014; Stryjakiewicz *et al.*, 2012; Hlaváček *et al.*, 2016; Doğan, 2019). The countries of Central and Eastern Europe had not succeeded in developing instruments to support problem urban areas before joining the European Union. For this reason, urban policy has taken an important place in financing development with the use of European Union funds.

Our paper aims to analyze and evaluate the actions taken at the national and local level in the field of urban regeneration after the EU accession of Poland and Bulgaria. The paper compares the general national and local planning approaches and the capacity building for urban regeneration in the context of regulatory and procedural issues. The local case studies represent two types of urban areas under regeneration: the metropolitan core cities of Poznań and Sofia and medium-sized non-core towns of Piła and Gabrovo. The results are in the form of a concurrent evaluation of both the achievements and negative effects with regard to

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the regeneration of deprived urban neighborhoods. The discussion and conclusions address the impact of the EU regional policy framework and funding upon the national urban planning and regeneration policies.

The paper is structured as follows. Following the introduction, in the second section we present the changing role of the European Union in urban development and regeneration in Europe. In the third section, we focus on the spatial transformations taking place in CEE after the systemic transformation in 1990. The fourth section is devoted to the presentation of source materials and methodology. In the fifth section, we analyze regeneration pathways in Poland and Bulgaria at the national and local levels. The sixth and final section provide an overview of the issues at hand.

THE ROLE OF EU FUNDS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION IN EUROPE

Urban development and regeneration have for years been the subject of hot debate within the European Union. However, to date it has not been formally reflected in the *acquis communautaire* (Cheshire, 1987; Parkinson, 1992; Hachmann, 2000; Van Den Berg, Braun and Van Der Meer, 2018). This is due in particular to the opposition of those member states which have regarded the common urban policy as a breach of the subsidiarity principle (Van Den Berg, 2005; Frank, 2006). This principle assumes that the European Union should intervene in a given matter only if actions at a lower, i.e. national, level, have proven ineffective. The European Union's activity in relation to urban areas under the common cohesion policy is therefore limited exclusively to promoting social and economic development in cities through a system of financial aid, consisting of grants and occasionally loans. In the first few years of its existence, the European Economic Community intervened little in urban development. It was only in 1988 that a report by P. Cheshire highlighted the collapse of many important urban centers within the Community (Parkinson, 2005). The creation of Urban Pilot Projects (UPPs) was a breakthrough moment. The program referred to the idea of area-based initiatives and aimed at working out an integrated, i.e. multifaceted, solution for economic, environmental or spatial problems in a strictly defined area. The effectiveness of the intervention was additionally increased by the accumulation of maximum financial resources in a specific time and place. In 1994, the problems of urban areas were singled out and covered by the Community Initiative Concerning Urban Areas (URBAN). This was a dedicated financial instrument to address problems that were widespread throughout the European Union, regardless of whether they concerned a backward or a well-developed region. The main objective of the initiative was to achieve integrated regeneration and internal cohesion in European cities. The URBAN program is considered to be the first initiative aimed at supporting cities to gain the unanimous support of all the EU Member States. In the early 2000s, the European Commission launched another program, known as Urban Audit. This initiative was the outcome of a reflection on the working document *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union* as presented by Commissioner M. Wulf-Mathies. The 1998 document entitled *Sustainable Urban*

Development. A Framework for Action, in turn, outlined the objectives to be set to achieve effective and sustainable urban development. Furthermore, the report highlighted the need to achieve better coordination of community policies and to develop a future financial framework with greater emphasis on the role of cities. In the following years, encouraged by the positive results of the UPPs and URBAN-I, the European Commission decided to continue with a single program under the name of URBAN II. New funds were also earmarked for the second edition of Urban Audit, which became known as Urban Audit II. In 2002, a new URBACT program was launched to stimulate and finance the creation of thematic urban networks for the mutual exchange of information and best practices. The adoption in 2003 of the New Athens Charter by the European Council of Town Planners was a major event. The document set out the vision for the future of 21st-century cities, determined the most important urban development trends and identified key problems and challenges that should guide urban policy. In 2005, a decision was taken to terminate URBAN II and extend support to urban areas by mainstreaming it into community-wide programming under two objectives: "Convergence" and "Regional Competitiveness and Employment". The urban dimension of the European Union thus took on a completely new and more important shape. In addition, the European Commission decided to launch a new financial tool in 2009. Known as JESSICA, it stood for the Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in the City Area. The program is an innovative solution for regeneration measures through a system of convenient, low-interest loans, mostly from renewable structural funds. At the same time, the URBACT III and Urban Audit programs were continued.

