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## URBAN REGENERATION PROGRAMMING IN POLAND IN THE YEARS 2014–2020

**Abstract.** In 2015, *the National Urban Policy*, *The Urban Regeneration Law*, and the *Guidelines regarding urban regeneration in operational programmes for the years 2014–2020* were adopted in Poland. These documents marked a new direction for developing and implementing these difficult processes. Simultaneously, communes received support which was supposed to help them plan urban regeneration properly on the basis of reliable diagnoses of the initial state, considering their endogenous features and potentials, with active participation of local communities. The aim of the article is to present the Polish approach to regeneration programming. Its background is the analysis of the definitions of urban regeneration which have functioned in Polish literature since the 1990s followed by a presentation of Western European stages of the evolution of this subject. The analysis offered in the article as well as the resulting conclusions show that the Polish approach to regeneration follows the integrated model prevalent in Europe. It fits the discussions between the academics and practitioners regarding the designation of degraded areas in cities, the principles of regeneration programming, and active involvement of different stakeholders in the aforementioned processes.

**Key words:** urban regeneration, regeneration programme, National Urban Policy, Urban Regeneration Law, Poland.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Dynamic political changes in Poland in the 1990s combined with many years of neglect of renovation have caused cities to struggle with the problem of degraded areas. These are the areas where deficiencies in the social, economic, spatial, and en-

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vironmental spheres are concentrated. In most cases, they include downtown areas or brownfields. The problems of degraded areas apply to over 20% of urbanised areas of Polish cities and towns (Jarczewski and Kuryłło, 2010) where a significant number of Polish citizens live. Therefore, the scope of regeneration needs is significant and it is certainly one of the undeniable arguments why this subject matter should be an important element of urban development policy. The most important deficiencies of degraded areas include: inherited poverty of inhabitants, long-term unemployment, low social activity, sub-standard residential tissue, low quality of public spaces and green areas, and significant exceedances of environmental standards.

The issue of regeneration has been discussed in Poland since the 1990s. Definitions of regeneration based on the oeuvres of such authors as K. Skalski, Z. Zuziak, B. Domański, M. Bryx, T. Markowski, A. Billert, P. Lorens, S. Kaczmarek, or Z. Ziobrowski have always emphasised that it is a comprehensive and long-term process, the essence of which is to lead urbanised degraded areas out of crisis. It should occur in the infrastructural, social and economic sphere with the participation of the local community and all interested parties. Unfortunately, in practice, this concept was and continues to be abused and associated to a large extent with the possibility of implementing investments. Currently, however, a lot of emphasis (at least in planning documents) is placed on the social dimension of this process. The social problems occurring there are considered the basis for, e.g. designating a degraded area. Cities carry out a series of analyses and studies that enable one to learn about the problems of the inhabitants of an area. It could also be noted that the institutions which manage EU funds expect beneficiaries to create a regeneration framework in the form of programmes based on social participation. Cities developing their urban regeneration programmes in 2015–2020 had to change their approaches from typically infrastructural to social. Earlier, a similar trend was observed in Western Europe, e.g. in Germany, France, and Great Britain, however, these countries had started their regeneration experience much earlier and they also had understood much earlier that infrastructural measures alone were not enough to make a permanent change in a crisis area. Moreover, these countries had largely dealt with sub-standard residential tissue earlier through large-scale renovation programmes which had been conducted since the 1960s. They also have a number of proven instruments that help manage these processes and have launched numerous national (and regional) funds to solve the problems of degraded areas, not relying exclusively on the support from EU funds in this area.

Polish cities have been gathering experience in the implementation of regeneration projects only since the 1990s. There are many problems, however, be it financial, organisational, and formal and legal, which significantly hinder those efforts. This is mainly due to the fact that successive governments were never seriously interested in this problematic subject, the effects of which definitely exceed political tenures. The responsibility for running these processes has been pushed onto local governments and their very limited budgets, which have been supported by EU funds since 2004.

Since then communes have been undertaking the implementation of projects which could be subsidised from available funds. Their willingness to use EU funds made communes develop the necessary Local Regeneration Programmes (LRP). Pursuant to applicable regulations, they have been considered since 2004 as economic programmes<sup>1</sup>. In their guidelines, the Institutions Managing Regional Operational Programmes (IMROP) imposed the principles of drawing up such documents and their contents. In the period from 2004 to 2013 the desire to observe these guidelines often caused that beneficiaries approached the task of developing LRPs in a conventional way. Many LRPs were commissioned to external entities. The resulting documents usually constituted an appendix required in order to obtain subsidies rather than a long-term regeneration policy for a city. Cases when these documents were developed on the basis of a reliable diagnosis of a city's condition and its local potential were very scarce. Every LRP included a list of projects. To a large extent they referred to different types of infrastructure. No social or economic projects were integrated with the proposed investment actions. Initially, stakeholders were not involved in the process of drawing up LRPs and their role was rather limited to consulting a ready document. As a consequence, cities often implemented projects which were adapted to the available source of financing rather than to the actual needs of local communities (Masieriek, 2016). No policy in this area, either at the national or a regional level, inclined local units to take individual actions aimed at using the possibility of obtaining financing for individual projects (Herbst and Jadach-Sepiolo, 2010).

