

COHESION PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: TENDENCIES AND NEW CHALLENGES

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Cohesion processes in the European Union, new development tendencies, as well as contemporary challenges for further European integration are analyzed in this theoretical article. Possibilities of activation of the processes of European integration and of the further enlargement of the European Union are discussed. The main attention is paid to the role and priorities of cohesion in the context of needs of the common cultural, social and economic space creation. The article raises and considers the problem of social, economic and political development, cultural changes, the new tendencies of technological progress and environmental protection, closely associated with the cohesion processes, taking place under the conditions of European integration and the European Union development and enlargement. It is shown that the cohesion processes determine the basic changes in contemporary society and its life in the common cultural, social and economic space in the European Union.

It is noted that cohesion and its processes are based on some particular principles and regularities, which reflect the objective nature of cohesion. The main principles of cohesion are formulated and described, the role and significance of these principles are discussed. The main general principles of cohesion, including the principles of 'the communicating vessels', multiplication of new quality standards, innovation and qualitative changes, diversity harmonization, as well as the principles of "the common denominator" and assimilation, are formulated and described. It is also be noted that, in some specific cases of cohesion, specific cohesion principles may be pointed out.

The cohesion regularities characterize the main trajectories of cohesion processes, allowing us to determine the dominant cohesion features. The cohesion regularities refer to various cohesion phenomena, including those, reflecting the variety of the cohesion aims and interests of various subjects involved in the cohesion processes, the complexity and inconsistency of these processes, as well as risks, threats and uncertainties, associated with various conditions, in which the cohesion processes take place. In general, the cohesion regularities reflect the processes, associated with application and realization of the cohesion principles.

The variety of the cohesion processes is described, new trends of cohesion in the context of globalization and internationalization, knowledge based society and knowledge economy creation processes are identified. Regularities of the cohesion processes in general, as well as of the cohesion processes in the European Union, are described. It is noted that the goal-oriented and effective cohesion is a condition required for successive modernization of the European Union, and the solution of its current economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological development, as well as safety, enlargement and environmental problems.

Keywords: *cohesion, European Union, European integration, principles and regularities, common space*

Introduction

New demands for identifying and solving the so-called *cohesion* problems emerge under the conditions of *globalization* and *internationalization* of social, economic and political development, cultural, scientific and technological advance, as well as under the conditions of the creation of *knowledge based society* and *knowledge economy* and *European integration* and *the enlargement of the European Union*: adequate understanding of these problems and the ability of solving them may be perceived as an important precondition for making true the wishes of modern society for advance.

The problems of cohesion are in the focus of many research works. Their significance is emphasized in the context of social, economic and political development, the advance of culture, science and technologies, as well as the relationship with the natural and social environment and the development

of safety ensuring activities. Special attention is paid to the problems of cohesion under the conditions of European integration and the expansion of the European Union.

In addition, it is noted that the present level of research into the cohesion problems is *not sufficient* for their solution: the *variety* of cohesion problems, needs and cases have not been properly identified, traditional approaches to cohesion are not enough adequate to the needs of the society, especially – in the conditions of contemporary society in the European Union. It is especially important that a *systematic and integrated approach to cohesion* and to *prevention of the lack of cohesion* has not been developed yet.

Insufficiency of the traditional approaches to cohesion and *the lack of systematic and integrated approach to cohesion* and to *prevention of the lack of cohesion* could be defined as an important *scientific problem* of the complex scientific

research on social and economic integration processes in the context of globalization and internationalization in general, as well as of the complex scientific research on European integration processes and the processes of development, expansion and enlargement of the European Union.

The object of this article is the cohesion processes, especially - cohesion processes in the context of contemporary needs of European integration, enlargement of the European Union and in the context of the needs of creation of knowledge based society and knowledge economy in the European Union. The main focus is put on the principles and regularities of the cohesion as well as on the impact of cohesion on the social, economic and technological changes in European Union and on the creation and further modernization of common cultural, social, economic space. Scientific research on the cohesion processes, especially - in the context of the creation of knowledge based society and knowledge economy and in the context of globalization, is identified as a perspective way of the scientific research on European integration processes.