As a result, when the CEE countries joined the European Union in 2004-2007, urban issues had been quite well-ordered and had clearly gained more importance in the community policy. The common approach to urban development was further strengthened by the adoption by EU ministers in 2007 of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. The charter contains common and coherent principles of sustainable urban development in Europe. In the programming period 2014-2020, the development and regeneration of cities was an element of mainstream European Union funding. At the same time, successive editions of existing programs such as URBACT, JESSICA and Urban Audit were in place (Dąbrowski, 2015) and the next generation of these is upcoming, providing opportunities for better distribution of knowledge and funding. In 2016, the Urban Agenda for the European Union was developed, which aims to create partnerships for improvement in urban areas to meet the key challenges faced by cities. These range from employment and social inclusion through mobility, regeneration, the environment, and climate change. Many of these challenges in Central and Eastern European cities are particularly important.

TRANSFORMATION AND REGENERATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN CITIES AND TOWNS

Prior to 1989, the practice in CEE was in line with the postwar reconstruction of city centers throughout Europe.

The growth of the urban tissue through more compact and high-rise housing and centrally planned services in socialist times, and even the construction of some large panel housing estates, took the place of already urbanized bourgeois areas with varying levels of urban development and equipment. Moreover, there was much emphasis on large-scale flagship interventions of public character, such as multipurpose complexes, monuments, squares, and parks. The changes, transformation and regeneration that have taken place in CEE cities and towns in the last 30 years of transition and EU integration through the establishment of market-based urban economies and democratic institutions of urban governance and planning have been the focus of multiple publications during this period. These processes and their impact are generally described and analyzed in the body of literature partially outlined here in three chronologically distinguished stages, for every decade from 1989 onwards.

The first decade of 1989-1999 is marked by the reconstruction of the long-term patterns of urbanization in the countries under scrutiny (Węclawowicz, 1992; Thornley, 1993; Musil, 1993; Strong *et al.*, 1996; Bertaud and Renaud, 1997). The transition from a centrally-planned totalitarian system to a market-oriented democratic one was accompanied by a rapid and prolonged decline of traditional industry, and the related social marginalization and strong migration. Overall regional and urban environmental changes related to abandonment, decay, fragmentation, emerging congestion, and suburban sprawl were qualitatively described. Demographic dynamics with parallel growth of major cities and shrinkage of most of the other regions in the countries in transition were observed and analyzed. The social stratification and patterns of socio-spatial segregation in cities and towns, the economic restructuring from industry to services and their reflection on central and peripheral locations and land markets were studied as separate cases, limited comparisons or broader scope studies.

In the second decade (2000-2009), after the transformation of the political and economic regime, the focus was on the impacts of the more mature transition, as well as the expectations and immediate effects after EU accession and the globalization of urban economies, societies, environment, and spaces (Staddon and Mollov, 2000; Dimitrova, 2000; Dimitrovska-Andrews, 2002; Tsenkova, 2003; Hamilton, *et al.*, 2005; Parysek and Mierzejewska, 2006; Tsenkova and Nedović-Budić, 2006; Stanilov, 2007; Hirt and Stanilov, 2009). The initial impacts from the faster or slower opening up to foreign direct investment associated with exponential growth of commercial developments, such as offices and shopping malls, were an important part of the urban transformations, capturing the bigger picture of the scene in the region prior to the global financial crisis. In parallel, some of the themes found in the professional discourse of the first years after the new millennium were: the search for new glocal identities; “the tragedy of the commons” (Hardin, 1968), especially the overall poor urban environmental quality; and the mismanagement of public amenities, infrastructure and collective housing.

