

EDITORIAL

The issues devoted to 'services of general interests' (SGI) are increasingly gaining in topicality and importance today, *inter alia* on account of the fact that these matters are explicitly mentioned in many strategic documents at the European level, as well as at the national levels. This signifies a new approach both in the research and political sense to a huge services segment of economic and social nature. Their provision is not only perceived in market terms but also as one of responsibilities of authorities at the various levels of governance. Improvement in access to 'services of general interests' is an element of inclusive growth mentioned in the *Strategy Europe 2020*. In a base report of Polish presidency (*How to strengthen the territorial dimension of Europe 2020 and the EU Cohesion Policy – a report based on the Territorial Agenda 2020*)¹, territorial keys were indicated, the purpose of which was to combine priorities of EU *Territorial Agenda 2020* with goals set up by *Strategy Europe 2020*. The 'services of general interests' were exactly one of these keys.

The current volume of Europa XXI is entirely dedicated to a presentation of the results of the Project *Indicators and Perspectives for Services of General Interest in Territorial Cohesion and Development* (ESPON SeGI) led by the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. Research studies that form the basis for the findings presented herein were fully financed by the ESPON 2013 Programme. The volume is composed of 7 papers and 1 report from research project. The papers are devoted to various aspects of affordability, accessibility and quality of 'services of general interests' in Europe. In particular, they pay special attention to the problem of use of appropriate indicators, allowing, in a broad sense, for evaluation of accessibility to this type of services (E. Marques da Costa et al., I.M. Breuer and A. Milbert). In this context, an attempt was made to comprehensively assess the minimum levels of SGI (H. Littke and D. Rauhut), as well as to recognise challenges facing the European Cohesion Policy (D. Ludlow and D. Rauhut) and national policies. Moreover, a comparison was performed to determine the provision of the 'services of general interests' in Europe (A. Humer and P. Palma). Also, other articles based on empirical studies under the aforementioned Project are worthy of noting. These papers include findings from case studies that were conducted in nine countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom – D. Świątek et al.), and, separately, results from a comparative analysis of transport accessibility for specific groups of services (the study involving five selected regions, which employed a uniform methodology – M. Stępniaak and P. Rosik). At the end of the volume, to better illustrate the research basis for the findings herein presented, additionally one of the reports from the Project case studies concerning Poland is provided (Świątek et al.). A final report from the above-mentioned Project, along with annexes, as well as all the reports from the remaining case studies are available at www.espon.eu.

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¹ For publication details, see: **Zaucha Jacek**, Komornicki Tomasz, Świątek Dariusz, **Bohme Kai**, **Żuber Piotr**: Territorial keys for bringing closer the Territorial Agenda of the EU and Europe 2020, *European Planning Studies*, DOI: 2013 10 1080 09654313 2012 722976