Tasks of the article:

- to identify the cohesion processes in general, especially - cohesion processes in the context of globalization and in the context of contemporary needs of European integration, enlargement of the European Union as well as in the context of the needs of creation of knowledge based society and knowledge economy in the European Union,
- to explore the new definitions and to systematize the cohesion processes, to defined and to describe the main principles and regularities of the cohesion, especially - in the conditions of the European integration and of the enlargement of the European Union ,
- to explore the main challenges and the role of the cohesion processes, to identify their impact on the development and modernization processes in the European cultural, social and economic space.

The main ideas of the article could be defined as partly controversial. It may be noted that these ideas, in general, could be defined as the basis for further scientific discussion and as the basis for the research on the cohesion processes in the European cultural, social and economic space, especially – in the context of the knowledge based society and knowledge economy creation, as well as in the context of globalization, European integration and enlargement of the European Union.

Cohesion: the main definitions, research priorities and specifics in the conditions of development and enlargement of the European Union

An adequate description of the cohesion problems requires the use of the appropriate *cohesion concepts*. It is well-known that there are many different approaches to cohesion and its concept.

Despite the existence of various approaches, the concept of cohesion is usually described as *convergence* or *harmonization*, meaning the trend of *decreasing the differences* in a particular area of social life, activity or development (Melnikas, 2011; Melnikas, Chlivickas, Razauskas, Pipiriene, 2011).

Thus, it may be stated that *cohesion as a process*, describing *harmonization and decrease of differences*, also reflects the orientation to *decreasing or eliminating conflicts*

or disproportions, as well as the *realization of wishes for sustainable development and harmonization*.

This approach to cohesion and its concept may be considered to be *universal* in describing the meaning of *the cohesion processes as harmonization and decreasing of differences*. The universal character of this approach requires us to take into account the *diversity of cohesion processes*, realizing that they can be considered and assessed, when a number of *various factors* are taken into consideration.

The main of these factors reflect the following types of cohesion:

- the cohesion between various *processes*: between economic, social, political, technological development or other processes, as well as between social and economic processes, between technological development and environmental protection or between other combinations of processes (Brady, 2010; Crane, Matten, 2010; Ravenhill, 2008),
- the cohesion between various *regions* or other *geographically identified spaces* : in this case, the cohesion between *globally, internationally, nationally* or even locally described regions, may be mentioned (Ambros, Schlegelmilch, 2009; Wiener, Diez, 2009; Morrison, 2006; Hix, 2006),
- the cohesion between various *social groups or social layers*, which may be considered and assessed globally, internationally, nationally or even locally (Plattoni, 2010; Searle, 2010),
- the cohesion between various *activities*, between the sectors of social, economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological development, as well as various *spheres* of social activities or business (O'Brien, Williams, 2007; Brakman, Garretsen, Marrewijk, Witteloostuijn, 2006; Button, 2008; Harrison, 2010),
- the cohesion between various *organizations or subjects* engaged in various activities (Brookes, Grint, 2010).

Now, under the globalization conditions, the factors, reflecting the cohesion between various *cultures, mentalities*, as well as between the *systems of various lifestyles, ideologies or values*, may be mentioned as particularly important. It is clear that the cohesion of this type may be analysed only if the respective cultures, mentalities, systems of lifestyles, ideologies or values can be, *in principle*, considered *harmonized*, or be able, at least, to exist or evolve *in parallel*. However, even in the cases, when the above cultures, systems of mentalities, lifestyles, or values clearly manifest the *lack of harmony*, the cohesion between them is still *possible* to some extent and even *necessary* and *unavoidable*: even in the cases of disharmony, some naturally occurring *interaction* between the above-mentioned factors, causing the development of vague *signs of cohesion*, may be observed.

It should be emphasized that *cohesion and cohesion processes* are perceived as a *basic precondition* for implementing the wishes to achieve the *sustainable development and harmonization*. This means that, in the context of the current challenges to social, economic, political development and the advance of culture, science and technologies, reflecting the values of sustainable development and harmonization, the problems of cohesion should be *at the centre of attention*.