The development paths during the transition and the first years of integration are described as retrospectives in

the third decade (2010-2019). This is paralleled with the trajectories and perspectives that CEE cities and towns faced, as well as their regeneration strategies and actions in the context of the legacy of the recent past and the newly emerging environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and power-related challenges and their representation in the urban space (Scott and Kühn, 2012; Kubeš, 2013; Kaczmarek and Marcinczak, 2013; Tsenkova, 2014; Tasheva-Petrova, 2016; Stryjakiewicz *et al.*, 2018; Dimitrova *et al.*, 2019). Various visions and performances are shaping the current transitions and adaptation capacities. The development and regeneration perspectives are set within a complex puzzle of urban networks and urban tracts moving at very different speeds. This is in the context of the advantages or disadvantages of macro connectivity, the common market and the free flow of capital. All of the above themes and processes can be traced back in the urban development and regeneration paths of the various cities and towns in both countries. The case studies of Poland and Bulgaria provide particularly interesting observations in this regard as ground for studying similar yet divergent paths, especially in the urban regeneration domain addressed in the following chapters.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Various research methods were applied in the article. The desk research approach was supported by a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000) and participant observation, coupled with a comparison of qualitative and quantitative secondary data. The first step analyzed the national paths of the regeneration process in Poland and Bulgaria after their EU accession. The strategic documents regarding socio-economic and spatial development prepared at the national level were taken into account, along with the operational programs constituting the basis for spending European funds, and the legal regulations regarding the development of cities, with emphasis on their regeneration. On this basis, the approach to the renewal of degraded areas in Poland and Bulgaria was determined, covering four case studies. The selection of cities was based on a comparative case study selection approach (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). The cities covered by the analysis are examples of primary cities and lower tier towns. In this regard, we used the Legendijk (2000) core/non-core concept, which assumes that core cities are located in metropolitan areas and the non-core cities are located ‘outside the principal metropolitan areas’ (Legendijk and Lorentzen, 2007). One of the most important factors for selecting the case studies was that both authors had had the opportunity to be either participants and/or observers during the stages of the planning process for regenerating the four urban areas.

Poznań and Sofia, which are metropolitan areas in both countries, were selected as core cities. Piła and Gabrovo were selected as non-core towns (Table 1).

We analyzed the nature of the actions taken, the main actors in this process and the most important effects. In this way, we verified how the national path of regeneration activities was implemented at the local level in various types of cities. The cases and the comparison are not exhaustive but indicative.

For the comparative analysis we used the criteria that were described in the work of Stohr (1989), Lichfield (1992) and Roberts (2000) in the characteristics of the evolution of regeneration in Western European countries. Therefore, we took into account the following: the major strategy and orientation, key actors and stakeholders, spatial level of activity, economic focus, social content, physical emphasis, and the environmental approach. These categories of study were found to be helpful for the purpose of the study and to articulate the sustainable urban development and regeneration notion around the EU and national policies for regional and urban development and their planning and implementation.

On this basis, we determined the regeneration paths followed by Poland and Bulgaria at the national level and their implementation at the local level.

being the first country in the European Union to decide to utilize it. In the 2014-2020 programming period, the importance of regeneration increased again. It is currently estimated that by 2023, within the framework of EU and national financial resources, approximately EUR 6 billion will have been allocated for the regeneration of problem areas (National Regeneration Plan, 2014). The value of regeneration projects financed from the European Union funds in 2014-2020 amounts to EUR 1.8 billion (Mapa dotacji UE, 2021).

The organizational and financial support of the European Union triggered systemic changes in the area of urban regeneration in Poland. Currently, this is a major element of the strategic policy of the state, expressed in the so-called Strategy for Responsible Development (Ciesiółka, 2018). EU guidelines helped to create a legislative framework via

Table 1. Comparative information about selected case study cities
(Source: Eurostat, 2017; GUS, 2018; NSI, 2018)

Country	Poland		Bulgaria	
City	Poznań	Piła	Sofia	Gabrovo
Type	Core city	Non-core town	Core city	Non-core town
Population (2011; 2018)	550,742; 536,438	74,930; 73,398	1,208,097; 1,241,675	58,367; 52,169
Degree of urbanization LAU 1 level (2011; 2018)	High density cluster	High density cluster	High density cluster	Urban cluster
First regeneration initiatives with EU funds (year):	2005	2004	2011	2010
Current document regulating regeneration (year of preparation)	Municipal regeneration program (2017)	Municipal regeneration program (2017)	Integrated plan for urban rehabilitation and development (2013) and investment program (2016)	IPURD (2013) and investment program (2016)
Main type(s) of regeneration area	City center	City center, post-military area	Zones with public, social and economic character	Zones with public, social and economic character

