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# External Determinants of the Development of Small And Medium-Sized Enterprises – Empirical Analysis

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## **Abstract**

*The paper aims to identify external determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and assess their impact on the functioning of these entities in Poland. Meeting this objective required: identifying determinants of the development of SMEs, determining the current development situation of the surveyed enterprises and examining the impact of external determinants on the development of SMEs. The implementation of the above-presented goals was based on the following assumptions: (i) the current situation of the surveyed enterprises is determined with the use of quantitative indicators (turnover volume, number of employees, market share, profit levels) (ii) the analysis of external determinants encompasses three components of the environment: the macro-environment, the meso-environment and the micro-environment, (iii) in each analysed area there are separate analyses conducted for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, enabling greater precision in the identification of external determinants of development for each category of businesses.*

**Keywords:** *SME's development, determinants of SME's development, macro-environment, meso-environment, micro-environment.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The terms “growth” and “development” of the enterprise are used interchangeably in the national as well as international literature. These terms are not synonyms though but rather complementary concepts. The enterprise's growth refers to quantitative changes (e.g.: an increase in turnover, employment, market share), while its development refers to qualitative changes (e.g.: the introduction of innovation, the ability to adapt to customer needs, etc.). Growth is therefore regarded as essential to the enterprise's development (Lisowska, 2013, p. 67). The development means coordinated changes of the enterprise's systems, adapting the company to

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a constantly changing environment so that it could survive in the market. This means: (i) introducing new elements into the enterprise's system, (ii) improving the quality of existing system elements, (iii) changing the structure of the systems (Pierściołek, 1998, pp. 11-15). According to B. Kaczmarek and Cz. Sikorski (1995, p. 225), the development is a holistic, long-term process of a strategic nature for the enterprise, based on changes. The changes are primarily aimed at individual elements of the organisational system and the method of implementation of particular management functions.

The literature indicates the existence of two theoretical approaches: growth theories and organisational development theories, which play an important role in the conceptualisation of the concept of the enterprise's development. Growth theories identify and analyse the impact of various factors on the increase in the size of the enterprise, also taking into account qualitative factors, whereas organisational development theories place the main emphasis on qualitative criteria, using knowledge of organisational behaviour (e.g.: personal relationships, structural solutions in the area of organisation and work processes, relationships between the organisation and the environment) for the improvement of the enterprise (Matejun, 2015, pp. 27-27).

T. Egan, based on 27 analyses of the definition of the organisational development, points out that the concept of enterprise's development is associated with (Egan, 2002, after: Matejun 2015, p. 28): (i) organisational renewal, (ii) change in the organisational culture, (iii) facilitating the acquisition of information and learning in the organisation, (iv) strengthening the system and improving processes, (v) planning and implementing of organisational changes, (vi) support in solving problems.

Therefore, the nature of the enterprise's development is related to changes in the status quo over time (Machaczka, 1998; Masurel & Mantfort, 2006; Steffens, Davidson & Fitzsimmons, 2009). The character of the development can be deliberate or accidental, progressive or reactionary, spontaneous or forced, continuous or stepwise (Machaczka, 1998; Bławat, 2004). It can involve the whole enterprise as well as its areas – economic, organisational, information, technical, production (Stabryła, 2000, p. 9), marketing, behavioural and financial ones (Sysko-Romańczuk 2005, p. 55), and it can relate to the changes occurring under the influence of the environment.

S. Sysko-Romańczuk (2005, pp. 52) defines the concept of the enterprise's development referring to three approaches: cause-related, effect-related and function-related. Based on the cause-related approach, the incentive for development is the development gap (the difference between the desired state, i.e. existing capabilities, and the real state – the actual achievements),

which is identified through the strategic determination of achievable capabilities not utilised by the enterprise so far (Matejun 2015, p. 29). The effect-related approach treats the development as a result of development processes often described as having a competitive advantage (the market position which at a certain time enables the enterprise to generate significant surplus of value over the cost of obtaining this advantage) and the enterprise's innovativeness (related, among others, to the introduction of product, process, marketing and organisational innovations). In the function-related approach, the enterprise's development means improving the areas of its operation (e.g.: changes in the enterprise's systems by introducing new elements, improving quality of existing ones, changing the structure of these systems, etc.) and the position it occupies in the environment (e.g.: changes in the enterprise's position compared to its competitors) (Sysko-Romańczuk, 2005, pp. 52-53).

