

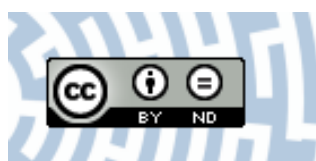


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RESULTS OF THE COMPANY  
COMPETITIVENESS BAROMETR 2014  
IN POLAND, SLOVAKIA AND  
THE CZECH REPUBLIC

**Z a r y s t r e ś c i:** Competitiveness is a concept that evaluates the entities participating in the competition in terms of the results, as well as the ability to achieve benefits in the future by a company. The company referred to as “competitive” is able to achieve from its economic activity relatively greater benefits than their competitors. In this article the authors present some results of the Company Competitiveness Barometer, conducted in 2014 on a group of 992 companies from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Barometer is based on the Competitiveness Integrated Model.

**S ł o w a k l u c z o w e:** competitiveness; competitive potential; strategy of competition; competitive advantage; competitive positioning.

**K l a s y f i k a c j a J E L:** F14.

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## WSTĘP

Competitiveness is of particular importance for scientists, economic policy makers and businessmen in small and open economies [Stojcic, 2014, p. 194]. There are different approaches to study the competitiveness of companies. The starting point for the analyses is a classic, but still developed, concept of M. Porter [Ketels, 2012]. However, positive competitive outcomes can only be obtained by matching competitive strategy to available resources [Block, 2015, p. 39].

Competitiveness is a concept that evaluates the entities participating in the competition in terms of the results, as well as the ability to achieve benefits in the future in a changing environment [Bossak, 2004, p. 18]. The company referred to as “competitive” is able to achieve from its economic activity relatively greater benefits than their competitors. [Hemmarfar, 2010] Competitiveness may be a general method to deal with the competition, which allows to specify the mechanisms and tools of competing in both long and short term [Pierścionek, 2005].

When reviewing existing definitions of competitiveness one can also find more synthetic approaches to the company competitiveness as a greater efficiency in the production and delivery of products and services compared to competitors [Wattanapruttipaisan, 2002; Ambastha & Momaya, 2004], or the ability to continuously deliver added value to its stakeholders [Dwyer & Kim, 2003] or to be profitable and keep a dominant market position [Lombana, 2006, p. 34]. Competitiveness is often simply equated with the price, product quality, productivity, resources, production costs or the competitive advantage [Lombana, 2006, p. 33].

Attempts to define the notion of the company competitiveness appears frequently in scientific publications and on the occasion of the research conducted by various institutions in different countries [Cetindamar & Kilitcioglu, 2013]. The European Union has developed a formula, according to which a company’s competitiveness is determined by its ability to support the potential used to meet the needs of customers through efficient supply of products and services, better pricing and non-price conditions, and better quality of products than offered by competitors [Annoni & Dijkstra, 2013]. In contrast, the UK government has proposed to define the competitiveness of a single entity as the ability to produce the right products at the right quality and price at the right time [Benchmarking UK Competitiveness in the Global Economy, 2012].

A popular approach is also the use of benchmarking as a tool to carry out specific rankings of competitiveness [Attiany, 2014]. The conducted studies often refer to international comparisons [Abel-Koch, 2014] and aspects of internationalization of enterprises that are affecting their competitiveness [Pereira et. al, 2009].

In this article the authors present some results of the Company Competitiveness Barometer, conducted in 2014 on a group of 992 companies from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Barometer is based on the Competitiveness Integrated Model [Flak & Głód, 2009; Flak & Głód, 2012].

The specific objectives of this article are:

- To indicate the selected approach to the competitiveness of the company and the Competitiveness Integrated Model that was used as a theoretical foundation in Company Competitiveness Barometer.
- To provide an overview of the research methodology.
- To present the results of empirical studies of 992 companies.
- To propose the future direction of the research on company's competitiveness by means of the Company Competitiveness Barometer.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF COMPANY COMPETITIVENESS BAROMETER