URBAN REGENERATION: CASE STUDIES IN POLAND AND BULGARIA AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The case of Poland

After Poland joined the European Union in 2004, it did not accede to the URBAN Initiative. However, it took advantage of the URBACT II initiative and decided to introduce the financing of urban development and regeneration into the mainstream programming of funds. Under the 2004-2006 Integrated Regional Development Operational Program (IROP), urban regeneration was to receive over EUR 96 million, which accounted for approximately 3.3% of all the available resources from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in Poland. In the 2007-2013 programming period, sixteen regional operational programs (ROPs) were established, supplanting the IROP. As Churski (2008) notes, this was evidence of a greater regional focus of the planned measures and a clear devolution of regional policy in Poland. In this period, the total allocation of ERDF funds for urban regeneration in Poland rose significantly and amounted to approximately EUR 1.1 billion (Ciesiółka, 2014). Since 2011, the JESSICA Initiative has also been used to promote regeneration among entrepreneurs, Poland

the adoption in 2015 of the first legal act regulating the issues of renewal of degraded areas, i.e., the Regeneration Act. As a result, over 53% of communes and over 69% of municipalities in Poland have adopted regeneration programs (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2018). The principles of their creation, implementation and monitoring are unified. To date, the effects of regeneration activities have focused on spatial changes, which in larger cities have led to their gentrification (Kaczmarek and Marcińczak, 2013). Therefore, since 2014, emphasis has been placed on the implementation of social measures, which are accompanied by spatial, economic or environmental steps. A participatory approach to regeneration has been promoted, in which local authorities stimulate other stakeholders, in particular residents, entrepreneurs and NGOs, to engage in relevant activities. At the same time, European Union funds have continued to be the principal source of financing regeneration. For this reason, the main barriers to regeneration in Poland are as follows: the lack of a national financing program guaranteeing a long-term, systematic regeneration process in degraded areas, as well as insufficient legal provisions concerning the protection of tenants' rights in areas undergoing regeneration (Stryjakiewicz *et al.*, 2018).

The case of Bulgaria

After EU accession, during the first programming period for Bulgaria in the EU, 2007-2013, sustainable and integrated urban development received approximately 22.8% of the total budget of ERDF in Bulgaria through the Operational Program Regional Development (OPRD). The amount was over EUR 0.7 billion. The sustainable and integrated urban development axis is 53.6% of that operational program, and the other resources from the ERDF have been distributed along with resources from the cohesion fund in other more sectoral or specific programs dealing with transport, the environment, competitiveness, and technical assistance. Since 2010, the JESSICA Initiative has also been used to promote regeneration among entrepreneurs and public authorities.

There has been no clear devolution in terms of regional policy, except for the creation in 2008 of regional development advisory councils. Lower tier district and municipal authorities are being represented there to provide consultations on the regional development plans at the NUTS 2 level. During the pre-accession and early membership period, gradual Europeanization of the planning system took place (Yanchev, 2012), along with the inherited legacy from the transition period.

Integrated plans for urban rehabilitation and development (IPURD) were introduced in the Regional Development Act in 2012, prior to the second programming period of Bulgaria as an EU Member State. They became the major planning instrument at the urban level for the allocation of EU regeneration funding. The IPURD are backed by several short provisions in the Regional Development Act and by the Methodological Guidance for their elaboration and implementation (MRRB, 2012). A National concept for spatial development 2013-2025 was approved, defining the priority polycentric network of cities and towns to be supported by the sustainable integrated urban development approach. Currently, 39 cities and towns receive such funding after negotiations with the European Commission.

In 2013, the MRRB made an effort to promote a more integrated approach towards funding for the programming period 2014-2020, but there was resistance from some of the other ministries that were redistributing ERDF and ESF resources. In parallel, the national government did not choose the option for application of the community-led initiatives approach in urban areas during the 2014-2020 programming.

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the importance of sustainable and integrated urban development increased slightly to 54.5% of the Operational Program Regions in Growth (OPRG). The value of regeneration projects financed from the European Union funds in 2014-2020 amounts to EUR 531 million.