The theoretical framework for the analysis of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises is provided by numerous staged growth/development models described in the literature (e.g.: Greiner 1972, Adiezs,1989; Churchill and Lewis, 1983; Quinn and Cameron, 1983, Machaczka, 1998; Dodge and Robbins, 1992; Scott and Bruce, 1987; Storey, 1994; Gib and Davies, 1990). However, most of them relate to large enterprises, which does not always mean the possibility of their use in small and medium-sized enterprises. To identify determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, the model provided by L.E. Greiner (1972), in which the enterprise's development consists of occurring alternately processes of evolution and revolution, considered in terms of the company's age, size and rate of growth of the industry in which it operates, has proved to be important (Urbanowska-Sojkin, 2003; Machaczka & Machaczka, 2011). The life cycle of an organisation in this model consists of five stages, each of which ends with the so-called revolution which is a response to an emerging crisis. The enterprise grows until a crisis emerges and is overcome, which allows its further development (Greiner,1972). The first stage is growth through creativity – the creation and growth of the organisation are made possible through innovation and creativity of entrepreneurs. This stage ends with the emergence of the leadership crisis, which is related to the loss of management control over the growing volume of business and the size of the organisation (Greiner, 1972; Machaczka & Machaczka, 2011; Zelek, 2003). The second stage is growth through formalisation which encompasses duties and powers at different levels of the organisational hierarchy. The enterprise's growth is achieved mainly by improving its organisational structure and expanding its management system. This stage ends with the crisis of autonomy. The next stage is growth through the delegation of authority,

which is characterised by a transfer of competences and responsibilities to managers at lower levels (Greiner, 1972; Machaczka, 1998; Wiczerzyńska, 2009). This stage ends with the crisis of decentralisation, which necessitates the restriction of the autonomy at lower management levels. The fourth stage – growth through coordination – leads to synchronising the actions of the organisational units in one direction (e.g.: product or project-oriented groups are created). The enterprise's growth results from improving its policies as well as the introduction of modifications to its organisational structure. Expansion of the system can lead to the crisis of bureaucracy consisting in reducing the effectiveness of functioning of large organisations due to their tendency towards bureaucracy. The last stage is growth through cooperation, in which employees should be co-responsible for the organisation (Greiner, 1972; Wiczerzyńska, 2009; Machaczka & Machaczka, 2011). This has an impact on the development of commitment and effectiveness in achieving the enterprise's objectives. The continuation of the concept presented by L.E Greiner is the model provided by N. Churchill and V. Lewis (1983) as well as the model formulated by M. Scott and B. Bruce (1987). These models differ only in the scope of the areas analysed. In the model presented by N. Churchill and V. Lewis (1983), the enterprise's development is determined by factors related to the company's resources (financial, personnel, system, business ones) and the characteristics of the owner (the owner's motivation, ability to act, management skills and strategic capabilities) (Machaczka, 1998). In the model provided by M. Scott and B. Bruce, the following elements are analysed at each stage of development: the degree of the industry's development, key issues for the enterprise, the role of the entrepreneur, the management style, the organisational structure, the enterprise's systems and control mechanisms, sources of funding as well as the range of products and channels of distribution (Masurel & Montfort, 2006; Roomi, 2009). The presented staged models have many supporters and opponents. They explain the differences between enterprises at different stages of development but are criticised for their small degree of suitability for the analysis of external determinants of business development (Wasilczuk, 2005).

In numerous papers (e.g.: Gibb & Davies 1990; North & Smallbone 1993; Storey 1994; Davidson & Wiklund, 2000; Fisher & Reuber, 2003), a great deal of space is devoted to growth theories, classified by J. Wasilczuk (2005, p. 25) into the following approaches: resources-based, personnel-based, strategic, referring to the environment, integrated and based on the life cycle of the enterprise. In the resources-based approach, most theories explaining the enterprise's growth refer to company resources, mainly financial capital and human capital. The personnel-based approach analyses the factors related to the person of the owner or manager, such as age, education, gender,

experience, motivation, personality and temperament. Another approach – the strategic one – refers to the process of formulating a strategy and the management style as the enterprise's growth factors. The approach referring to the environment places the main emphasis on the elements of the environment that shape the growth and development of the enterprise. The integrated approach provides a broader view of the enterprise's growth as growth theories are based on more than one of the aforementioned approaches. The last approach focuses on the analysis of the life cycle of the enterprise in which growth theories relate to the growth factors at individual stages of its development (Wasilczuk 2005, pp. 25–26).

The evolutionary theory also provides an important framework for the analysis of business development (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Dosi, 1991). According to this theory, the development of an enterprise is affected by a set of its routines (technical, marketing, investment, diversification routines, as well as routines related to changes in knowledge and innovation) and by its environment. These routines are subject to change (mutation, recombination, transition and transposition) under the influence of the environment, which means that enterprises either grow or go bankrupt. The aim of the enterprise is to enter the market and achieve a high return on capital, as well as survive as long as possible in the market with decreasing profitability of capital which does not allow the survival of its competitors (Noga, 2009, pp.178-180).

Another approach to the enterprise's growth was introduced by D. Storey, who criticised staged models and on that basis built a static model which takes into account a combination of three factors: the characteristics of the entrepreneur (e.g.: the entrepreneur's motivation, education, experience, age, gender, family traditions), the characteristics of the enterprise (e.g.: the enterprise's age, sector, legal status, location, size and ownership) as well as the type of development strategy (e.g.: the enterprise's technical level, market position, new products, competitiveness) (Piasecki, 2001, p. 51).

J. Wasilczuk (2005, pp. 130–132) has proposed a dynamic growth/development model of small and medium-sized enterprises in which she identifies the following groups of factors influencing the enterprise's growth/development:

- initial processes (the selection of industry, legal status, company size and location);
- the enterprise's resources dependent on the competence of the owner and initial processes;
- the competence of the owner-manager as a key element of the whole system since the perception of possibilities for the company's development, along with opportunities and risks presented by

the environment, as well as the results achieved depend on this competence;

- growth opportunities (actual and perceived by the owner);
- objective, strategy, management;
- the real environment and the subjective one perceived by the owner.