It may be noted that the considered approach to cohesion and cohesion processes is not only *universal*, but has the *prospects* of wide application, especially, when it is necessary to comprehend and solve complicated problems, relating to the development, evolution and advance of *large systems*, described from various *perspectives*.

The considered approach is and may be applied in various areas. One of these areas is *public governance, public and business management and management activities*. It is clear that the need for proper response to various requirements associated with various kinds of cohesion means that the respective actions and changes should be made in various *public governance* and *public and business management* areas. It can be stated that governance and management methods and means should be directly used to satisfy the particular cohesion requirements.

These governance and management methods and means may be *very diverse*. They may be identified and classified, based on *various criteria*.

Under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion, it is possible to respond to the cohesion requirements as follows:

- applying the methods and means of *public policy and public management*, including the methods and means of public policy and public management used by the European Union and particular states or their groups, as well as the methods of public policy and administration used by various public management or local government institutions,
- using the methods and means of *business* and other management instruments, including the management methods of various organizations and the ways of improving these methods.

The methods and means of public policy and public management, also including business and other management methods used in response to cohesion requirements, should be very diverse, embracing, actually, all spheres of modern social, economic, political development, as well as the advance of culture, science and technologies and the relationship with the environment. It can be also stated that orientation to cohesion challenges and wishes to respond to cohesion demands may be considered the priorities of public and business management, representing highly important problems of management investigation, practice and profile.

It may be stated that in the study of management practice and management profile aimed at responding to cohesion demands, the consideration of such important problems as *training of human resources* cannot be avoided. This statement is true because the cohesion needs can be and are usually satisfied by methods, associated with *training, development and management of human resources*. Moreover, the priority of the problems of training, development and management of human resources is particularly evident in responding to the cohesion demands and challenges under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion: one of the main features of cohesion and response to its demands is the *priority* given to the factors, characterizing training, development and management of human resources.

Thus, generalizing the above considerations, the following conclusion may be made: adequate response to current cohesion demands raised in the conditions of European

integration and the European Union expansion requires us to pay the greatest attention to measures, aimed at proper training, development and management of human resources. It may be stated that, in its turn, an adequate response to cohesion needs and challenges requires that practical and research works, aimed at investigating these problems, should be given the priority in the context of the works devoted to the improvement of training, development and management of human resources.

A concept of cohesion under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion and enlargement

The *universal* approach to cohesion and its concept may be applied to diverse conditions of social, economic and political development, as well as the advance of culture, science and technologies: the application prospects of this approach under the conditions of *European integration and the EU expansion* should be emphasized (Melnikas, 2002; Melnikas, Reichelt, 2004).

It may be stated that *consistent cohesion* is considered to be *the main precondition* for achieving that the processes of European integration and the European Union expansion should be really oriented to the statements of *humanism, democracy, environmental safety, morality and social responsibility* and that they could be *effective* in ensuring the *stability* of the European Union as a multifaceted and very complicated system. Besides, social, economic, political, technological and other changes, taking place in the European Union, should be clearly *directed at its advance*.

The *priority* areas and trends of cohesion under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion are as follows:

- the cohesion between cultures, mentalities, lifestyles and systems of values, as well as between the harmonized ideologies spread or being propagated in the European Union space,
- the cohesion between social, economic, political and informational development, as well as between the processes, associated with cultural, scientific and technological development and the relationship with the environment, which are taking place in the conditions of European integration and the European Union development and expansion,
- the cohesion between various European Union regions, various states and their groups (particularly, the cohesion between the so-called “old” and “new” European Union member-states), as well as the cohesion between the regions of various countries,
- the cohesion between various social layers and social groups of Europe and the European Union (particularly, between the so-called “native” people and “traditional” social groups and layers and the so-called “newly arrived population” or “foreigners” in various European or the European Union states),
- the cohesion between various areas of activities and various business and public sectors, including the cohesion between them in various European or the European Union member-states (particularly, the cohesion between technologically centred and technologically advanced areas of activities and the

- areas of activities lagging behind in this respect),
- the cohesion between various organizations and other subjects, primarily, between those, acting in Europe or the European Union space (particularly important are various forms of cohesion between the organizations of business and public sectors' harmonization),
- various forms of cohesion between individuals, particularly, at the time of using modern computer network facilities.