Thanks to the introduction of IPURD and the financial engineering instruments, demand for more sophisticated planning practice has emerged, although various deficiencies in the quality of the planning content have been recognized (Dimitrova *et al.*, 2017, 2018), partially attributed to formalism. To date, the activities from both programming

periods have stressed the physical environment and infrastructure, which has had a major effect on the comfort of local communities. Nevertheless, this has had a limited impact on environmental performance, social cohesion and economic innovation. Some of the larger upgrading projects had gentrification effects over areas with concentration of vulnerable groups (Venkov, 2014).

The currently implemented IPURD include zones for intervention of three types: (a) of a social nature: housing estates and slums; (b) of public character and high societal significance: city centers and major public spaces such as parks and gardens; and (c) with economic potential: old brownfields of military or industrial sites for conversion or new mixed-use greenfields. These zones for intervention have their own implementation programs and apply an area-based approach. There are no specialized management structures to care for the coordination and integration aspects during the implementation of these programs. Instead, the usual administrative practice of implementing EU-funded projects is followed, which has limited application in complex issues.

Up to now, there has been no official plan to adopt a separate urban regeneration act. Indirectly, the issues of urban regeneration (rehabilitation) are addressed in the Regional Development Act, where integrated territorial strategies, plans and investments are under consideration at the regional and local levels. In the current proposed amendments of the act from October 2019, the IPURD are removed and the urban rehabilitation is envisaged as part of more general plans for the integrated development of municipalities.

URBAN REGENERATION CASE STUDIES IN POLAND AND BULGARIA AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The case of Poznań (Poland)

Poznań is located in western Poland and has a population of 536,400 (2018), which makes it the fifth largest Polish city in terms of population. Together with the surrounding municipalities, it makes up the Poznań agglomeration, inhabited by about 1.1 million people. It should be noted, however, that more than 8% of residents left the city between 1999 and 2018. The city is a thriving service center and boasts many international enterprises and universities.

Regeneration activities in Poznań began in 2005, with the establishment of the Regeneration Office within the structures of the City Hall. Its task was to coordinate work on the program and regeneration projects. Local non-governmental organizations, cultural organizations and small entrepreneurs have also been actively involved in regeneration. A regeneration committee, in operation since 2018, is an advisory body to the mayor of the city on behalf of the city residents. One of the key reasons for embarking on regeneration in Poznań, in addition to emerging socio-economic and spatial problems in the city, was the new possibility of financing the regeneration from European Union funds, which emerged after Poland's accession to the European Community in 2004 (Ciesiółka, 2010).

Since 2006, regeneration programs in Poznań have been

associated with the idea of moving regeneration, planned as a long-term process of gradual change. The entire downtown area of the city was recognized as degraded, with a high concentration of socio-economic problems (high unemployment, poverty) and spatial ones (poor technical state of the buildings). However, a decision was taken to first carry out activities in pilot areas on the outskirts of the downtown area. In subsequent years, the relevant projects covered the following areas:

- tasks activating and integrating urban communities, involving the organization of periodic cultural events, i.e. concerts, theatrical performances, multimedia shows, exhibitions, and social events;
- minor improvements in the form of road and pavement renovations, rearrangement of public spaces, creating small green areas, introducing elements of small architecture; and
- public investments, which included, above all, the reconstruction of the bridge to improve the connectivity of the regeneration areas, the construction of a museum about the beginnings of Polish statehood, the creation of the New Gasworks culture center and a city beach on the bank of the River Warta, and renovation of municipal housing resources. More than EUR 61.1 million from public funds was spent on regeneration activities in the period 2004-2013.

The activities of public authorities were increasingly accompanied by private investments. They mainly concerned the renovation of private tenements and the construction of new residential and service buildings and hotels in so-called "seals", i.e. undeveloped spaces between buildings, as well as the development of post-industrial areas (e.g. Stary Browar/Old Brewery Shopping Center, Baltic Tower) and post-military areas. The JESSICA initiative was of great importance in this regard. However, the transfer of poorer inhabitants to other parts of the city, not covered by regeneration, was an unintended effect of the regeneration process (Ciesiółka and Maćkiewicz, 2020).