Summing up the current discussion present in the literature, there is no comprehensive theoretical interpretation of the causes of the development of enterprises, including small and medium-sized ones. Although it is possible to identify the key development factors of different types of companies, it is difficult to formulate a coherent model of business development for predicting the enterprise's development capacity (Smallbone, Leigh & North, 1995). The growth/development models presented earlier, despite their diversity, have some common elements and define the determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises which will be discussed in detail later in this paper.

The paper aims to identify external determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and assess their impact on the functioning of these entities in Poland.

### **Determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises – a classification attempt**

Numerous papers cite different classifications of determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises affecting the nature, dynamics and structure of development processes occurring in these entities (e.g.: Storey, 1994; Guzmán & Santos, 2001; Nogalski, Karpacz & Wójcik-Karpacz, 2004; Steffens, Davidson & Fitzsimmons, 2009; Skowronek-Mielczarek, 2011; Lisowska, 2013). In this paper, a division of the determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises into two categories, internal and external ones, has been adopted.

Internal determinants are most often classified in relation to the person of the entrepreneur and to the enterprise (e.g.: Wasilczuk, 2005; Romero & Fernandez-Serrano, 2011; Lisowska, 2012). The analysis of internal determinants associated with the person of the entrepreneur often refers to the approaches proposed by F. Baławat (2003, p. 49): biographical, personality-related, behavioural and relational ones. The biographical approach distinguishes the following development factors: age, sex, knowledge, professional education and business experience. The personality-related approach considers personality traits such as willingness to take risks, motivation, propensity for innovation, a need for achievement, diligence, etc. The behavioural approach sees as the driving force behind development processes the entrepreneur's attributes considered in terms of entrepreneurial

behaviour patterns (e.g.: the entrepreneur's work style, attitude towards opportunities and changes, propensity for innovation, managerial skills, attitude towards risk). The relational approach is mostly concentrated on the attitude towards risk, creativity, leadership, opportunities, etc. (Bławat 2003, pp. 57-60).

The other group of internal determinants of SME's development relates directly to the enterprise. The main factors include: the enterprise's age (the duration of its functioning in the market), the size usually measured by the number of employees, the scope of operation, the sector and the changes occurring in it, independence (compare: Storey, 1994; Piasecki, 2001; Steffens, Davidson & Fitzsimmons, 2009), as well as the enterprise's internal resources (human, tangible, financial and intangible).

External determinants are identified mostly with the environment of small and medium-sized enterprises, defined as the external environment which is a set of factors that influence the functioning and development of these enterprises. From the subject-based approach, the environment is a set of institutions and organised interest groups, but from the object-based approach, it is a set of processes and phenomena which the enterprise is subjected to and which it may also affect (Wach, 2008; Kamińska, 2011).

In the context of the analysis of the environment, external determinants are divided into: macro-environment, meso-environment and micro-environment (Bednarczyk, 1996; Skowronek-Mielczarek, 2011). The macro-environment, i.e. the so-called far environment, is a set of general conditions of operation in the case of a particular enterprise functioning in the given country or area. This type of environment includes the following five dimensions (Griffin, 2010): economic, political, legal, technological, social, cultural and international.

The meso-environment is the regional environment which encompasses factors that influence the enterprise in the regional dimension, taking into account the specific features of particular areas. The structure of meso-environment can be also considered on the basis of the subject-based approach (Bednarczyk, 1996) and/or the object-based approach (Wach, 2008). According to the subject-based approach, the meso-environment includes (Bednarczyk, 1996, p. 46):

- public administration bodies (e.g.: local government, Inland Revenue offices);
- service infrastructure entities associated with business activity (e.g.: regional development agencies, chambers of commerce and industry, entrepreneurship incubators, training and consulting companies).

According to the object-based approach, the meso-environment consists of (Wach, 2008, p. 34–35):