The most important trends and areas of cohesion under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion are considered to be those, which characterize the phenomena of *multichannel "penetration"*, implying the simultaneous *spread of processes, originated in Europe, into non-European areas* and, vice versa, *the spread of non-European processes into European spaces*. These phenomena reflect various conditions of cohesion between Europe and the European Union as a whole and non-European spaces and are considered to be of great importance *in the context of modern globalization* because they help to perceive the need for European integration and the European Union expansion not only on the background of local, but of the global changes, as well.

Therefore, it is possible to state that the cohesion processes, taking place under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion, are very complicated and diverse, requiring an *adequate response to specific cohesion conditions*, characteristic of European and the European Union space: the processes of European integration and the European Union expansion determine both new cohesion *requirements* and the need for and the inevitability of the appropriate perception of *purposeful effects of cohesion* on the creation of *common spaces* in Europe and the European Union. This also implies that the cohesion processes may be treated as the actions, raising *new challenges to governance, management and management activities in the European Union space* and providing *new possibilities for governance and management improvement*, taking into account *the specific features of cohesion*, which manifest themselves under the conditions of European integration and the European Union expansion.

The main principles and regularities of cohesion: general characteristics and the specifics in the conditions of development and enlargement of the European Union

The processes of cohesion are very complicated and versatile. It can be also noted that cohesion and its processes are based on some particular *principles* and *regularities*, which reflect *the objective nature of cohesion*, allowing us to state that the cohesion processes may be perceived and considered as a specific cognition and research object.

Though the problems associated with cohesion are in the focus of theoretical and experimental research, the principles governing the cohesion processes have not been appropriately identified and systematized. This shows that the problems associated with *major principles of cohesion* need more thorough investigation.

It is clear that *general cognition logic* may be used in the investigation of cohesion and the related issues. Based on this logic, the main *general principles of cohesion*, including the principles of *'the communicating vessels'*, *multiplication of new quality standards*, *innovation* and *qualitative changes*,

diversity harmonization, as well as the principles of *"the common denominator"* and *assimilation*, may be defined.

The above-mentioned principles reflect the orientation of the cohesion processes to *the searching for and encouraging the synergetic effects*. It can be stated that *cohesion by its nature* is the process of the *searching for and purposeful encouraging of possible synergetic effects*: in the course of cohesion, the efforts are made to find and effectively use new possibilities for the development, expansion and modernization of the particular systems, which are based on the *searching for and encouraging of synergetic effects*. Thus, it is clear that the cohesion principles reflect a concept of the searching for and encouraging of synergetic effects, therefore, they may be approached as the principles, reflecting the circumstances of the searching for and encouraging of synergetic effects in the course of cohesion.

The principle of *'the communicating vessels'* reflects *the logic of interaction or joining of various systems, spaces or phenomena*. It may be stated that the systems, spaces or phenomena related to cohesion make the whole by interacting with each other as *'the communicating vessels'*. The use of *'the communicating vessels'* logic in considering the cohesion processes shows that the cohesion is primarily oriented to the development of *a new system of the united and interacting elements*, with all these elements becoming more alike and coordinated. These processes are also characterized by the increasing trend of maintaining and strengthening the growing similarity and coordination of the created system's elements.

The principle of multiplication of new and higher quality standards reflects the orientation the cohesion processes to wider propagation and application of the results achieved due to modern scientific and technological advance. This principle is associated with the significant role of cohesion in activating and encouraging the striving for modernization, higher quality and level of development in all spheres of life. Moreover, the multiplication of new and higher quality standards on the background of cohesion may be perceived *in two ways*:

- *in the narrow sense*: it is the transference of the norms and standards of modern higher level achievements and higher quality standards from the advanced and modern systems, spaces and elements to the backward systems, spaces and elements, thereby raising the level and quality of less developed systems, spaces and elements,
- *in the broad sense*: it is *the development of a qualitatively new and higher level system*, based on transferring the norms and standards of new developments and higher quality *to the newly created and expanding system*.

The principle of *multiplication of new and higher quality standards* is closely associated with the principles of *innovation and qualitative changes*.