In 2017, in connection with the entry into force of the Regeneration Act and new opportunities for financing regeneration from European Union funds, a new regeneration program was adopted in the city, which already covers the entire downtown area. Furthermore, the scope of the planned public activities is much broader and includes large-scale investments related to the renovation of the city's main streets, the construction of a new tram route and a new pedestrian crossing over the River Warta, construction of cultural centers in housing estates, etc. The wider spatial scope of the regeneration program is associated with increased interest from the private sector in regeneration matters. The regeneration stimulated by the local authorities, previously confined to small areas, has now been extended to the entire downtown area, becoming an element of strategic thinking about the city's development. It is based on diversified sources of financing, including EU funds, city financing and private money. The value of regeneration projects financed by the European Union funds in Poznań in 2014-2020 amounts to EUR 34 million (Mapa dotacji UE, 2021). At the same time, gentrification is taking place in the areas regenerated

previously; there are no legal and financial instruments in place to prevent this process.

The case of Sofia (Bulgaria)

Sofia is the capital and the biggest city in Bulgaria, with a population of more than 1,236,000 inhabitants (NSI, 2018). It is located in the western mountainous part of the country. The municipality of Sofia (*Stolichna obshtina*) enjoys a special status and its limits correspond to those of the Sofia (*stolica*) district. The functional urban area (FUA) of Sofia includes a significant number of municipalities in the two adjacent districts of Sofia and Pernik, making up an agglomeration of almost 1.5 million inhabitants. The city has both lost and gained many residents during some of its more turbulent years during the 1990s and it continues to attract people from all over the country. The capital offers a range of opportunities, e.g. in globally integrated outsourcing services and the ICT sector; national public administration, academic bodies and the headquarters of commercial companies, along with networks of creative and knowledge-intensive industries.

More than EUR 158.3 million was spent on regeneration activities in the period 2007-2013 from EU and national public funds on top of over EUR 500 million for the construction of the underground. Pilot urban regeneration initiatives include a number of major projects, apart from separate buildings or infrastructure elements in Sofia: a) The "Integrated capital city transport project" funded by OPRR 2007-2013; b) The "Reconstruction and major overhaul of Zhenski Pazar, Sofia" – funded by OPRR 2007-2013 through JESSICA and Fund for Sustainable Urban Development; c) The "Science and Technology Park" (Sofia Tech Park) through the Operational Program "Development of the Competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy" (OPDCBE) 2007-2013; and d) The "Demonstration renovation of multi-family residential buildings" by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), MRRB and the integrated STACCATO project within the European Concerto initiative. The strong citizen or stakeholder dissatisfaction in the case of the first three of the above projects or, on the other hand, a lack of interest in participating in the last case were important lessons. They can be attributed to the lack of more advanced project management and inclusive communication with stakeholders, beneficiaries and interested citizen groups from the planning stage to the implementation.

Today, no mature regeneration structures exist as part of the administration. Some of the major projects and interventions are horizontally coordinated. A key role is played by the Architecture and Urban Planning Directorate and its Urban and Spatial Planning and Immobile Cultural Heritage Department. The Department was added to the structure of the directorate as late as 2016. Its addition is a formal response to the more specific guidance for the establishment of a management structure found in the IPURD, in which this approach is supported as a first step. This unit's mandate, functions and capacity for wider integration and coordination through the provision of the plans is disputable. Its preparation role is clearer, including the administrative support for physical intervention projects under the IPURD and its investment program agreed by the Managing authority of the OPRG 2014-2020. The synergetic effect outlined in the methodological guidance

for the IPURD (MRRB, 2012) and the demand for more innovative and adequate urban development, planning and regeneration stressed by many local experts (Forum for urban development, 2016) seem more attainable in the new programming period.

The scope of planned activities and interventions currently being realized or to be started in the remainder of the period include the following: a) the second phase of the “Integrated capital city transport” project with the reconstruction of tram lines and other rolling stock and traffic management related measures; b) the “Building and rehabilitation of zones for public leisure, parks, green areas, pedestrian alleys, subways and sidewalks, cycling alleys, sports playgrounds” in Zone 2 and Zone 4 of the historic city center within a public character zone; and c) the renovation of Zapaden and Vladimir Zaimov parks, the former in a zone with a public character and the latter in a zone with a social character. Several other projects are included in the program as reserves. Intensive critique of the immediate results has attracted public attention, but the long-term impacts are much more important. The amount spent on regeneration projects funded by the European Union altogether with the national co-financing in Sofia between 2014 and 2020 is EUR 92 million (CMRB, 2021a). It is doubtful whether any of these and other projects, focusing predominantly on physical improvement, will lead to more favorable conditions for the deprived urban neighborhoods.