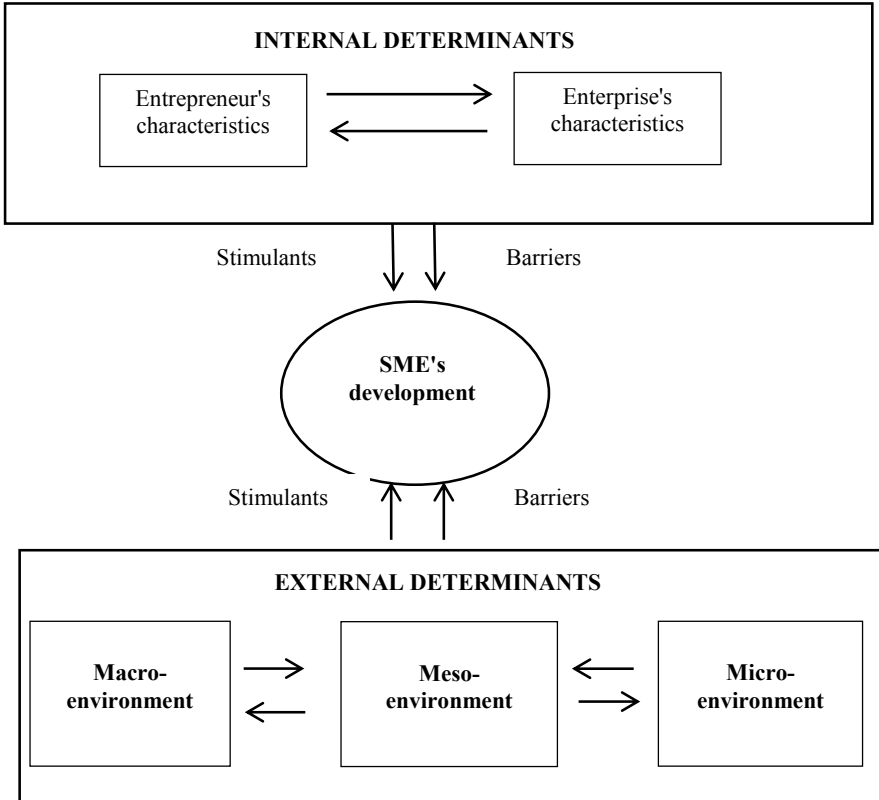
- financing institutions (e.g.: banks, financial partnerships, guarantee funds, leasing companies, regional financial institutions),
- local government institutions (e.g.: local authorities, local administration units),
- business self-government institutions (e.g.: chambers of commerce, chambers of crafts, employers' associations),
- research and academic institutions (e.g.: universities, research institutes, science and technology parks, information centres),
- institutions of the state apparatus (e.g.: Inland Revenue offices),
- institutions active in the area of entrepreneurship development (e.g.: regional development agencies, entrepreneurship incubators, industrial clusters, consulting firms, training companies),
- entities within the given sector (e.g.: competitors, suppliers, customers),
- specific groups of influence (e.g.: local communities, local lobbying groups).

The micro-environment, i.e. the so called competitive environment, includes customers, suppliers, business partners, competitors and trade unions (Wach 2008, Griffin 2010). These entities maintain cooperative or competitive relations with the enterprise (Kamińska 2011, p. 42) and a feedback relationship constitutes an important feature of such relations. The analysis of this type of environment enables the determination of conditions for the functioning and development of small and medium-sized enterprises. The above-mentioned deliberations indicate that determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises can be considered in the set of stimulants and barriers to development. In the analysis, it is worth focusing on the subjectivity of the evaluation of individual factors, as well as their changeability over time. Certain factors can become barriers to development for some small and medium-sized enterprises while for others they are development stimulants. For example, complex procedures of obtaining funds from the EU constitute a barrier for companies seeking capital for growth, while consulting firms dealing with assistance in the preparation of applications should see a market opportunity in this factor.

Numerous studies presented in the literature (e.g.: Daszkiewicz, 2004; Starczewska-Krzysztozek, 2008, Matejun, 2012) indicate mostly the existence of barriers, and the analysis of development stimulants is usually limited to the analysis of strengths (e.g.: Piasecki, 2001; Nehring, 2011) or policies to support SMEs in various areas of activity (e.g.: Filipiak & Ruszała, 2009; Gancarczyk, 2010; Wach, 2008; Kamińska, 2011; Lisowska, 2013). A research model built on the previously analysed groups of determinants has been proposed for further research and analyses (compare: Figure 1). The author is aware that the proposed list of variables representing the determinants of



the development of small and medium-sized enterprises is not exhaustive, the cited literature and the findings of other authors, however, suggest that such a selection of factors is generally accepted and will help clarify the research problem.



**Figure 1.** Determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in marginalised areas – research model

### Research methods and characteristics of the enterprises surveyed

The study was carried out in 2012 on a sample of 590 small and medium-sized enterprises from the private sector, set up before 31st December 2007. The national official register of business entities (REGON) of the Central Statistical Office constituted the sampling frame. The so-called legal unit (corresponding approximately to an enterprise with all its subsidiaries) was adopted as the sampling unit (the statistical unit in the study). Then a sample of 6,000

entities was randomly selected. Stratified sampling was used according to the following criteria: the number of persons employed (3 groups: micro-enterprises: 0–9 employees; small enterprises: 10–49 employees; medium-sized enterprises: 50–249 employees) and the voivodeship (region) based on its office location. The sample size was determined with a large excess due to the applied research technique. The study was conducted with the use of a questionnaire sent by mail and e-mail. It was then supplemented by the direct interview survey, due to the low return on questionnaires sent.

The realised sample size i.e. the number of received, completed questionnaires, was 590 (9.8% return rate). The conducted quantitative research, on the one hand, made it possible to reach more business entities and ensure the degree of anonymity of the respondents (it was often a prerequisite for conducting the survey). On the other hand, there was a high degree of difficulty associated with completing the survey, e.g.: partially filled questionnaires and problems with the interpretation of some questions.

In order to assess the representativeness of the realised sample, a comparison of its structure with the structure of the population was carried out based on the following characteristics: the company size (micro, small and medium-sized enterprises) and the location (the voivodeship according to its office address). The comparison results allowed to regard the analysed sample as representative of the general population.