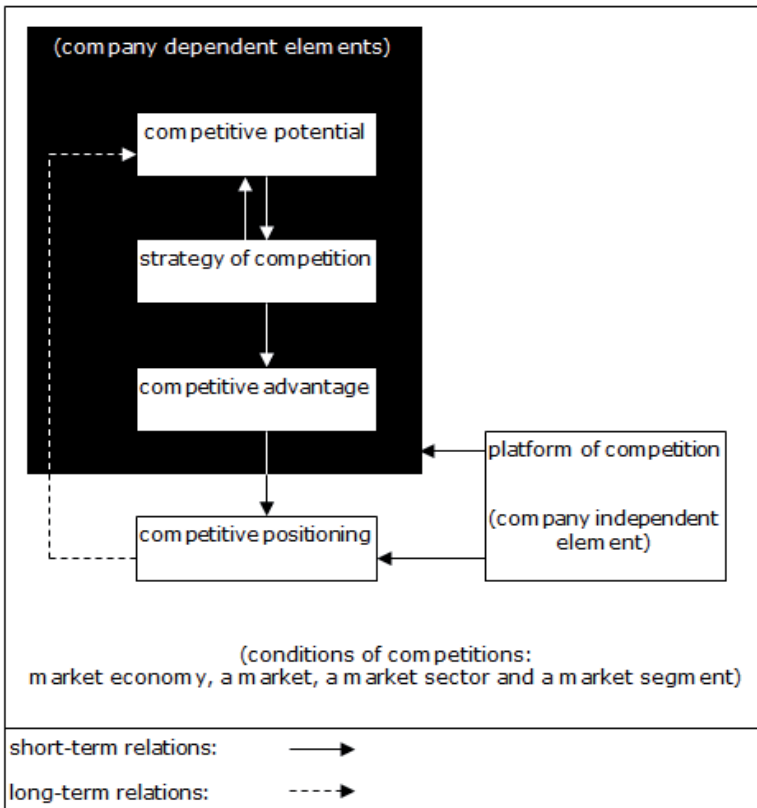
Most of the definitions of competitiveness, in the current state of art, indicate that it is a multi-dimensional characteristic of a company [Iarossi, 2013]. The subject of the competitiveness's evaluation should be all areas of the company that decide on the attractiveness of the offer, its economic condition, organizational and technical effectiveness [Donno, 2013].

In the current state of art, an integrated approach, which was also used by the authors, can be found. Its description is presented below. The inspiration for its creation was, among all, the Integrated Model Of Destination Competitiveness [Armenski et al., 2012, p. 488]. The Integrated Model defines six main categories of competitiveness: inherited resources, created resources, supporting factors and resources, destination management, demand conditions and situational conditions. In the literature, one can find the view that the main competitive factors in competitiveness models created from small be very different individual competitiveness indicators [Gomezelja & Mihalic, 2008, p. 306].

The authors have attempted to systematize the concepts, definitions and models related to the subject of the company's competitiveness

[Flak & Głód, 2009]. The authors' model of competitiveness has been improved and operationalized, and by the means of the research tools, was adapted for practical use in the evaluation of various aspects of the company's competitiveness [Flak & Głód, 2012]. The authors focused on competition as the motive for repositioning, whereas most of the existing strategy literature focuses on opportunity as the motive [Wang, 2014, p. 1586].

The Competitiveness Integrated Model was created to allow a generalization of the most companies and identification of the key relationships between different aspects of competitiveness. Competitiveness Integrated Model, and the situational context, conditioning competing companies, is shown in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1.** The Competitiveness Integrated Model

Source: Flak & Głód, 2012, p. 57

The Competitiveness Integrated Model is based on 7 assumptions. Firstly, that the competition between companies takes place within the sector. Secondly, the competitiveness of companies is affected by dependent and independent factors. Thirdly, the platform of competition comprises the features of proximal and distal environments; the characteristics of the distal environment are fixed at the time and the same for all competitors; the characteristics of the proximal environment may be different for each of them. Fourthly, the characteristics of the platform of competition do not depend on a particular company. Fifthly, the characteristics of companies included in the concepts of the potential, strategy, advantage and competitive positioning, are different for each of them. Sixthly, the characteristics of the company, included in the concepts of the potential, strategy and competitive advantage, are dependent on the company. Finally, the characteristics of the company included in the concept of the competitive positioning, are independent of the company [Flak & Głód, 2014, p. 14–16].