The case of Piła (Poland)

Piła is located in the northern part of Wielkopolskie Voivodeship and has a population of 73,398 inhabitants (2018). In recent years, the city’s population has declined slowly. Between 1999 and 2018, 2.2% of the population left the city. Piła was seriously damaged during World War II and after the war it was rebuilt almost from scratch. Services are the dominant branch of the city’s economy.

Regeneration activities in Piła started as early as 2004 and were coordinated by the City Hall. Other actors involved in regeneration activities are primarily educational institutions. The private sector and non-governmental organizations were only slightly interested in the renewal of degraded areas. A regeneration committee has been operating in the city since 2018. To date, its activity has had little impact on the direction of regeneration of the city.

After Poland joined NATO in 1999, its army was restructured. This led to the liquidation of many military units, including those stationed in Piła. For this reason, the first regeneration program concerned post-military areas. Undoubtedly, the possibility of financing activities in post-military areas from European Union funds had an impact on this decision. The regeneration program for residential areas was created in 2013 and covered the city center. So far, it has been implemented to a limited extent. Therefore, regeneration projects implemented over the years have focused primarily on the adaptation of post-military facilities to new educational, recreational and sports functions. By the end of 2013, a total of EUR 25 million was spent on regeneration.

The new regeneration program drafted in 2017 covers both downtown areas and post-military and post-industrial areas. Training modalities and workshops for residents

from different age groups are a strong focus of the program. In addition, plans have been made to regenerate green areas in the city center, modernize residential buildings, create new cultural facilities, and prepare former industrial areas for new production investments. The value of regeneration projects financed by the European Union funds in Piła in 2014-2020 amounts to EUR 4.2 million (Mapa dotacji UE, 2021). Regeneration financing is still based on European Union support and on the national assistance program called Package for medium-sized cities losing socio-economic functions.

The case of Gabrovo (Bulgaria)

Gabrovo is the center of a municipality and district by the same name, located in the North Central region, with a population of almost 54,000 inhabitants. The town has been shrinking since the late 1980s from a peak of more than 80,000 residents. Gabrovo was one of the first industrial centers, called the Bulgarian “Manchester”. It continues to have an industrial profile, being the location of a technical university and schools specializing in mechanical engineering. It is trying to both specialize and diversify its economy, including in the mix of its activities creative industries and cultural tourism.

Pilot renovation activities started through demonstration projects and strategic planning for the energy efficiency of various types of public buildings, collective housing, public infrastructure and facilities such as lighting. An Energy Management Unit was established in 1999, consisting of representatives of various departments and working with multiple internal and external users. However, the renovation of separate buildings or facilities, basic water and sewerage infrastructure and public spaces such as parks or gardens are different from the area-based regeneration approach. One of the reasons is the dispersed character of urban decline and deprivation. Still, there are clear signs for areas with a concentration of decline. One example is the historic core with its small-scale fragmented physical structure and a large number of legal heirs of real estate. Other examples are the several bigger industrial sites restituted or privatized, yet not part of the local economic or social life. By the end of 2013, a total of EUR 19.3 million was spent on regeneration.

The 2013 IPURD contained various recipes for an integrated approach towards the regeneration of deprived zones. The municipality is trying to encourage citizen and business participation in the process through many soft measures such as the web-GIS portal, Gabrovo innovation camp, etc., yet interpersonal and socio-cultural challenges prevail.

The investment program stemming from the IPURD gives priority to public works (Koleloto Park and the adjacent neighborhoods, as well as parts of the town center with the Shivarov Bridge) and new construction of public infrastructure (the Eastern urban street). The reserve projects are oriented towards public works and open spaces in several housing estates, a park and reconstruction of the central square. The amount spent on regeneration projects funded by the European Union funds altogether with national co-financing in Gabrovo in 2014-2020 is EUR 10 million (CMRB, 2021b).

The strenuous efforts of the municipality to combine all sources of funding and to mix hard and soft measures in order to pull more opportunities are grounded in its severe demographic shrinking, but something more is needed for the synergy to happen.