In order for a visible expansion of urban regeneration in Poland to occur, it is necessary to start supporting communes at the governmental level by developing appropriate strategic and legal frames and instruments (including financial ones) which would enable them to effectively manage the programmes in practice. It could be said that the first stipulation was fulfilled by adopting the *National Urban Policy* in 2015 and including urban regeneration therein as a strategic goal. Another, after a dozen years of ineffective legislative attempts usually modelled on French and German experiences<sup>2</sup>, was fulfilled by passing in 2015 the *Urban Regeneration Law*. The third one, referring to instruments which would enable entities to earmark national funds for this purpose, to employ the potential of private investors and non-governmental organisations, still remains an open subject. Unfortunately, the regeneration of Polish cities still depends to a large extent on EU funds, which leads to a false assumption that it is a task to be financed from public funds exclusively. As Romańczyk indicated “It is estimated that in the years 2007–2013 8.5 billion zlotys was earmarked for this purpose across the country (1.89 billion EUR), whereas in the perspective of 2014–2020 as much as 26 billion zlotys will be spent (5.78 billion EUR),” (Romańczyk, 2018, p. 9).

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Art. 18 Section 2(6) of the Law of 8 March 1990 on commune local government (Journal of Laws Dz.U.2020.0.713).

<sup>2</sup> More on the subject: Masieriek, 2013, pp. 41–59.

It was only in 2015 that regeneration in Poland became more systematised. The approach to it visibly changed and more emphasis was placed on its social dimension. The *Urban Regeneration Law* regulates, among others, the procedure of approving and the required minimal contents of the *Commune Regeneration Programme* (CRP). Additionally, communes willing to use EU funds for regeneration programmes had to observe new *Guidelines regarding regeneration in operational programmes for the years 2014–2020* issued by the Ministry of Development. Polish communes had to radically change the way they approached preparation and implementation of regeneration process, including reliable diagnostic work with the purpose of marking the intervention area, developing regeneration programmes with the participation of local communities, and implementing a bigger number of the so-called “soft” projects addressing social issues. In order to support communes in their adaptation to new expectations and challenges, new subsidies were introduced in Poland in the years 2015–2019. The above-mentioned support referred mainly to assistance in the elaboration of LRPs and CRPs. Additionally, pilot and model projects were implemented within which practical solutions were developed. Their purpose has been to be a source of inspiration for communes developing their own ideas for regeneration.

The purpose of this article is to present the current requirements for Polish communes developing regeneration programmes against the background of different stages of the evolution of the regeneration issue in Western Europe and in Poland, as well as against the background of different definitions of regeneration which have appeared in Polish literature since the 1990s. I wrote this article because I wished to systematise the data regarding the current trends in regeneration programming in Poland and present it to broader audience. This article relies on subject literature, analysis of the provisions of the National Urban Policy (2015), the Urban Regeneration Law (2015), the Guidelines regarding urban regeneration in operational programmes in the years 2014–2020 (2016), the reports of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development (2018) regarding the support given to local governments in the area of programming and implementing regeneration, and my practical experience, as in the years 2015–2019 I cooperated with three entities submitting their applications within the Model Urban Regeneration project.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The regeneration of Polish cities has been a delayed process as compared to Western European (Lorens and Martyniuk-Pęczek, 2009), which has enabled Poles to learn from the experiences of their fellow European countries. Post-

WWII actions of such countries as Great Britain, France, and Germany involved to a large extent the demolishing of sub-standard buildings and replacing them with new ones (Short, 1982; Gibson and Langsta, 1982; Schmoll, 1999; Skalski, 2009). A. Jadach-Sepiolo has argued that “urban complexes which would be considered valuable from contemporary point of view were erased” (Jadach-Sepiolo, 2018, p. 28). Until the end of the 1960s, infrastructural projects were the main focus. It was only in the 1970s that the social and economic aspect of the development of degraded city districts’ started to be appreciated. The main purpose of such actions was not only to improve living standard but also to regenerate local communities in degraded quarters (Cameron, 2003; Gripiaios, 2002; Ginsburg, 1999; Carmon, 1976). The 1970s and 1980s were the decades of the return to city centres, the regeneration of brownfield sites, and the regeneration of the so-called “waterfronts” (Lorens and Martyniuk-Pęczek, 2009). In the 1980s the private sector was allowed to join regeneration policy. It contributed to the implementation of a project which would not have been completed without the support of private investors (Carmon, 1999; Hall, 2000). In the 1990s, through, e.g. the URBAN initiative, an integrated approach to regeneration became prevalent in Europe and attempts were made to combine solving social problems (e.g. long-lasting unemployment, a low level of schooling and professional qualifications of inhabitants) and eliminating functional, spatial, and technical deficiencies (Carpenter, 2006; Billert, 2007). Such programmes as the Policy of Social Development of Urban Quarters (*Développement Social des Quartiers*) in France<sup>3</sup>, the Social City (*Die Soziale Stadt*) in Germany<sup>4</sup> or the City Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) in England<sup>5</sup> were implemented (Billert 2006; Jacquier 2005). Unfortunately, no such governmental programmes dedicated to urban regeneration have been implemented in Poland so far, nor financial instruments have been developed to support these long-term processes and guarantee the implementation of projects after the expiry of the current EU programming period.

The definitions of urban regeneration which appeared in literature have usually highlighted one of its numerous aspects, e.g. C. Couch (1990) emphasised its physical dimension, G. J. Ashworth (1991) put emphasis on its economic func-

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<sup>3</sup> The priority here was renovation of the existing buildings in city centres and levelling of sub-standard residential facilities. A new procedure of creating the so-called Architectural, Urban and Landscape Heritage Protection Zones was developed and protection zones were designated for listed buildings.