Tab. 1 presents the definitions of the terms used in the Competitiveness Integrated Model. Components of the Competitiveness Integrated Model are linked temporally and causally. Their relationship has been verified in previous publications of the authors [Flak & Głód, 2014, p. 14–16].

**Tab. 1.** Definitions of the terms used in the Competitiveness Integrated Model

| Element on the Model    | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Competitive potential   | Resources, which the company has or should have to be able to use them to build, maintain and strengthen its competitiveness. These are, in a broad sense, business opportunities arising from owned tangible and intangible capital. Competitive potential of the company is at the same time a relative, multidimensional concept. |
| Strategy of competition | Adopted program of action aiming to achieve a competitive advantage against other subjects of the competitive environment (microenvironment), serving the basic objectives of the company.                                                                                                                                           |
| Competitive advantage   | The company's ability to deliver the tangible and intangible assets to the buyer through the market. The competitive advantage of the company is a relative, multidimensional concept.                                                                                                                                               |

Continue tab. 1

| Element on the Model    | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Competitive positioning | Synthetic market and economic results of the company, resulting from the degree of the use of capacity of the enterprise to compete now and in the future. The competitive positioning of the company is a relative, multidimensional concept.                     |
| Platform of competition | Group of macro- and microenvironment's features in which the company operates. Features of the macroenvironment are the same for each company operating in the sector, while the microenvironment characteristics may be different for each company in the sector. |

Source: Flak & Głód, 2014, pp. 14–16.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The concept of the research appeared in 2012 as the result of the first Company Competitiveness Barometer which was conducted in Poland in 21 market sectors. However, in the research took part 109 companies and there was no possibility to obtain statistical conclusions. The authors decided to develop the Barometer and in 2013 the group of companies consisted of 173 companies. The results was so encouraging that it was possible to verify relations between a competitive potential, a strategy of competition and competitive advantage in the integrated model of company competitiveness [Flak & Głód, 2014, pp. 14–16].

In 2014 the Company Competitiveness Barometer evolved into an international research project called Barometer24.org. This is enhanced version of the Company Competitiveness Barometer from 2012 and 2013. Within 2014 a cooperation net of 5 European countries has been built: Poland, Spain, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Finland.

The questionnaire used in the Company Competitiveness Barometer contains 48 questions. 45 of them are related to the characteristics of the company that are affecting its competitiveness, and 3 questions are metric questions. The questionnaire can be found on the [www.barometer24.org](http://www.barometer24.org) website.

The questionnaire method used in 5 areas of the company competitiveness research was used in the Company Competitiveness Barometer. In ad-

dition, the questions of the Barometer were chosen in such a way so that the knowledge of the components of these areas of the company's competitiveness is widespread among employees. Most of the research questions do not require detailed financial, personal or technical information.

The questionnaire as a research method and the need to aggregate the respondents, influenced the choice of closed questions for the questionnaire.

The web-based tool that supports the questionnaire, has a built-in algorithm for the evaluation of companies participating in the study. The method for calculating the results of the competitiveness' assessment of a particular company is based on the following assumptions:

- a) No theoretical model of an absolutely correct answer for any sector of the economy (the platform of competition) valid for a longer period of time, defining the features of the most competitive company exists [Flak & Głód, 2012, p. 44].
- b) The comparison of the company's competitiveness can only be relative [Olszewska & Piwoni-Krzeszowska, 2004, p. 507].
- c) The characteristics of the most competitive companies in the sector are focused on some of the values of these features, but there is a low probability that companies with extreme characteristics were among the most competitive in the industry [Bień et al., 1997, pp. 143–144].

After each new entry into the database of the Company Competitiveness Barometer the algorithm updates the contractual value of the points for each question, searching first for the maximum frequency response, and giving that answer 10 points. This way the computer "learns" how the successive respondents answer and on this basis establishes the criteria for awarding the points to the next respondent [Flak, 2012, pp. 113–128].