Micro-enterprises were the dominant group in the study (55.8%), while small enterprises amounted to (26.8%) and medium-sized enterprises to (17.4%). The majority of the surveyed enterprises were involved in trade and services (approx. 70%), and only less than 30% in manufacturing. The regional, local and national market was their main area of activity, only one in ten companies expanded its business to the international market. Mostly manufacturing enterprises operated in international markets (Lisowska 2013).

The first part of the research was associated with the analysis of the development dynamics of the studied enterprises. For this purpose, the analysed enterprises were divided into three categories: enterprises in the growth phase, in the stagnation phase and in the regression phase, depending on changes in indicators expressed on an ordinal scale expressed in years: 2009 vs. 2008, 2010 vs. 2009 and 2011 vs. 2010. The first stage involved the selection of indicators and subsequently the k-means cluster analysis was applied for the classification of the analysed enterprises. The cluster method used enabled such clustering of the enterprises that members of a given cluster were characterised by maximum similarity, while similarity between members of the given group and other objects was minimal. In the classification procedure, quantification of selected features, in the form of

continuous variables expressed on an ordinal scale, was carried out first. The quantification was based on assigning specific numerical values to the analysed characteristics. As a result of preliminary analyses, the questionnaire enabled the expression of the state of the phenomenon on the 1-3 scale.

The following indicators were adopted as diagnostic features: turnover, employment, market share and profit levels. The level of change of the given indicator in the analysed periods was assessed by the respondents with the use of the following categories: growth, no change and decline. These marked degrees were assigned consecutive natural numbers: 3 – growth, 2 – no change, and 1 – a decline of the phenomenon. The use of this method allowed to distinguish three categories of enterprises: in the phase of growth, stagnation and regression (Lisowska, 2013, pp. 125-126).

The majority of the surveyed enterprises were in the growth group – 260 enterprises (44.1%), 181 enterprises (30.7%) in the stagnation group and 149 enterprises (25.2%) in the regression group. The analysis by company size showed that the majority of micro-enterprises were in the stagnation phase (40.4%), while most small and medium-sized enterprises were in the growth phase (respectively 47.5% and 54.6%) (compare: Table 1).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the surveyed enterprises: the size and phase of development

Company size	Growth phase	Stagnation phase	Regression phase
Micro	31.2%	43.6%	25.2%
Small	47.5%	32.3%	20.2%
Medium	54.6%	22.2%	23.2%

### **The analysis and evaluation of the impact of external determinants on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises**

The aim of the study conducted was to analyse and assess the impact of external determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Poland.

The analysis of external determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises was carried out in three areas: the macro-environment, the meso-environment and the micro-environment, according to the research model proposed in the first part of the paper (Figure 1). Using a list of proposed factors, the respondents assessed the degree in which each factor had a positive (stimulant) or negative (barrier) effect on the development of their business. The assessment was made based on a three-point scale where: 1 – negative impact, 2 – no impact, 3 – positive impact.

The first group of analysed external factors were macroeconomic factors, most of which were recognised by the surveyed entrepreneurs as barriers to business development. According to the majority of the respondents, the following factors hinder the development: high costs of raising external capital, the legal system and fiscal policy, strong domestic and foreign competition, the macroeconomic situation of the country, bureaucracy and the grey market. The respondents pointed to the following stimulants: public aid (EU grants), the policy of support for small and medium-sized enterprises and technological progress. In the opinion of the surveyed entrepreneurs, the level of innovativeness of the economy as well as the patent policy and protection of intellectual property had no significant impact on the development of the analysed enterprises. The analysed factors were often barriers for some enterprises and stimulants for others or had no impact on the development of the enterprise, which reflects the individual character of needs of the given enterprises (Lisowska, 2013, p. 142).

The analysis of macroeconomic determinants broken down by company size has not confirmed the diversity of most of the variables examined as evidenced by the Kruskal-Wallis test (more on the subject of the test, among others, in: Aczel 2000; Szwed, 2009) conducted ( $p > 0.05$ ) (compare: Table 2), which indicates a similar set of barriers and stimulants derived from the general environment for each category of the entities analysed.

**Table 2.** The Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H) and the level of probability value (p) of variables that determine macro-economic determinants of the surveyed enterprises in the context of the company

Macro-environment determinants	The Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H)	Probability value (p)
The macroeconomic situation of the country	1.32	0.72
The legal system and fiscal policy	2.18	0.54
Globalisation	1.20	0.75
The economic situation in the world	4.31	0.23
Technological progress	1.34	0.71
Public aid (EU grants)	2.79	0.42
The policy of support for small and medium-sized enterprises	7.11	0.07
High costs of raising external capital	1.94	0.67
Grey market	1.01	0.78
Strong domestic and foreign competition	6.57	0.11
The level of innovativeness of the economy	1.47	0.70
The patent policy and protection of intellectual property	4.89	0.21
Bureaucracy	5.65	0.19

The micro-entrepreneurs most often pointed to the following barriers to their enterprises' development: the legal system and the fiscal policy, high cost of capital acquisition and the grey market. They indicated the assistance in the form of EU subsidies as a development stimulant. The representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises, as in the case of micro-enterprises, indicated such barriers as high cost of capital acquisition, the legal system and fiscal policy as well as strong competition, while the indicated stimulants focused mainly on the SME support policy. Such a distribution reaffirms the need for better access of these entities on preferential terms to financing and for the improvement in the consistency and transparency of the legal system and the fiscal policy. For all the analysed groups of enterprises, development stimulants included: public support mostly perceived as the EU subsidies and the policy of support for the SME sector, which suggests better perception and the use of the offered support for these entities on the part of the government as well as the EU. (compare: Table 3).