<sup>4</sup> The main objectives of the programme were the following: improving living standards in quarters, creating stable social structures, and improving life opportunities for the inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> City tenders were organised within this budget. In order to acquire subsidies, local authorities had to prove that they had private partners and show that there were social groups engaged in the regeneration project.

tions, whereas P. Roberts *et al.* (2000) assumed a position shared by the author of this article that a single-aspect perspective on regeneration, regardless of the fact which aspect is highlighted – be it physical, economic, or social – is wrong. Only simultaneous, long-term, integrated actions within all these spheres may contribute to the actual lifting of an area from crisis.

In Polish literature, K. Skalski has rich theoretical and practical achievements in the area of urban regeneration. It was already in the 1990s that he presented urban regeneration as a complex process. He repeatedly highlighted that integrating technical, economic, and social projects within regeneration was the essence of the issue (Skalski, 2000, 2004). He defined regeneration as “a system of activities aimed at the renewal of old districts, the development of their residential, economic, social functions and significant spatial and cultural values” (Skalski, 2006, p. 11). Thus, he also drew attention to regeneration’s strong connection with cultural heritage and housing.

In the urban regeneration manual developed in 2003 jointly by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit and the now defunct Office for Housing and Urban Development, M. Bryx has insisted that regeneration requires that various areas which enable the functioning of a city be combined. Among them he included the following areas: economic, social, ecological, legal, financial, and planning. He has noted that regeneration not only improves living conditions in cities and the quality of public space, but also constitutes “a factor in increasing the competitiveness of cities on a supra-local or even transnational scale” (*Manual...*, 2003, p. 11).

Regeneration should include interventions in existing urbanised areas, a fact which significantly distinguishes it from the concepts which define activities aimed at planning and creating new buildings in undeveloped areas (*Manual...*, 2003). The perspective of the concentration of regeneration in urbanised areas was shared by A. Billert (2009), who additionally described the state of crisis which prevented or significantly hindered the proper economic and social development of a given area, but also emphasised its impact on the sustainable development of the entire city. When describing urban regeneration T. Markowski (1999, 2007) drew attention to the commercial dimension of these processes and, similarly to A. Billert (2009) and M. Bryx (2003), to the impact not only on the selected area, but on the entire urban organism. As a result, the investment and tourist attractiveness increases, which brings measurable benefits also to residents from outside the regenerated area. He has emphasised that the basis of the urban regeneration concept is the understanding of the essence of generating land value. He described the relationship between the value of land, its price, land rent, externalities, and taxes on property value (Markowski, 1999, 2007). In contrast, M. Tertelis (2005) considered urban regeneration in the context of EU policy. He has claimed that its essence is the use of tools and methods of stimulating investors’ activity. These

instruments are to operate on the basis of financial leverage, i.e. one zloty spent from public money should initiate an investment of a few zlotys from a private budget (Tertelis, 2005). Polish literature also emphasises that urban regeneration should be a socialised process in which all interested parties are involved. Therefore, it is important at the planning stage to identify entities and social groups whose interests may be related to regeneration, and then analyse their mutual relations and potential areas of conflict. The management of this process should be manifested, among others, by “skilfully combining many and sometimes opposing interests – to achieve an acceptable goal” (Ziobrowski, 2009, p. 10).

The basic purpose of urban regeneration is the improvement of the quality of life of city dwellers. Simultaneously, the following groups of goals have been differentiated (Lorens, 2010, p. 11):

- urban-architectural (renovations, modernisations, restoration of monuments, and the shaping cultural identity of the regeneration area);
- technical (the improvement of technical and road infrastructure);
- social (solving social problems, preventing negative social phenomena such as pathologies, social exclusion, and improvement of safety);
- economic (economic recovery, including the support of entrepreneurship, the development of tourism, and the implementation of private projects);
- environmental (the improvement of the condition of natural environment, the elimination of pollution and emissions, and noise reduction).

Urban regeneration may cover: (i) degraded downtown areas and multifunctional pre-WWII urban development areas, (ii) brownfield sites, and post-rail and post-military sites, and (iii) housing projects (Ziobrowski, 2010, p. 8).

Discussions concerning different issues related to urban regeneration have been unravelling for many years. In terms of European cities, two approaches to the issue of regeneration prevail. The first one focuses on inhabitants (people-based initiatives or PBI), while the other one focuses on the area (area-based initiatives or ABI) (Anderson, 2006; Jadach-Sepiolo, 2018). In literature, urban regeneration is usually presented as a remedy to the problems of degraded areas. It is also highlighted that regeneration should be planned with active participation of the local community (cf.: Hospers, 2017; Masierek, 2017; Przywojska, 2016; Stouten and Rosenboom, 2013). This article is in favour of the latter. However, there is also a critical approach which sees urban regeneration as a source of polarisation and dividing a city into areas with and without special support (Klemek, 2011; von Hoffman, 2008; Griffith, 1996). Moreover, urban regeneration is perceived as a gentrification factor, which is an object of interest for many researchers, e.g. Less (2019), Mehdipanah *et al.* (2018), Górczyńska (2015), Zukin (2010), Redefern (2003), Griffith (1996), van Weesep *et al.*, Musterd (1991), Smith *et al.* (1986). This issue has also been noticed and included in Polish premises for regeneration programming.