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

992 companies – 252 of Polish, 79 from the Czech Republic and 659 from Slovakia took part in the Company Competitiveness Barometer 2014. The survey was carried out from 1 September to 30 November 2014. It was the first international edition of the Barometer, and its third edition in Poland. The structure of the research sample, which took part in the Company Competitiveness Barometer 2014 is shown in Tab. 2, Tab. 3, and Tab. 4.



Tab. 2. Structure of the research sample in 2014 in Poland

| Number and percentage of the companies with a different time of operation in the market |                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Up to 5 years                                                                           | 43 companies (17,06%) |
| From 6 to 10 years                                                                      | 55 companies (21,82%) |
| From 11 to 20 years                                                                     | 90 companies (35,91%) |
| From 21 to 40 years                                                                     | 44 companies (17,46%) |
| More than 40 years                                                                      | 20 companies (7,93%)  |
| Number and percentage of the companies with a different number of employees             |                       |
| Up to 9 employees                                                                       | 76 companies – 30,15% |
| From 10 to 49 employees                                                                 | 72 companies – 28,57% |
| From 50 to 249 employees                                                                | 44 companies – 17,46% |
| 250 employees and more                                                                  | 60 companies – 23,80% |

Source: Own research.

Tab. 3. Structure of the research sample in 2014 in the Czech Republic.

| Number and percentage of the companies with a different time of operation in the market |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Up to 5 years                                                                           | 9 companies (11,4%)    |
| From 6 to 25 years                                                                      | 61 companies (77,2%)   |
| From 26 to 50 years                                                                     | 2 companies (2,5%)     |
| More than 50 years                                                                      | 7 companies (8,9%)     |
| Number and percentage of the companies with a different number of employees             |                        |
| Up to 9 employees                                                                       | 36 companies – (45,6%) |
| From 10 to 49 employees                                                                 | 23 companies – (29,1%) |
| From 50 to 249 employees                                                                | 9 companies – (11,4%)  |
| 250 employees and more                                                                  | 11 companies – (13,9%) |

Source: Own research.

Tab. 4. Structure of the research sample in 2014 in Slovakia

| Number and percentage of the companies with a different time of operation in the market |                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Up to 5 years                                                                           | 126 companies (19,1%)   |
| From 6 to 25 years                                                                      | 460 companies (69,8%)   |
| From 26 to 50 years                                                                     | 28 companies (4,3%)     |
| More than 50 years                                                                      | 45 companies (6,8%)     |
| Number and percentage of the companies with a different number of employees             |                         |
| Up to 9 employees                                                                       | 175 companies – (26,6%) |
| From 10 to 49 employees                                                                 | 201 companies – (30,5%) |
| From 50 to 249 employees                                                                | 165 companies – (25,0%) |
| 250 employees and more                                                                  | 118 companies – (17,9%) |

Source: Own research.

## CHOSEN ASPECTS INFLUENCING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE COMPANY

Due to the editing limitations of this article, the analytical part presents the most important and interesting, according to the authors, results of empirical studies. The analysis shows different aspects of the functioning of the companies, which include the following elements of the competitiveness model: competitive potential, competitive advantage, platform of competition and competitive positioning.

In the assessment of the competitive potential, the question about obtaining profit on the core business was raised. Tab. 5 presents the overall results in this respect for the companies from different countries. Thanks to the analysis of the results it can be concluded that the structure of the obtained results indicate a similar situation in the surveyed companies in all countries.

Tab. 5. Profit from the core business in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia

|                    | Definitely not | No   | It's hard to say | Yes  | Definitely yes | Altogether |
|--------------------|----------------|------|------------------|------|----------------|------------|
| Poland (n)         | 3              | 18   | 46               | 132  | 53             | 252        |
| Poland (%)         | 1,2            | 7,1  | 18,3             | 52,4 | 21,0           | 100,0      |
| Czech Republic (n) | 3              | 9    | 9                | 38   | 20             | 79         |
| Czech Republic (%) | 3,8            | 11,4 | 11,4             | 48,1 | 25,3           | 100,0      |
| Slovakia (n)       | 5              | 47   | 140              | 357  | 110            | 659        |
| Slovakia (%)       | 0,8            | 7,1  | 21,2             | 54,2 | 16,7           | 100,0      |

Source: Own research.