**Table 3.** The assessment of the impact of macro-environment determinants on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises [%]

Macro-environment determinants	Company size								
	Micro			Small			Medium		
	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
The macroeconomic situation of the country	22.1	20.1	57.8	19.4	18.5	62.1	22.3	21.9	55.8
The legal system and fiscal policy	10.9	12.4	76.7	13.4	16.2	70.4	9.8	22.1	68.1
Globalisation	34.5	34.5	31.0	32.4	33.8	33.8	31.8	34.6	33.6
The economic situation in the world	33.8	32.4	33.8	31.9	34.6	33.5	35.7	30.1	34.2
Technological progress	41.7	29.5	28.8	42.5	29.6	27.9	39.7	30.9	29.4
Public aid (EU grants)	55.6	20.5	23.9	44.9	31.5	23.6	51.2	26.5	22.3
The policy of support for small and medium-sized enterprises	42.1	29.4	28.5	53.1	24	22.9	54.6	22.3	23.1
High costs of raising external capital	9.6	14.5	75.9	10.5	17.1	72.4	10.6	18.5	70.9
Grey market	10.7	16.9	72.4	26.8	30.9	42.3	28.8	26.5	44.7
Strong domestic and foreign competition	14.2	20.1	65.7	12.4	17.8	69.8	13.2	20.3	66.5
The level of innovativeness of the economy	29.1	46.7	24.2	31.6	44.9	23.5	24.7	49.5	25.8
The patent policy and protection of intellectual property	26.1	50.3	23.6	27.3	49.7	23.0	30.9	42.6	26.5
Bureaucracy	25.3	22.3	52.4	28.5	20.6	50.9	25.7	25.5	48.8

Data for 590 enterprises.

Another group of analysed external determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises consists of determinants derived from the meso-environment. In the opinion of the majority of the respondents, most of the variables examined were barriers, such as: access to capital and financial assistance, the condition of transport and telecommunications infrastructure, the policy of local authorities in terms of creating a climate favourable for business activity as well as the quality and accessibility of services provided by business environment institutions (Lisowska, 2013. p. 145). Such a distribution of responses indicates the need for targeted policies to support small and medium-sized enterprises to improve financing for this sector. The development of SMEs is dependent on the possibility of obtaining and using external sources of financing, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the functioning of the widely understood business environment. The group of determinants that could have a positive impact on the development of the enterprises surveyed according to the respondents included: investments in the region and access to public aid, cooperation of enterprises in the region as well as transfer of knowledge and technology within the region. In the opinion of the surveyed entrepreneurs, natural resources of the region and its geographical location did not have a significant impact on the development of the analysed business entities (Lisowska, 2013. p. 145).

**Table 4.** The Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H) and the level of probability value (p) of variables that determine meso-economic determinants of the surveyed enterprises in the context of the company

Meso-environment determinants	The Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H)	Probability value (p)
Geographical location of the region	13.15	0.00
Socio-economic development in the region	17.29	0.00
Investments in the region	14.23	0.00
Natural resources in the region	6.27	0.09
Cultural and natural assets of the region	4.48	0.21
Knowledge and technology transfer in the region	19.74	0.00
Access to capital and financial assistance	1.49	0.68
Access to public aid (e.g.: EU funds)	11.24	0.00
Quality of human capital	10.19	0.02
Policy of local authorities – creating a climate favourable for business activity	15.94	0.00
Standard of living of the local community	1.94	0.59
Quality and accessibility of services provided by business environment institutions	13.66	0.00

The analysis of regional determinants broken down by company size allowed for highlighting the diversity most of the variables examined, which was confirmed by the conducted Kruskal-Wallis test ( $p < 0.05$ ) (compare: Table 4).

In the case of micro-enterprises, the respondents pointed most often to the following stimulants of development: natural resources of the region, as well as cultural and natural assets of the region. The indicated barriers included: inadequate access to capital and financial assistance, the policy of local authorities in terms of creating a favourable climate for business development, the quality and accessibility of services provided by business environment institutions, the condition of transport and telecommunications infrastructure, access to public aid (including EU funds). The respondents in small enterprises most commonly indicated the following development stimulants: access to public aid and the geographical location of the region. The barriers included: the policy of local authorities in terms of creating a favourable climate for the development of enterprises, the low quality of human capital and poor access to capital and financial assistance. In the case of medium-sized enterprises, the respondents mostly pointed to barriers, such as the condition of transport and telecommunications infrastructure, the socio-economic development of the region, the policy of its local authorities in terms of creating a climate favourable for business development, a lack of knowledge and technology transfer in the region and the low quality of human capital (compare: Table 5).