### 3. PREMISES AND SUPPORT OF REGENERATION PROGRAMMING IN POLAND

#### 3.1. Urban regeneration in National Urban Policy (2015)

In 2015, the National Urban Policy was passed in Poland. It is intended for all towns and cities regardless of their size or location. Its provisions respect the existing political system in Poland with the independence of local government being its indispensable element. The *National Urban Policy* indicates urban development directions favoured by the government. Its strategic goals are: strengthening the capacity of cities/towns and urban areas to create sustainable development, creating jobs, and improving the quality of life of residents. The *National Urban Policy* indicates the need to undertake actions which:

- counteract spontaneous suburbanisation,
- lead to sustainable investment in cities, with preference for previously developed areas and regeneration areas,
- launch social participation in planning and the development of cities,
- address demographic problems,
- lead to sustainable mobility,
- develop a multi-level cooperation in the management of urban areas and functional areas,
- strive for rational resource management (earth, water, environment, and energy), environmental improvement, and adaptation to climate change.

The National Urban Policy covers issues which are important from the point of view of the development of Polish cities, such as: spatial planning, public participation, urban transport and mobility, low emissions and energy efficiency, **urban regeneration**, investment policy, economic development, environmental protection and climate change, demography, and the management of urban areas (The National Urban Policy, 2015).

The second item in this list of “participation” is not accidental. In Poland, attempts are currently being made to involve residents in and integrate them around local activities practically in all areas of a city’s functioning. This is to help build a self-conscious and responsible civil society that co-administers the city. The issue of regeneration itself, as well as the participatory approach to it, constitutes a big part of the National Urban Policy as an extremely significant issue.

The main challenge faced by all entities involved in urban regeneration is to ensure that the process is comprehensive, coordinated, long-term, and that it covers social, economic, spatial, and technical changes. It must be adapted to the specificity of a city. It is crucial that it creates conditions for development based

on the specific endogenous conditions. Regeneration may apply to many types of urban areas and other areas losing their current socio-economic functions (The National Urban Policy, 2015).

### 3.2. The Urban Regeneration Law (2015)

In 2015, after many years of legislative attempts, the *Urban Regeneration Law* was adopted. It (i) creates the legal framework for regeneration, (ii) systematises the concepts related to regeneration, (iii) introduces the procedure for developing and adopting CRPs, (iv) motivates communes to undertake this process, (v) emphasises the aspect of regeneration planning and social participation, and (vi) introduces (optional) tools, such as: Special Regeneration Zone, Local Regeneration Plan.

The Urban Regeneration Law determines the principles and the procedure of preparing, conducting and evaluating regeneration. According to a definition included therein “regeneration is a process of recovering degraded areas from crisis, conducted in a comprehensive manner through integrated actions for the benefit of the local community, area, and economy, territorially focused, conducted by regeneration stakeholders on the basis of a community regeneration programme” (Art. 2(1) of The Urban Regeneration Law, 2015). It could be said that this definition summarises the theoretical and practical achievements to date and emphasises the special role of stakeholders in the process. It imposes the obligation of actual involvement of local communities not only in the phase of planning and developing a programme, but also in the phase of implementing, monitoring, and managing regeneration. It is not easy, however, to implement this stipulation in practice. The Polish society is in the process of building its awareness as citizens and its sense of agency. What raises some doubts is the fact that the cited definition does not mention that regeneration should apply to urbanised areas, i.e. in principle, according to the author, degraded urban areas. As a result, in practice, in Poland there appear regeneration programmes referring to rural areas. As a result funds are unnecessarily dispersed, there are difficulties in identifying endogenous features, and not fully justified diagnostic work is being conducted.

The statutory definition highlights that the regeneration process should refer to a **degraded area**, i.e. an area where there occur negative phenomena in the social sphere, additionally accompanied by deficiencies in at least one of the following areas: economic, functional and spatial, technical, or environmental (Table 1). Non-social spheres may be analysed in an area considered to be in crisis within the social sphere (Fig. 1), but not within the entire unit, which from the point of view of the author is a false assumption. It is difficult to decide whether one is dealing with, e.g. an economic crisis if one has no point of reference to the entire commune.

Table 1. Negative phenomena usually occurring in a degraded area

Sphere	Examples of deficiencies
Social	unemployment, poverty, crime, low level of education and social capital, low level of participation in public and cultural life
Economic	low level of business activity, poor condition of local businesses
Functional-spatial	insufficient technical and social infrastructure or poor condition thereof, no access to basic services or poor quality thereof, failure to adapt urban solutions to changing functions of an area, low level of communication services, lack of public areas or low quality thereof
Technical	poor technical condition of buildings, especially those with residential function or failure to adapt them to the current standards and needs
Environmental	infringement of the environmental quality standards, the presence of waste posing a threat to life, human health or the environment

Source: own work based on the Urban Regeneration Law, 2015.

A degraded area may be divided into sub-areas, including ones which do not share borders. A commune may designate an entire degraded area or a part of it as a regeneration area. Such a decision is taken on the basis of an analysis of the concentration of negative phenomena within the area, as well as the area's potential which is of great significance to local development (Fig. 1) (Jarczewski, 2017). A degraded area and a regeneration area must be approved in the form of a resolution. From the point of view of *the Urban Regeneration Law* it is important that the size of an urban regeneration area **may not exceed 20% of the city area and 30% of its population** (The Urban Regeneration Law, 2015).

A question arises as to the status of uninhabited areas, such as brownfield sites, for which it is impossible to indicate negative social phenomena that constitute the basis for the designation of degraded areas. These areas may be included in the regeneration area provided that the activities planned for them will closely correlate with it and contribute to the actual prevention of negative social phenomena presented in the diagnosis.