As presented in Tab. 5, almost three quarters of the Polish respondents achieved profit on their core business, and only approx. 8% of companies indicated a negative situation, which is – incurring losses. In contrast, more than 18% of the companies did not indicate a clear statement in this regard. Analysis of responses by the company headcount shows that negative results are recorded in the smallest (up to 9 employees) and the largest (over 249 employees) companies. The analysis according to the criteria of the time of the company's existence indicates that the greatest difficulty in achieving a profit on the core business activities happens to the youngest companies (up to 5 years of existence).

Tab. 6. Profit from the core business (Poland)

| Are you obtaining profit from your core business?<br>N=252 | Size of the company<br>(number of employees) |               |                |               | Number of years of existence in the market |              |               |              | Altogether |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|-----|
|                                                            | up to 9                                      | from 10 to 49 | from 50 to 249 | more than 249 | up to 5                                    | from 6 to 25 | from 26 to 50 | more than 50 |            |     |
| Definitely not                                             | n                                            | 2             | 0              | 0             | 1                                          | 0            | 3             | 0            | 0          | 3   |
|                                                            | %                                            | 2,6           | 0,0            | 0,0           | 1,7                                        | 0,0          | 1,7           | 0,0          | 0,0        | 1,2 |

Continue tab. 6

| Are you obtaining profit from your core business?<br>N=252 |   | Size of the company<br>(number of employees) |               |                |               | Number of years of existence in the market |              |               |              | Altogether |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
|                                                            |   | up to 9                                      | from 10 to 49 | from 50 to 249 | more than 249 | up to 5                                    | from 6 to 25 | from 26 to 50 | more than 50 |            |
| No                                                         | n | 11                                           | 3             | 1              | 3             | 7                                          | 10           | 1             | 0            | 18         |
|                                                            | % | 14,5                                         | 4,2           | 2,3            | 5,0           | 15,9                                       | 5,7          | 4,8           | 0,0          | 7,1        |
| It's hard to say                                           | n | 17                                           | 12            | 8              | 9             | 12                                         | 30           | 3             | 1            | 46         |
|                                                            | % | 22,4                                         | 16,7          | 18,2           | 15,0          | 27,3                                       | 17,0         | 14,3          | 9,1          | 18,3       |
| Yes                                                        | n | 37                                           | 42            | 19             | 34            | 23                                         | 90           | 12            | 7            | 132        |
|                                                            | % | 48,7                                         | 58,3          | 43,2           | 56,7          | 52,3                                       | 51,1         | 57,1          | 63,6         | 52,4       |
| Definitely yes                                             | n | 9                                            | 15            | 16             | 13            | 2                                          | 43           | 5             | 3            | 53         |
|                                                            | % | 11,8                                         | 20,8          | 36,4           | 21,7          | 4,5                                        | 24,4         | 23,8          | 27,3         | 21,0       |
| Altogether                                                 | n | 76                                           | 72            | 44             | 60            | 44                                         | 176          | 21            | 11           | 252        |
|                                                            | % | 100,0                                        | 100,0         | 100,0          | 100,0         | 100,0                                      | 100,0        | 100,0         | 100,0        | 100,0      |

Source: Own research

More than 73% of Czech companies declare obtaining profit on core activities (Tab. 7). The weakest performance in this respect is achieved by the longest available on the market. Analysis by the criterion of number of employees does not show large differences, only in the smallest businesses a slightly worse situation in the reporting aspect can be noticed.