The principle of innovation reflects both the role of innovations in the cohesion development and its orientation to modern innovations. It is clear that the cohesion processes may be considered to be successful only when they are *innovative* by nature and when the outcome of the cohesion process is *a modern innovation*, reflecting the development of a qualitatively new system, aimed at achieving new breakthroughs.

The principle of qualitative changes reflects the orientation of the cohesion processes to the continuous *development*

of new quality: the efforts aimed at the continuous creation and development of the systems of new quality oriented to qualitative changes both in the systems themselves and in their surroundings may be viewed as the main feature of cohesion. *The principle of qualitative changes* also means that, in the course of cohesion, the particular systems acquire *new features*, requiring a *broader approach* to the needs and prospects of further development and breakthroughs.

The principle of diversity harmonization reflects the need and requirements for seeking *coordination and harmonization of diversity*, manifesting itself under the cohesion conditions. It is clear that, in the course of conditions of cohesion, the interaction and integration of various systems, spaces and elements can be observed. Therefore, *new requirements of adaptation and tolerance* emerge. In this situation, *diversity harmonization* may also be perceived as the manifestation of *sustainable development*, reflecting the efforts of *simultaneous development of a new system's quality and preservation of the features characteristic* of the particular interacting and integrating systems, spaces and elements. In general, *diversity harmonization* may be considered to be a basic essential precondition for implementing *the ideas of sustainable development*, when the cohesion processes are taking place.

The principle of "the common denominator" and assimilation reflects the orientation of cohesion to such a situation, when systems, spaces and phenomena involved in this process should have some *common dimensions* and be *similar and comparable*: this means that the cohesion processes are perceived to be oriented to some particular *"common denominators"* and aimed at ensuring *similarities* of all interacting and integrating systems, spaces and elements. It may be stated that this principle emphasizes the requirement to activate and increase the interaction and integration of all newly created and developing systems.

Special emphasis is placed on the fact that the principle of 'the common denominator' and assimilation *does not imply* that the interacting and integrating systems, spaces and elements do not *possess and preserve the inherent individual and specific features*. The processes of orientation "to common denominator" and assimilation should *not necessarily* activate or cause the vanishing of the individual and specific features or the diminishing of their role: on the contrary, in the course of cohesion, both the processes of the orientation "to common denominator" and assimilation and the manifestation and preservation of individual and specific features of the particular systems, spaces and elements should take place simultaneously.

The above-mentioned *general principles of cohesion* may be considered to be most important among the principles underlying *the typical cohesion processes*, taking place under the conditions of social, economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological development and interaction with the environment.

It can also be noted that, in some *specific* cases of cohesion, *specific cohesion principles* may be pointed out. For example, in the case of *the European Union cohesion*, the most significant *specific principles* are considered to be the principle of *strengthening the humanitarian and democratization values*, as well as the principle of *seeking social responsibility, ethics, justice and legitimacy*, the

principle of *seeking the economic welfare, social comfort and favourable environmental conditions*, the principle of *sustainable development*, etc. All these principles are described to some extent in the research works devoted to the analysis of European integration and the European Union enlargement. They are also paid special attention in pursuing *regional and the cohesion policy*.

It may be noted that, in *various cohesion conditions*, *different* and even *very diverse specific cohesion principles* manifest themselves. Thus, it can be stated that the diversity of the cohesion conditions, causing the respective diversity of the cohesion principles, shows that the cohesion processes make a significant and complicated research area.

The current cohesion practice reveals some particular *trends*, reflecting both *general* and *specific* cohesion *regularities*.

In general, *the cohesion regularities* characterize the main *trajectories of cohesion processes*, allowing us to determine the dominant *cohesion features*. It is clear that *the cohesion regularities* refer to various cohesion *phenomena*, including those, reflecting the variety of the cohesion *aims and interests of various subjects* involved in the cohesion processes, *the complexity and inconsistency* of these processes, as well as *risks, threats and uncertainties*, associated with various conditions, in which the cohesion processes take place.

It can be stated that, in general, *the cohesion regularities* reflect *the processes, associated with application and realization of the cohesion principles*: any regularities of cohesion may be perceived and treated as a description of a particular 'cause and effect' relationship associated with application and realization of the cohesion principles.