An entire chapter in the Urban Regeneration Law is devoted to social participation. The legislator referred to this issue in some detail, specifying, for example, the manner and methods of conducting public consultations. It also indicates that active the participation of stakeholders must occur at every stage of the regeneration process, i.e. during the preparation of the process, as well as during its implementation and evaluation. As specified in the Urban Regeneration Law: "Public consultations are conducted by the mayor, city mayor or commune mayor"<sup>6</sup> (Article 6, Clause 1, the Urban Regeneration Law, 2015). It

<sup>6</sup> The *Mayor* is the executive in a commune where the seat of the local authorities is located in a town situated in the territory of the commune. In the case of cities with a population of over 100,000, the

is necessary to ensure that the widest possible group of stakeholders participates in the consultations which take different forms, e.g. collection of comments, organised meetings, debates, workshops, study walks, and the application of surveys and interviews using representative groups and leaders. It is also important that the content presented during public consultations is understandable and preceded by an educational and information campaign. The Urban Regeneration Law also imposes an obligation to establish a Regeneration Committee which is to be a forum for cooperation and dialogue with stakeholders. If several regeneration sub-areas have been designated in a unit, a separate Regeneration Committee may be appointed for each of them. The rules for determining its composition are established before the adoption of a CRP or within a period not longer than 3 months after its adoption. These rules must be subject to the public consultation procedure.

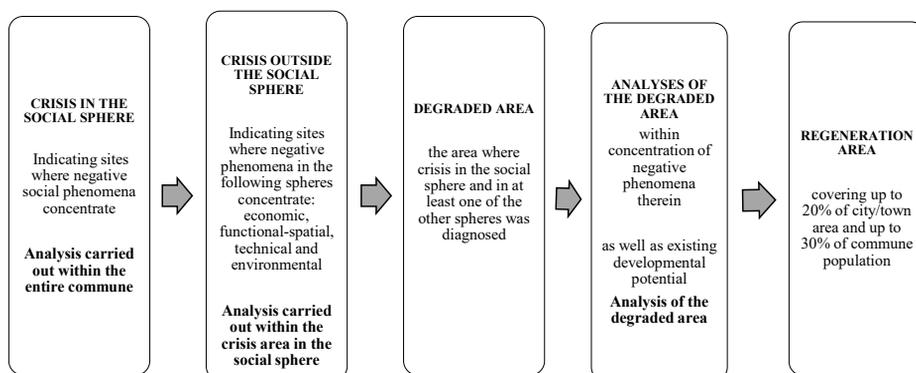


Fig. 1. Marking the regeneration area pursuant to the Urban Regeneration Law

Source: own work based on The Urban Regeneration Law (2015).

The Urban Regeneration Law determines the basic scope of CRPs, which should include, in particular:

- a detailed diagnosis of both the negative phenomena and the potentials of the regeneration area,
- connections to the commune's strategic documents,
- a vision of the area after the regeneration,
- goals and regeneration activities,
- directions of functional and spatial changes,
- a description of the regeneration projects,
- mechanisms that enable the integration of regeneration activities and undertakings,

executive is a *City Mayor*, whereas in other units – a *commune mayor*. The Law of 8<sup>th</sup> March 1990 on Commune Local Government (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 713).

- sources of financing,
- the administration system,
- the necessary regeneration instruments, and
- monitoring systems of the CRP progress and evaluation.

The Law has provided local governments with (non-obligatory) tools to help implement regeneration in Poland. However, it is too early to assess whether they are effective in practice. Such instruments include, among others, the Special Regeneration Zone, which can be established for a maximum of 10 years in a part or all of a regeneration area. Through it a commune can exercise the right of pre-emption, suspend the issuing of building permit decisions or subsidise renovation of private buildings. Previously, local governments could legally support private investments only in the case of listed historic buildings. Currently, local governments that have established a Special Regeneration Zone usually organise annual competitions for subsidies for the renovation of private buildings (including those remaining in joint ownership with the commune), which enables the financial participation of stakeholders. The second instrument worth mentioning is the Local Regeneration Plan. On its basis, urban transformations occur in the area covered by a CRP. It may contain urban concepts and special investment requirements for selected properties.

It needs to be noted that the Law came into force in 2015, i.e. already during the new EU programming period. Hence, its provisions have introduced a transitional period and its application by communes will be discretionary until the end of 2023. This means that in practice most units are currently implementing regeneration programmes on the basis of LRPs and not on the basis of CRPs consistent with the Law (Report..., 2018). This is mainly due to the fact that the procedure of adopting an LRP is much simpler and communes may rely on previous experiences. Both of these forms, however, must comply with the *Guidelines regarding urban regeneration in operational programmes for the years 2014–2020*, if communes want to receive EU funding for their projects.

### **3.3. Guidelines regarding urban regeneration in operational programmes for the years 2014–2020**

In 2015, the Ministry of Development drew up *the Guidelines regarding urban regeneration in operational programmes for the years 2014–2020*. They were, first of all, intended for IMROPs, which at their level, for particular voivodships, developed detailed requirements regarding the implementation of regeneration projects co-financed from EU funds. Therefore, all communes which want to use EU funds in the 2014–2020 programming period for projects connected with urban regeneration have to meet both national and regional guidelines.

The Guidelines have determined the tasks to be performed by the IMROPs, which include maintaining communes informed about the requirements and ex-

pectations which are set for LRPs/CRPs, the verification of the correctness of LRP's/CRP's preparation and regeneration projects' consistency with the LRPs/CRPs, as well as maintaining a list of regeneration programmes in a voivodship (Report..., 2018).