Tab. 7. Profit from the core business (Czech Republic)

| Are you obtaining profit from your core business?<br>N=79 |   | Size of the company<br>(number of employees) |               |                |               | Number of years of existence in the market |              |               |              | Altogether |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
|                                                           |   | up to 9                                      | from 10 to 49 | from 50 to 249 | more than 249 | up to 5                                    | from 6 to 25 | from 26 to 50 | more than 50 |            |
| Definitely not                                            | n | 3                                            | 0             | 0              | 0             | 2                                          | 1            | 0             | 0            | 3          |
|                                                           | % | 8,3                                          | 0,0           | 0,0            | 0,0           | 22,2                                       | 1,6          | 0,0           | 0,0          | 3,8        |

Continue tab. 7

| Are you obtaining profit from your core business?<br>N=79 |   | Size of the company<br>(number of employees) |                     |                      |                     | Number of years of existence<br>in the market |                    |                     |                    | Altogether |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------|
|                                                           |   | up<br>to 9                                   | from<br>10 to<br>49 | from<br>50 to<br>249 | more<br>than<br>249 | up<br>to 5                                    | from<br>6 to<br>25 | from<br>26 to<br>50 | more<br>than<br>50 |            |
| No                                                        | n | 4                                            | 2                   | 2                    | 1                   | 0                                             | 8                  | 0                   | 1                  | 9          |
|                                                           | % | 11,1                                         | 8,7                 | 22,2                 | 9,1                 | 0,0                                           | 13,1               | 0,0                 | 14,3               | 11,4       |
| It's hard to say                                          | n | 5                                            | 2                   | 1                    | 1                   | 0                                             | 7                  | 0                   | 2                  | 9          |
|                                                           | % | 13,9                                         | 8,7                 | 11,1                 | 9,1                 | 0,0                                           | 11,5               | 0,0                 | 28,6               | 11,4       |
| Yes                                                       | n | 18                                           | 15                  | 3                    | 2                   | 5                                             | 30                 | 1                   | 2                  | 38         |
|                                                           | % | 50,0                                         | 65,2                | 33,3                 | 18,2                | 55,6                                          | 49,2               | 50,0                | 28,6               | 48,1       |
| Definitely yes                                            | n | 6                                            | 4                   | 3                    | 7                   | 2                                             | 15                 | 1                   | 2                  | 20         |
|                                                           | % | 16,7                                         | 17,4                | 33,3                 | 63,6                | 22,2                                          | 24,6               | 50,0                | 28,6               | 25,3       |
| Altogether                                                | n | 36                                           | 23                  | 9                    | 11                  | 9                                             | 61                 | 2                   | 7                  | 79         |
|                                                           | % | 100,0                                        | 100,0               | 100,0                | 100,0               | 100,0                                         | 100,0              | 100,0               | 100,0              | 100,0      |

Source: Own research.

Similarly, in the case of companies in Slovakia, the situation is very similar to that observed in the Polish and Czech companies, as 70.9% declare obtaining profit on their core business. The smallest and youngest companies in the bottom of the studied area. Detailed data are presented in Table. 8.

Tab. 8. Profit from the core business (Slovakia)

| Are you obtaining profit from your core business?<br>N=659 |   | Size of the company<br>(number of employees) |               |                |               | Number of years of existence in the market |              |               |              | Altogether |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
|                                                            |   | up to 9                                      | from 10 to 49 | from 50 to 249 | more than 249 | up to 5                                    | from 6 to 25 | from 26 to 50 | more than 50 |            |
| Definitely not                                             | n | 2                                            | 2             | 1              | 0             | 2                                          | 3            | 0             | 0            | 5          |
|                                                            | % | 1,1                                          | 1,0           | 0,6            | 0,0           | 1,6                                        | 0,7          | 0,0           | 0,0          | 0,8        |
| No                                                         | n | 19                                           | 15            | 10             | 3             | 15                                         | 30           | 2             | 0            | 47         |
|                                                            | % | 10,9                                         | 7,5           | 6,1            | 2,5           | 11,9                                       | 6,5          | 7,1           | 0,0          | 7,1        |
| It's hard to say                                           | n | 42                                           | 45            | 29             | 24            | 27                                         | 100          | 3             | 10           | 140        |
|                                                            | % | 24,0                                         | 22,4          | 17,6           | 20,3          | 21,4                                       | 21,7         | 10,7          | 22,2         | 21,2       |
| Yes                                                        | n | 88                                           | 105           | 98             | 66            | 62                                         | 254          | 19            | 22           | 357        |
|                                                            | % | 50,3                                         | 52,2          | 59,4           | 55,9          | 49,2                                       | 55,2         | 67,9          | 48,9         | 54,2       |
| Definitely yes                                             | n | 24                                           | 34            | 27             | 25            | 20                                         | 73           | 4             | 13           | 110        |
|                                                            | % | 13,7                                         | 16,9          | 16,4           | 21,2          | 15,9                                       | 15,9         | 14,3          | 28,9         | 16,7       |
| Altogether                                                 | n | 175                                          | 201           | 165            | 118           | 126                                        | 460          | 28            | 45           | 659        |
|                                                            | % | 100,0                                        | 100,0         | 100,0          | 100,0         | 100,0                                      | 100,0        | 100,0         | 100,0        | 100,0      |

