

## **Abstract**

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The aim of this study was to diagnose the socio-economic consequences of cooperation between Polish tourism enterprises belonging to the SME sector and Business Environment Institutions (BEIs), by identifying the reasons for and extent of the use of BEI services by these enterprises, as well as by determining the resulting benefits and barriers. The analyses were conducted on the basis of a literature review and empirical research – quantitative research among 108 tourism enterprises and qualitative research among 83 BEIs.

The first chapter presents the fundamental assumptions and main directions of the new institutional economics, explains the concept of BEIs, discusses their tasks and classification, the types of services offered, and the tools used in their operations. It also highlights the links between BEI activities, the state's innovation policy, and the concept of smart specializations. The second chapter focuses on the essence of the SME sector (including the tourism industry), the barriers to its development in Poland, and the methods and sources of its support (including EU programs and initiatives). The third part of the dissertation has a methodological character and presents the research process and the characteristics of the studied populations. The fourth chapter analyses the sources of information about BEI offers, as well as the premises (including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and inflation) and barriers to cooperation between tourism SMEs and BEIs. The fifth chapter identifies the beneficiaries of BEI services; the most frequently used forms of support provided by them and determines the consequences of their cooperation with tourism SMEs.

The results of the conducted research and analyses confirmed the formulated specific hypotheses, namely that the main motivation for enterprises to cooperate with BEIs is the possibility of obtaining financing. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the demand for BEI support, while other crises – the war in Ukraine and inflation – had a lesser impact. The most frequently indicated barriers to cooperation were the lack of awareness of BEI offers and their insufficient adaptation to the specific nature of the tourism industry. High service costs also proved to be an additional obstacle. The research further showed that tourism enterprises use BEI services less frequently than enterprises from other sectors, and that BEIs are more effective in supporting the introduction of new products than in facilitating market expansion. Promotion activities carried out with BEI support were assessed as more effective than

independent promotional efforts. Moreover, EU funds distributed through BEIs were found to contribute more significantly to regional development and to the improved performance of local tourism enterprises than commercial funding sources.

Thus, the main hypothesis of the study was confirmed – despite the generally positive opinions expressed by the surveyed enterprises, the role of BEIs in the development of tourism SMEs remains limited, mainly due to the insufficient alignment of their offer with the needs of tourism stakeholders and the excessively high cost of their services.

The recommendations proposed include, among others: the strategic use of EU funds, improved communication between BEIs and enterprises, better alignment of training offers with sectoral needs, support for innovation and promotion, the development of mechanisms for responding to various types of crises, and the introduction of monitoring systems for evaluating BEI effectiveness, including incentive mechanisms for the most efficient institutions.