**Table 5.** The assessment of the impact of meso-environment determinants on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises [%]

Meso-environment determinants	Company size								
	Micro			Small			Medium		
	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
Geographical location of the region	35.2	33.4	31.4	38.1	34.6	27.3	22.7	37.5	39.8
Socio-economic development in the region	38.6	37.9	23.5	24.8	36.7	38.5	27.5	26.9	45.6
Investments in the region	28.4	23.1	48.5	31.2	32.1	36.7	30.6	29.9	39.5
Natural resources in the region	43.7	33.6	22.7	33.4	32.1	34.5	38.0	33.7	28.3
Cultural and natural assets of the region	40.1	31.2	28.7	34.5	32.4	33.1	38.8	30.3	30.9
Knowledge and technology transfer in the region	30.5	38.1	31.4	35.7	38.2	26.1	25.8	33.7	40.5
Access to capital and financial assistance	14.3	25.5	60.2	24.1	32.1	43.8	24.2	36.3	39.5

Access to public aid (e.g.: EU funds)	29.7	23.6	46.7	41.7	31.5	26.8	36.4	37.1	26.5
Quality of human capital	33.4	31.4	35.2	27.5	23.8	48.7	27.2	32.3	40.5
Condition of transport and telecommunications infrastructure	19.7	33.2	47.1	29.4	35.1	35.5	21.3	23.4	55.3
Policy of local authorities – creating a climate favourable for business activity	19.2	30.1	50.7	11.2	30.6	58.2	25.8	29.7	44.5
Standard of living of the local community	31.4	33.4	35.2	32.1	31.2	36.7	29.4	38.2	32.4
Quality and accessibility of services provided by business environment institutions	22.8	27.9	49.3	22.7	37.5	39.8	23.4	37.9	38.7

*Data for 590 enterprises.*

Determinants of the development of SMEs derived from the micro-environment constituted another area of analysis. According to the respondents, most of the variables studied were barriers and they included: the demand for products and services offered, strong competition, high barriers to market entry and demanding customers. According to the respondents, the group of determinants that could have a positive impact on the development of the enterprises surveyed included: cooperative relations with other companies and demanding customers. The analysis of microeconomic determinants broken down by company size allowed the highlighting of the diversity of most of the variables examined, which was also confirmed by the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $p < 0.05$ ) (compare: Table 6).

**Table 6.** The Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H) and the level of probability value (p) of variables that determine micro-economic determinants of the surveyed enterprises in the context of the company size

Meso-environment determinants	The Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H)	Probability value (p)
Demand for products and services offered	1.30	0.52
High barriers to market entry	2.54	0.28
High barriers to market exit	7.95	0.06
Impact of suppliers	9.34	0.04
Strong competition	3.04	0.39
Cooperative relations with other companies	13.75	0.00
Demanding customers (recipients)	4.34	0.23

The respondents in the micro-enterprises pointed to the following barriers to their development resulting from the micro-environment: the demand for products and services offered as well as high barriers to



market entry. In the case of the small enterprises, barriers included strong competition and demanding customers, while the medium-sized enterprises indicated the impact of suppliers and strong competition (compare: Table 7). The respondents also pointed to development stimulants which included cooperative relations with other entities, which may indicate an appreciation on the part of the entities surveyed of both financial (e.g.: joint projects, acquisition of new technologies), as well as non-financial (e.g.: the exchange of knowledge and experience, trust between partners) benefits resulting from such cooperation.

**Table 7.** The assessment of the impact of micro-environment determinants on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises [%]

Micro-environment determinants	Company size								
	Micro			Small			Medium		
	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
Demand for products and services offered	18.7	20.1	61.2	26.4	28.5	45.1	31.2	27.9	40.9
High barriers to market entry	14.7	25.7	59.6	23.2	33.7	43.1	25.8	33.0	41.2
High barriers to market exit	31.6	34.6	33.8	33.8	32.4	33.8	24.7	30.6	44.7
Impact of suppliers	33.4	31.9	34.7	34.6	31.9	33.5	17.6	14.5	67.9
Strong competition	22.7	28.1	49.2	16.2	13.4	70.4	27.3	20.1	52.6
Cooperative relations with other companies	55.6	20.5	23.9	46.9	21.6	31.5	41.2	28.5	30.3
Demanding customers (recipients)	34.0	21.4	44.6	22.0	14.9	63.1	52.6	24.3	23.1

*Data for 590 enterprises.*

## CONCLUSION

The development of small and medium-sized enterprises is influenced by many internal determinants related to the characteristics of the entrepreneur and the enterprise (these determinants were not examined here), as well as external determinants arising from the environment. The determinants can contribute to but also restrict the development of SMEs. The study on external determinants of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises presented in the paper suggests that:

- the analysis of determinants stemming from the macro-environment indicates their impact on the growth/development of the surveyed enterprises especially in the area of barriers which included: high costs of raising external capital, the legal system and the fiscal policy, strong domestic and international competition, the macroeconomic

situation of the country, bureaucracy and the grey market. In terms of stimulants, the respondents pointed to the public aid (the EU grants), the policy to support small and medium-sized enterprises and technological progress. The analysis of macroeconomic determinants broken down by the size of the company does not confirm the diversification of the variables studied, as evidenced by the conducted Kruskal-Wallis test ( $p > 0.05$ ), which indicates a similar set of barriers and stimulants derived from the general environment for each category of the entities analysed.