According to the Guidelines, a commune is required to possess an LRP/CRP determining the main directions for investments and operations in a designated area in crisis to conduct regeneration activities. An LRP can be adopted by passing one resolution, whereas the procedure of adopting a CRP is definitely more laborious and time-consuming. It begins with the stage of designating a degraded area and a regeneration area by passing a resolution. Usually, another resolution on commencing the preparation of a CRP is simultaneously adopted. Only after these two resolutions are passed, can the stage of developing a CRP commence. As soon as a commune adopts an LRP or a CRP, it is submitted for verification to the competent IMROP. If approved, it is entered in the list of regeneration programmes of a voivodeship and only then can it be the basis for applying for EU funding (Fig. 2). **This approach differs from that which was applied in 2004–2013 when the substantive content of a regeneration programme was not assessed at all. What mattered was the very fact of having it and of including the beneficiary's project in it.**

Most of the Guidelines' stipulations are consistent with the provisions and obligations arising from the Law. In addition, they emphasise such aspects as:

- including regeneration as an important element of a comprehensive vision of a commune's development;
- the necessity to perform a diagnosis covering an entire commune within the social, economic, spatial-functional, technical, and environmental spheres in order to indicate the places where various problems concentrate (as opposed to the Law which includes a requirement to set a diagnosis in the social sphere for the whole city, whereas deficiencies in other areas are analysed only as regards those places where social problems have been diagnosed (Fig. 2));
- establishing a hierarchy of needs in the field of regeneration activities;
- proper selection of tools and interventions addressing the needs and conditions of the problem area;
- integration of activities;
- proper monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of urban regeneration;
- implementation of the partnership principle (Art. 5(1) of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) No. 1303/2013);
- planning of regeneration in such a way as to create the so-called social mix in the regeneration area and so that the influx of new residents does not “push out” the less affluent part of the community (The Guidelines..., 2016). This is to counteract the processes of gentrification, which might be the consequence of the urban regeneration process.

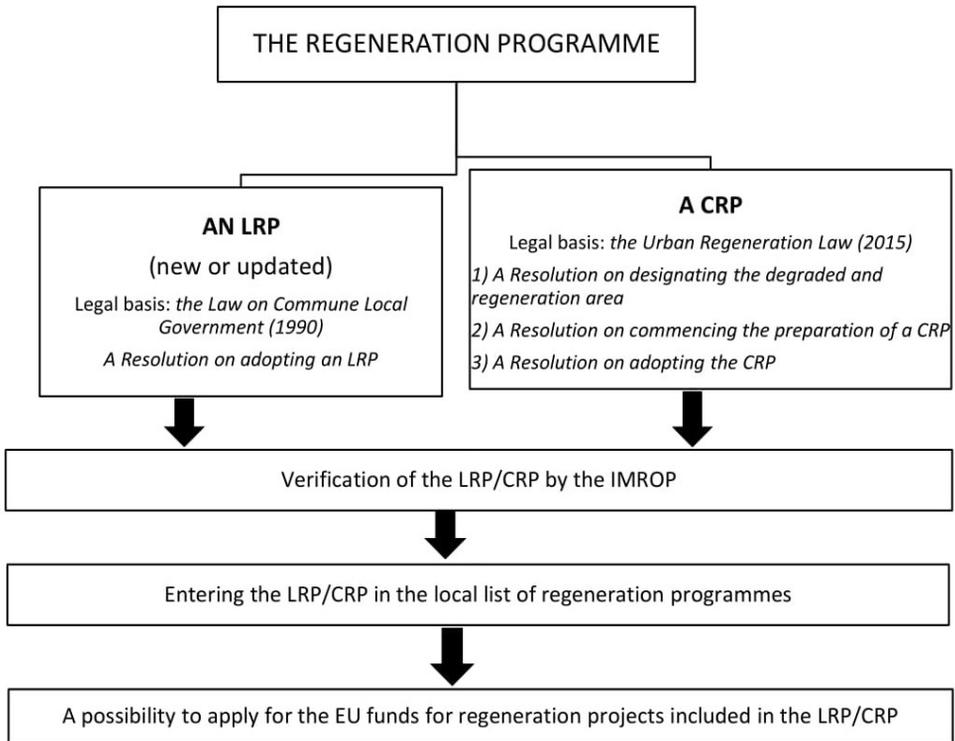


Fig. 2. A Regeneration Programme as the basis for applying for EU funds in 2014–2020  
Source: own work on the basis of the Guidelines (2016) and The Urban Regeneration Law (2015).

When assessing an LRP or CRP in terms of the implementation of the Guidelines, the following aspects are considered: its complexity, concentration and complementarity of the planned regeneration activities in the spatial dimension, problem-based dimension, procedural-institutional dimension, intertemporal dimension, and the financing sources. The assessment of these aspects is supposed to motivate potential beneficiaries to jointly plan solutions to problems existing in the regeneration area.

EU funds are the main source of co-financing of regeneration projects in Poland. They are allocated under 16 Regional Operational Programmes and, as a supplementary measure, from various National Operational Programmes. Investment priorities directly related to regeneration concern, among others, improving competitiveness, low-carbon economy, environmental protection, sustainable transport, supporting mobility, and combating social exclusion and poverty (Table 2).

