

The thesis deals with a region as a basic building unit of the regional policy of the European Union, describing the formation and development of the European regional policy as supranational one and therefore unique on a global scale.

With the increasing regional policy budget (this policy being the second most expensive in the Union), the influence of regions proper is growing as well: they are becoming more independent and emancipated. In the running process of globalisation, regions with the highest added value seem to be the best off: innovative regions with qualified labour and a strong connection with the supranational business and information networks. Metropolises, or urban centres, are faring the best in the global competition. The role of these central areas is growing stronger. The task of the regional policy is to balance the differences between these richer, central areas, and peripheral, poorer regions.

The enlargement of the European Union by adding ten new member states in 2004 has been accompanied by regional policy reforms as there has been a sharp increase in the number of less developed regions, i.e. those that are entitled to draw upon funds of the European regional policy. Opinions on efficiency of the said policy differ: its proponents see it as the main tool of regional convergence while its critics point out to ineffectiveness and complicatedness of the whole system.

By applying its regional policy, the European Union significantly strengthens the process of integrating regions into broader relations – the ‘breaking-out-of-the-state-borders’ process. It provides room for the regional self-confidence growth, strongly contributing to changing of the traditional centre-periphery relationship and supporting the subsidiarity principle.

The process of national state decentralisation is also well visible in the Czech Republic, having been considerably supported by the creation of functional higher territorial self-governing units and accession to the EU.

Regions, or rather elected representatives of individual regions, are powerful players in the domestic political landscape. Czech and Moravian regions rank to slightly below average developed regions in the 25-member EU. However, the outlook for their rather fast convergence is optimistic. Prague is an exception among the Czech regions, being one of the richest areas of the European Union.