- determinants resulting from the meso-environment varied for each category of entities due to the company size, which was confirmed by the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $p < 0.05$ ) and were mainly considered as barriers. In the case of the micro-enterprises, the respondents indicated as barriers to their development insufficient access to capital and financial support, the policy of local authorities in terms of creating a climate favourable for the development of enterprises as well as the quality and availability of services offered by business support institutions. In the small enterprises, the group of highlighted barriers included: the policy of local authorities in terms of creating a climate favourable for the development of enterprises, a lack of cooperation among enterprises in the region, the low quality of human capital as well as inadequate access to capital and financial assistance. On the other hand, in the case of the medium-sized enterprises, the respondents mostly pointed to the existence of barriers which included: the condition of transport and telecommunication infrastructure, the socio-economic development of the region and the policy of local authorities in terms of creating a climate favourable for business development. Such a distribution of responses indicates the need for targeted policies to support small and medium-sized enterprises in order to improve the funding of the sector and access to specialised services offered by the widely understood business environment.
- the analysis of determinants resulting from the micro-environment showed a mostly negative influence of these factors on the growth/development of SMEs and their diversity for each category of entities due to the company size, which was confirmed by the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the micro-enterprises, the respondents indicated the following elements resulting from the micro-environment as barriers to their development: the demand for products and services offered as well as high barriers to market entry. The small enterprises indicated strong competition and demanding customers, while the medium-sized enterprises pointed to the impact of suppliers and strong competition. These results indicate the need to improve the

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competitiveness of these entities, which would reduce the impact of barriers resulting from the micro-environment.

- the entrepreneurs surveyed are aware of the benefits resulting from the cooperation with other companies, which may contribute to the development of such cooperation in various spheres, i.e. typically economic contacts, such as joint selling of products, as well as non-economic ones covering the exchange of knowledge and the outsourcing of expert opinions, analyses and studies, participation in fairs, exhibitions and conferences, technology purchasing, etc.

The presented results are consistent with the findings of other studies carried out in Poland (e.g.: Borowiecki & Siuta-Tokarska, 2008; Daszkiewicz 2009; *Trendy rozwojowe...* 2012 and 2013; Matejun & Motyka 2015; *Czarna lista barier...* 2013 and 2014; *Informacja o kondycji...* 2014 and 2015). Market barriers, i.e. low demand, strong competition and the grey market, as well as legal and political barriers, i.e. a lack of transparency and clarity of legislation along with the amount of taxes and fees required by the law, proved to be an important group of barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises. Capital constraints are also emphasized as a significant barrier to the development of SMEs in all the studies conducted. Availability of external capital and its cost are elements of particular importance for the development and expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises. Development opportunities, in turn, translate into increased innovation and competitiveness of these enterprises and the strengthening of their market position. Problems with access to capital may result in low propensity to invest, and thus low propensity for innovation, which is another barrier to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. It is widely believed that these entities are characterised by a low degree of innovativeness and intensity of the use of advanced technologies. Introduced innovations usually rely on one type of product or service, hence the likelihood of the introduction of changes by these entities is smaller than in enterprises with a wide range of products or services and complex processes, such as most large enterprises (Lisowska 2013). Financial resources derived from the EU have provided an opportunity for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, including innovative activities. However, as shown by the programming perspective 2007-2013, entities in this sector do not always have the opportunity to apply for these funds due to complex formal procedures associated with this process, as well as insufficient resources for their own contribution to the project. Business environment institutions, offering support in the form of specialised services responding to the needs of SMEs, should play an important role in improving this situation.

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### **Abstrakt (in Polish)**

*Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja zewnętrznych determinantów rozwoju małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw oraz ocena ich wpływu na funkcjonowanie tych podmiotów w Polsce. Osiągnięcie tego celu wymagało: określenia determinantów rozwoju MSP, dokonania oceny obecnego stanu rozwoju badanych przedsiębiorstw oraz zbadania wpływu zewnętrznych determinantów na rozwój MSP. Realizacja przedstawionych powyżej celów oparta była na następujących założeniach: (i) obecna sytuacja badanych przedsiębiorstw określona jest przy pomocy wskaźników ilościowych (wielkość obrotu, zatrudnienie, udział w rynku, dochody) (ii) analiza determinantów zewnętrznych obejmuje trzy elementy otoczenia: makrootoczenie, mezootoczenie i mikrootoczenie, (iii) w każdym analizowanym obszarze dokonuje się odrębnych analiz dla mikro, małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw, co umożliwia bardziej precyzyjne określenie zewnętrznych determinantów rozwoju dla każdej z tych kategorii przedsiębiorstw.*

**Keywords:** *rozwój MSP, determinanty rozwoju MSP, mikrootoczenie, mezootoczenie, mikrootoczenie.*

### **Biographical note**

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