Table 2. Investment priorities directly related to regeneration in operational programmes

Regional Operational Programmes	National Operational Programmes
<p><b>Reinforcing the competitiveness of SMBs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promoting business initiatives (e.g. business incubators).</li> </ul> <p><b>Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Supporting energetic effectiveness, intelligent energy management and use of renewable energy sources in public infrastructure;</li> <li>– Promoting low-carbon strategies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Preserving and protecting the natural environment and promoting effective resource management:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritages;</li> <li>– Improvement of the urban environment quality, urban regeneration, reclamation and decontamination of brownfield sites (including post-military areas).</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoting sustainable transport:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Development and rehabilitation of rail transport systems.</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoting sustainable and high-quality employment and supporting employee mobility:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Access to employment for persons seeking jobs and professionally inactive persons;</li> <li>– Supporting self-employment and enterprise development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Supporting social inclusion and combating poverty:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Supporting regeneration in urban and rural areas;</li> <li>– Active participation and increasing chances for employment;</li> <li>– Access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality public services;</li> <li>– Supporting the social economy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>‘Infrastructure and Environment’ Operational Programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Supporting energy efficiency, intelligent energy management and use of renewable energy sources in public infrastructure;</li> <li>– Promoting low-carbon strategies;</li> <li>– Protection and development of natural and cultural heritages;</li> <li>– Improvement of the urban environment quality, urban regeneration, reclamation and decontamination of brownfield sites (including post-military areas);</li> <li>– Investments in healthcare and social infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p><b>‘Knowledge, Education, Development’ Operational Programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Investments aimed at integrating young people in the labour market, in particular those at risk of social exclusion or originating from marginalised communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>‘Eastern Poland’ Operational Programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promotion of low-carbon strategies and adaptation measures with a mitigating effect on climate change.</li> </ul> <p><b>‘Digital Poland’ Operational Programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expanding the scope of broadband connections and introducing high-speed internet networks;</li> <li>– Supporting new technologies and networks for the digital economy;</li> <li>– Strengthening the application of information and communication technologies for e-governance, e-learning, e-social inclusion, e-culture, and e-health.</li> </ul>

Source: own work based on The Guidelines..., (2016).

In Poland, there is still no national financial support for the implementation of the LRPs/CRPs developed by local governments. Unfortunately, this results in them being focussed mainly on activities that can be financed from EU funds.

Examples from different countries show that all administrative levels should be involved financially and organisationally in regeneration processes. The roles of regional and national authorities cannot be limited to the distribution of EU funds. The private sector's active participation in the regeneration process is also important from the financial perspective. Hence the necessity to create proper conditions and develop instruments that will implement this stipulation.

### 3.4. Supporting communes in regeneration programming

In 2015–2019, the Ministry of Investment and Development conducted activities aimed at helping local governments prepare the correct bases for this process. The support was provided in three forms (Report ..., 2018; Jadach- Sepioło *et al.*, 2018):

1) grant competitions for communes conducted by the IMROPs for the development of regeneration programmes. Cooperation in this area was initiated by 15 out of 16 voivodships. The IMROPs conducted a total number of 30 calls for communes to prepare LRPs or the CRPs. 1,114 subsidy agreements were signed, which constituted 45% of all communes in Poland;

2) pilot projects intended for selected cities recognised as those with the greatest regeneration needs, i.e. Łódź<sup>7</sup> (Łódzkie Voivodeship), Bytom (Śląskie Voivodeship) and Wałbrzych<sup>8</sup> (Dolnośląskie Voivodeship). These projects constituted an individualised form of support in programming integrated, comprehensive and effective regeneration activities that would address the specific needs of crisis areas and, at the same time, fit the vision of a given city's development;

3) the project *Model Urban Regeneration*, in which 20 communes representing 13 out of 16 voivodships were selected in a two-stage competition. The beneficiaries were both urban-rural and urban communes, small towns, and medium and large cities. The average value of the project could be PLN 100,000.00, and the maximum figure reached PLN 5 million. At the first stage of project implementation, the beneficiaries developed regeneration programmes; at the second stage,

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<sup>7</sup> Łódź is a city that underwent unfavourable changes after 1989, with the fall of the textile industry. These changes caused, among others, the liquidation of many jobs and a significant outflow of people. In 2000, Łódź had a population of 793,000; in 2010 – 737,000; at the end of 2019 – 680,000 (source: Szukalski P., *Demographic situation in Łódź, Demographic collapse of the city and its consequences for the future of Łódź*, the study was prepared under the grant of the Mayor of the City of Łódź, Łódź 2012 and Statistical Information 1/20, Socio-economic situation of Łódź, Statistical Office in Łódź, Łódź 2020).

<sup>8</sup> As a result of the liquidation processes in the mining and metallurgical industries, Bytom and Wałbrzych faced a large-scale degradation of facilities (including post-industrial ones), depreciation of the housing substance, and significant environmental pollution (Partnership Agreement, Programming the 2014–2020 financial perspective, The Minister of Development, Warsaw, December 2015, p. 48).

they developed model solutions and procedures related to a problem/challenge identified in their area. Each commune decided on the so-called leading topic of their project and developed model solutions in this area. These topics included: financing regeneration activities, social policy and the labour market, social participation, housing, shaping urban space, environmental protection, economic recovery and increasing investment attractiveness, urban mobility in degraded areas, and the protection and use of the potential of cultural and natural heritage (The Regulations of the Model Urban Regeneration Competition, 2015).

Table 3. Support for urban regeneration process development in communes in 2015–2019

Type of support	Granted subsidies (in million PLN)
Subsidies for developing a regeneration programme	66.7
Pilot projects	14.5
Model Urban Regeneration	47.3
TOTAL	128.5

Source: own work based on *the Report...* (2018).