COMPARISON

Research results indicate both shared features and differences in the regeneration paths in Poland and Bulgaria (Table 2). In both countries, EU funds are key to financing regeneration. Local authorities play an important role yet, with the exception of large cities, there is little interest of the private sector in regeneration activities.

of cities in several aspects. First, regeneration has been integrated in the strategic regional and urban policies of the two member states. There has been mobilization of public funds by national and local co-financing but also by supplementary public resources, especially at the local level. The gradual creation of a legal regeneration framework differs in the two countries, as in Bulgaria it is less focused on addressing integrated urban development. An increased interest in regeneration, its orientation and impacts, can be seen among various actors in the process. While private sector actors have become more involved in the regeneration activities thanks to the financial mechanisms, local government continues to play a decisive

Table 2. Main features of regeneration in Poland and Bulgaria
(Source: own compilation based on the criteria described in Stohr (1989), Lichfield (1992) and Roberts (2000))

Country	Poland	Bulgaria
Major strategy and orientation	Regeneration as one of the main strategies of urban development of the country. Striving for an integrated approach to regeneration, with an emphasis on solving social problems.	Regeneration as part of the national polycentric and integrated local and urban development approach. Emphasis on the physical problems for larger scale and multiple layers.
Key actors and stakeholders	Local authorities supported by residents, entrepreneurs, and representatives of NGOs.	Local authorities supported by many stakeholders at the strategy level, but implementation is strongly criticized.
Spatial level of activity, degree of devolution and empowerment	Emphasis on the local level; regional and national levels have a supervisory role. Mainly renewal of city centers, less importance of regeneration of post-industrial and post-military areas, promotion of community-led approach.	Strong links between national and local levels with priorities and a unified approach settled by the former. Rehabilitation and renewal of city and neighborhood public spaces and lack of a community-led approach.
Economic focus	Crucial role of EU funds larger than the local budgets, except for biggest cities. Weak integration of private capital.	Crucial role of EU funds larger than the local budgets, except for biggest cities. Weak integration of private capital.
Physical emphasis	Improving housing conditions, adaptation of buildings to new social roles, modernization of public spaces.	Infrastructure, public space and buildings rehabilitation, especially educational and cultural facilities.
Social content	Crucial in regeneration. Focused on counteracting poverty, unemployment and crime, as well as building a sense of community.	Few attempts to analyze more deeply social disadvantages. Several cases of social discontent due to poor communication in planning or political struggles.
Environmental approach	Little importance given to regeneration, emphasis on preventing air pollution in city centers.	Noise and air pollution indirectly addressed through emphasis on better pedestrian access.

The approach to physical and environmental issues is similar, yet in Poland much more emphasis in regeneration is placed on solving social problems. In both countries, the renewal of degraded areas is considered a major element of the countries' development policy, although in Poland regeneration clearly stands out from other public policies, and in Bulgaria it is an element of integrated urban development, although what was said in 2007 (ESPON, 2007, p. 127) that "Bulgaria's theory and practice could not be further apart" is still relevant to some extent in terms of the application of an integrated comprehensive approach of governance and planning.

CONCLUSIONS

The research carried out proved that the EU accession of Poland and Bulgaria has influenced the regeneration

role in regeneration programming and implementation. Despite attempts to create social advisory bodies (especially in Poland), the importance of social actors in regeneration is insufficient. For instance, there is no leadership capable of involving different social groups in regeneration. The priorities in the regeneration approaches in both countries are shifting slightly, from just being physical towards the involvement of social issues, although more practical evidence for this trend is needed to prove that the relevant impacts take place. In parallel, environmental justice for the most deprived neighborhoods and reuse of more peripheral industrial brownfields are not as high as necessary on the urban regeneration agenda. Although the rules set by the central government are unified, in Poland regeneration in larger cities is more advanced than in peripheral towns; in Bulgaria the opposite is more often the case. At the same

time, gentrification symptoms are emerging, especially in the core metropolitan areas. They are a result of regeneration in the absence of economic and social mechanisms which might alleviate such effects. Finally, the prevailing formalism and the conduct of national and local institutions, focusing on the absorption of EU funds, needs to move to the next stage. At that stage, the social and ecological problems and the potential of deprived urban neighborhoods should be addressed in earnest, bearing in mind the inequality patterns and creative destruction from the circulation of public and private capital.

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