This approach allows for identification of several most significant *general cohesion regularities* governing the current cohesion practice:

- *the increasing diversity of the interested subjects and their interests*, reflecting the trend of increasing the variety of *subjects*, seeking to realize more diverse *interests* in the process of cohesion: this regularity may reveal the possibilities and needs for developing *the cooperation* of various subjects of cohesion, as well as the possibilities of various conflicts and threats and the needs for *preventing the conflicts and threats*, arising in the course of cohesion,
- *stronger orientation of cohesion to a larger scope of activities and a higher rate of transformation*, reflecting the trend of the cohesion processes *to enlarge the areas*, where they are taking place *and to increase the rate of their proceeding*: this regularity shows *the increasing cohesion significance* in response to globalization and internationalization challenges, as well as the increasing changes in the development of culture, science, technology and the relationships with the environment,
- *the complexity, difficulties and contradictions of the cohesion processes*, reflecting their diversity and the need for seeking their *harmony*: this regularity emphasizes the necessity of paying more attention to *the problems of sustainable development* because of *the lack of both the sustainable development and the new possibilities and the requirements to adequately respond to the priorities of sustainable development*,

- *the cyclic character of the cohesion processes*, reflecting the fact that cohesion develops in some particular *cycles*, which begin with *raising the requirement* of convergence, interaction and integration of various systems, spaces and elements and ending with *the creation of a particular new system characterized by the internal harmony*: this regularity indicates the need for paying the greatest attention primarily to the dynamic characteristics of cohesion,
- *the orientation of cohesion processes to expansion and renewal*, reflecting *the propagation* of the particular norms, standards, models, traditions and rules, which means that *two types of cohesion effects* become evident at the same time. In the first case, *the renewal* is taking place in the systems, spaces and elements, where new norms, standards, models, traditions and rules have been established. In the second case, *the expansion of the activities* of the subjects who purposefully promote and realize the propagation of these norms, standards, models, traditions and rules, takes place.

Moreover, in general, the considered regularities reflect the phenomenon associated with *the change of the uniqueness criteria*, implying that *three different, but mutually complementary processes*, are taking place simultaneously. The first process means that any system, space or element, involved in cohesion, *loses its uniqueness completely or partially*, while the second implies that any system, space or element, involved in cohesion, *acquires new uniqueness features*. The third process is associated with the creation and development of *a new unique system or space* in the course of cohesion. In general, *the phenomenon of changing the criteria of uniqueness* may be considered to be *a complex regularity*, allowing the current cohesion processes to be characterized from various perspectives.

It should be emphasized that the scientific study of modern cohesion phenomena and processes requires the researchers not only to identify *the general cohesion regularities*, but also to define *the specific cohesion regularities*, because *the latter* provide a possibility to take into account various specific features of cohesion, manifesting themselves in some particular cases. For example, in the case, when the European Union cohesion is considered, the main attention is paid to *interregional cohesion* and various *regional uniqueness aspects*, taking into account the peculiarities of European integration and the European Union development and enlargement: therefore, the problems of interregional cohesion are considered to be highly significant today for the whole European Union and for its particular member-states (Daugėliene, 2011; Pukelienė, 2008; Fligstein, 2010; Trondal, 2010; Johnson, Turner, 2006; Lane, Ersson, 1996; Leach, 2007; Leen, Melnikas, 2005; Morris, Goldsworthy, 2008).

Goal-oriented cohesion in the European Union: problems and challenges

Goal-oriented and effective cohesion is a condition required for successive modernization of the European Union, and the solution of its current economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological development, as well as safety, enlargement and environmental problems. This implies that seeking to modernize the European Union and to solve the

problems of its development and enlargement, the greatest attention should be primarily paid to cohesion.

It is clear that the European Union cohesion has very *specific features* and requires the understanding of the particular *challenges* to its development which should be *adequately responded*.