In total, approximately PLN 128.5 million was allocated for the above activities (Table 3). The projects were co-financed in 85% from the Cohesion Fund under the 2014–2020 Operational Program Technical Assistance and in 15% from the central budget. The experience gained by the beneficiaries of various sizes and conditions is to help other communes in preparing their own regeneration studies and developing the necessary tools and implementation instruments. Hence, all the educational activities and the dissemination of their results were an important element of the support provided by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development. The materials developed as part of the projects were made available on the website of the National Knowledge Centre (*The Report...*, 2018).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The subject of urban regeneration in Poland has been discussed in theory and practice since the 1990s. Polish literature on the subject presents its correct definitions, which emphasize that it is a long-term and comprehensive process which integrates activities in the spatial, economic, environmental, and social spheres, related to degraded urban areas where residents and stakeholders should be actively involved. In practice, however, a deliberate intervention in the space which

is called ‘urban regeneration’ in Poland, similarly to the countries of Western Europe, began with typically infrastructural measures, which are obviously necessary, but do not in themselves constitute a remedy for the actual problems of the degraded areas.

Poland’s accession to the European Union and access to funds for regeneration projects motivated communes to create LRPs as obligatory documents on their way to obtain funding. According to Jadach-Sepiolo, in 2004–2013, due to the willingness to use EU funds, “the investment approach was dominant, and the multi-faceted nature and integrated nature of urban regeneration were marginalised” (Jadach-Sepiolo, 2018). At that time, rather schematic LRPs subordinated to the guidelines of the IMROP were developed and stakeholders were activated to a small extent. Projects tailored to the available source of financing and not the actual needs of the local community were often implemented (Masierek, 2016).

Only since 2015, i.e. since the adoption of the *National Urban Policy* (in which regeneration has found its place) and the long-awaited Law that a definite change in the perception of this issue has occurred in Poland. Additionally, the Guidelines appeared and they set the directions of regeneration activities expected from the beneficiaries of the EU funds. The new approach definitely promotes the social and participatory aspect of regeneration, which applies both to solving social problems in the regeneration area and the active participation of stakeholders in the entire process of change (from joint planning through the implementation and subsequent monitoring of changes). It also emphasizes the need to integrate activities undertaken in various spheres and by various entities, aimed at leading the designated regeneration area out of crisis. Moreover, the new approach forces communes, among others, to:

- pay more attention to diagnostic work delineating the area of intervention (in previous local regeneration programmes, diagnoses were often conducted summarily);

- territorial concentration – the regeneration area may cover a maximum of 20% of a commune’s area and 30% of its population (previously, some units covered large areas with their regeneration programmes, sometimes even entire cities);

- the concentration of activities in inhabited areas (several previously undertaken regeneration activities concerned brownfield sites, and post-military and post-rail areas);

- activate stakeholders and conducted participation activities in different forms at every stage of the regeneration process (previously, participation often meant conducting consultations of ready LRPs and forms of consultation were very limited);

- make planned and undertaken regeneration activities complementary in the following dimensions: spatial, problematic, procedural and institutional, intertemporal, and financing sources.

Before they become the basis for obtaining EU funds in 2014–2020, the urban regeneration programmes developed by communes (in the form of LRPs or CRPs) have to undergo a substantive assessment by IMROPs and be entered in the voivodship list of urban regeneration programmes. This enables verification and control of the programming bases adopted by the communes. At the same time, it means that they have to prepare qualitatively better programmes and select the area of intervention much more objectively than before, and plan the entire process.

In 2015–2019 grant support was launched to help communes adapt to the currently preferred approach to urban regeneration in Poland. It mainly concerned assistance in the development of LRPs and CRPs and in the search for individualised solutions and practical instruments, tailored to a given unit and its needs. The experiences gained by various beneficiaries during the implementation of these projects are to be an inspiration for other communes that develop “their own regeneration paths.”

Unfortunately, regeneration in Poland still largely depends on EU funding (Romańczyk, 2018). Local governments have only a small amount of their own resources to conduct these capital-intensive processes. The role of local governments should be limited to the coordination, stimulation, monitoring of regeneration processes, developing their foundations, and creating permanent platforms for integration, activation and cooperation of stakeholders. In Poland, there is clearly a need for greater involvement of the private sector in the regeneration activities. Incentives should be developed to encourage investments in the degraded areas.

The sense of urban regeneration is the simultaneous performance and integration of activities in the following, practically interpenetrating, spheres: social, economic, spatial and functional, technical, and environmental (Roberts, 2000), as well as its planning and implementation by stakeholders. Each city has its own specificity and unique identity; it is characterised by different endogenous conditions, strengths and problems to be solved. Each has a different potential to be used. Therefore, there is no single recipe for urban regeneration. Each commune should prepare and fulfil it in its own way. However, on the way to change, it is important to have solid strategic, financial, and legal foundations, as well as the possibility to learn from the experience of others and to use successful solutions as a model. Therefore, the course of action taken by Poland after 2015 seems to be proper. Currently, there is a need for a consistent implementation of the LRPs/CRPs adopted by communes; making a critical reflection on the projects implemented in the 2013–2020 period and the instruments launched at that time; the modification of legal bases verified in practice and the preparation of national government programs dedicated to urban regeneration.

The analysis of the current Polish approach to the issue of urban regeneration made in this article and the conclusions drawn from it show that Poland follows the integrated approach common in Europe. The analysis fits the discussions of

both academics and practitioners on the designation of degraded areas in cities and the principles of developing urban regeneration programmes. They emphasise the need to include stakeholders in the regeneration processes and to use legal, organisational, and financial instruments to support this issue. The article also points to the need, which is criticised by some researchers, to direct aid to selected areas in cities, which, left to themselves, deteriorate and, in the author's opinion, do not have a chance to solve their problems on their own without explicit, coordinated support in the form of an urban regeneration programme.

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