A number of the most important *conditions*, reflecting the specific character and challenges to the cohesion processes, may be defined as follows:

- the conditions, reflecting the need for *creating and strengthening the common European Union space of social, political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological development*: the cohesion processes taking place in the European Union should be primarily oriented to *strengthening the common space*, including the plans for ensuring *its long-term stability and inviolability*.
- the conditions, reflecting the need for *increasing the potential of innovative activities* by using the cohesion mechanisms oriented to *breakthroughs* in all the areas of social, economic, cultural, scientific and technological development: *the strengthening of the innovative potential* is the European Union cohesion priority, reflecting a highly important area of *synergetic effects' initiation*, particularly, taking into account that the strengthening of the innovative potential is the main condition required for accelerating scientific and technological development and improving the quality of social and economic life,
- the conditions, reflecting the need for *strengthening safety and preventing the conflicts* in the European Union by using the mechanisms of cohesion: these mechanisms can really *decrease the differentiation* in various areas of social and economic life, thereby creating the conditions for *preventing various conflicts and increasing the safety and stability* in the European Union,
- the conditions, reflecting the need for *harmony and sustainable development* in the European Union: cohesion is the main condition for achieving *harmony and sustainable development*, including the plans for extending the cohesion processes to all the areas of social and economic life as well as to all the countries, regions and social layers.
- the conditions reflecting the significance of cohesion in the European Union both in the sense that the level of the advanced development of the European Union as a whole should *correspond to the current challenges* and in the sense that the European Union as a whole should be *competitive* and perspective in the current *globalization context*.

Some *specific problems* arise in the course of cohesion, taking place in the European Union, which show that:

- some particular *disagreement between the supranational European Union interests and the national interests* of the particular European Union member-states can be observed: in the cases of disagreement or conflict of interests, the conditions are created, when the cohesion priorities and solutions are chosen which, like the very cohesion processes, are not quite adequate to the public needs and challenges of life,

- *the increasing need* for attracting some *additional financial and other resources* arises: the awareness of *the insufficiency* of the available resources for developing the cohesion processes should result in the actions ensuring *their effective use*,
- the need for making some additional efforts for purposeful cohesion expansion among *the more advanced* member-states of the European Union and their regions as well as among *the backward* European Union states and regions arises: this purposeful cohesion development may raise some additional problems associated with incomplete readiness of both more and less advanced European Union member-states and regions to realize *the principle of solidarity*,
- considerable *disagreement between the interests* of the *national states* and *international business entities*, can be observed in the common European Union space: this poses new challenges to cohesion.

The conditions described above reflect the need for taking into account the specific nature of the cohesion processes in the European Union, as well as determining the need for the respective research and defining new trends and priorities of practical activities.

Conclusions

Cohesion processes could be defined as an *especially important precondition* for further positive political, social, economic development, as well as for positive cultural and ecological changes and for scientific and technological progress in the European Union. In addition, *cohesion* processes could be described as *priority* of political, cultural, social, economic, ecological and technological *harmonization* processes in the contemporary conditions of the European integration and enlargement of the European Union.

Cohesion could be described as *convergence* or *harmonization*, meaning the trend of *decreasing the differences* in a particular area of social life, activity or development. It may be stated that *cohesion as a process*, describing *harmonization and decrease of differences*, also reflects the orientation to *decreasing or eliminating conflicts or disproportions*, as well as the *realization of wishes for sustainable development and harmonization*.

This approach to cohesion and its concept may be considered to be *universal* in describing the meaning of *the cohesion processes as harmonization and decreasing of differences*. The universal character of this approach requires us to take into account the *diversity of cohesion processes*, realizing that they can be considered and assessed, when a number of *various factors* are taken into consideration.

The main of these factors reflect the following types of cohesion:

- the cohesion between various *processes* (e.g. between economic, social, political, technological development or other processes, as well as between social and economic processes, between technological development and environmental protection or between other combinations of processes),
- the cohesion between various *regions* or other *geographically identified spaces* (in this case, the cohesion between *globally, internationally, nationally* or even locally described regions, may be mentioned),

- the cohesion between various *social groups or social layers* (which may be considered and assessed globally, internationally, nationally or even locally),
- the cohesion between various *activities*, between the sectors of social, economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological development, as well as various *spheres* of social activities or business,
- the cohesion between various *organizations* or *subjects* engaged in various activities.

There are many principles and regularities of cohesion. As the main *general principles of cohesion*, could be defined the following principles:

- the principle of ‘the communicating vessels’,
- the principle of multiplication of new quality standards,
- the principles of innovations and qualitative changes,
- the principle of diversity harmonization,
- the principle of the „common denominator“ and assimilation.

The above-mentioned principles reflect the orientation of the cohesion processes to *the searching for and encouraging the synergetic effects*. Cohesion by its nature is the process of the *searching for and purposeful encouraging of possible synergetic effects*: in the course of cohesion, the efforts are made to find and effectively use new possibilities for the development, expansion and modernization of the particular systems, which are based on the *searching for and encouraging of synergetic effects*. The cohesion principles reflect a concept of the searching for and encouraging of synergetic effects, therefore, they may be approached as the principles, reflecting the circumstances of the searching for and encouraging of synergetic effects in the course of cohesion.

The cohesion practice reveals some particular *trends*, reflecting both *general* and *specific cohesion regularities*. The cohesion regularities characterize the main *trajectories of cohesion processes*, allowing us to determine the dominant *cohesion features*. The cohesion regularities refer to various cohesion *phenomena*, including those, reflecting the variety of the cohesion *aims and interests of various subjects* involved in the cohesion processes, *the complexity and inconsistency* of these processes, as well as *risks, threats and uncertainties*, associated with various conditions, in which the cohesion processes take place.

As the most significant *general cohesion regularities* could be defined the following regularities:

- *the increasing diversity of the interested subjects and their interests*,
- *stronger orientation of cohesion to a larger scope of activities and a higher rate of transformation*,
- *the complexity, difficulties and contradictions of the cohesion processes*,
- *the cyclic character of the cohesion processes*,
- *the orientation of cohesion processes to expansion and renewal*.

The scientific study of modern cohesion phenomena and processes requires the researchers not only to identify *the general cohesion regularities*, but also to define *the specific cohesion regularities*, because *the latter* provide a possibility to take into account various specific features of cohesion, manifesting themselves in some particular cases. In the case, when the European Union cohesion is considered, the main attention is paid to *interregional cohesion* and various *regional*

uniqueness aspects, taking into account the peculiarities of European integration and the European Union development and enlargement: therefore, the problems of interregional cohesion are considered to be highly significant today for the whole European Union and for its particular member-states.

A number of the most important *conditions*, reflecting the specific character and challenges to the cohesion processes in the European Union, may be defined as follows:

- the conditions, reflecting the need for *creating and strengthening the common European Union space of social, political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological development*,
- the conditions, reflecting the need for *increasing the potential of innovative activities* by using the cohesion mechanisms oriented to *breakthroughs* in all the areas of social, economic, cultural, scientific and technological development,
- the conditions, reflecting the need for *strengthening safety and preventing the conflicts* in the European Union by using the mechanisms of cohesion,
- the conditions, reflecting the need for *harmony and sustainable development* in the European Union,
- the conditions reflecting the significance of cohesion in the European Union both in the sense that the level of the advanced development of the European Union as a whole should *correspond to the current challenges* and in the sense that the European Union as a whole should be *competitive* and perspective in the current *globalization context*.

Some *specific problems* arise in the course of cohesion, taking place in the European Union, which show that:

- some particular *disagreement between the supranational European Union interests and the national interests* of the particular European Union member-states can be observed: in the cases of disagreement or conflict of interests, the conditions are created, when the cohesion priorities and solutions are chosen which, like the cohesion processes, are not quite adequate to the public needs and challenges of life,
- *the increasing need* for attracting some *additional financial and other resources* arises: the awareness of *the insufficiency* of the available resources for developing the cohesion processes should result in the actions ensuring *their effective use*,
- the need for making some additional efforts for purposeful cohesion expansion among *the more advanced* member-states of the European Union and their regions as well as among *the backward* European Union states and regions arises: this purposeful cohesion development may raise some additional problems associated with incomplete readiness of both more and less advanced European Union member-states and regions to realize *the principle of solidarity*,
- considerable *disagreement between the interests of the national states and international business entities*, can be observed in the common European Union space: this poses new challenges to cohesion.

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