Source: Own research.

Information resources, that are part of the competitive potential, were assessed among others, in the context of the knowledge collection. It turns out that the accumulation of knowledge in the company in the form of the electronic complete studies is the most common among companies in Slovakia (59.2%), and slightly less in Czech (43%) and Polish companies (40.9%) – the data are presented in Table. 9.

Tab. 9. Collection of knowledge in the company

| In which way is knowledge collected in the company? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| complete paper descriptions                         | n | 41     | 14             | 74       |
|                                                     | % | 16,3   | 17,7           | 11,2     |
| paper unrelated documents                           | n | 13     | 5              | 34       |
|                                                     | % | 5,2    | 6,3            | 5,2      |
| electronic complete descriptions                    | n | 103    | 34             | 390      |
|                                                     | % | 40,9   | 43,0           | 59,2     |
| electronic unrelated documents                      | n | 47     | 9              | 62       |
|                                                     | % | 18,7   | 11,4           | 9,4      |
| in the heads of employees                           | n | 48     | 17             | 99       |
|                                                     | % | 19,0   | 21,5           | 15,0     |
| altogether                                          | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                     | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

The innovation resources are yet another element of the assessment of the competitive potential. They have been assessed from the perspective of, inter alia, the possibility of introducing minor improvements by a single employee in their work. It turns out that complete freedom in this respect declare almost one in five companies and nearly 18% of Czech companies. In Polish companies such possibility is declared by only 7% of companies. Generally Polish companies present the least flexibility in this field. Detailed statistics are shown in Tab. 10.

Tab. 10. Introduction of facilitation at work

| To what extent can a particular employee introduce small facilitation in doing their work? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| it's not possible                                                                          | n | 10     | 2              | 24       |
|                                                                                            | % | 4,0    | 2,5            | 3,6      |
| to a small extent, only after discussing it with a supervisor                              | n | 61     | 7              | 47       |
|                                                                                            | % | 24,2   | 8,9            | 7,1      |
| to a certain, limited extent                                                               | n | 91     | 26             | 230      |
|                                                                                            | % | 36,1   | 32,9           | 34,9     |
| in most cases alone                                                                        | n | 72     | 30             | 227      |
|                                                                                            | % | 28,6   | 38,0           | 34,4     |
| ma pełną swobodę działania                                                                 | n | 18     | 14             | 131      |
|                                                                                            | % | 7,1    | 17,7           | 19,9     |
| altogether                                                                                 | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                                            | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

The creativity of key employees of the surveyed companies was another evaluated aspect (Tab. 11). In Polish and Slovak companies, high or very high creativity of employees was pledged by more than half of the surveyed companies. However, similar declaration from Czech firms was given by approx. 35% of the companies. At the same time every fourth company in the country declared its low or very low level.



Tab. 11. Creativity of the key employees

| How do you assess the creativity of the company's key employees? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| very low                                                         | n | 6      | 4              | 16       |
|                                                                  | % | 2,4    | 5,1            | 2,4      |
| low                                                              | n | 28     | 16             | 58       |
|                                                                  | % | 11,1   | 20,3           | 8,8      |
| moderate                                                         | n | 91     | 31             | 225      |
|                                                                  | % | 36,1   | 39,2           | 34,1     |
| high                                                             | n | 106    | 22             | 268      |
|                                                                  | % | 42,1   | 27,8           | 40,7     |
| very high                                                        | n | 21     | 6              | 92       |
|                                                                  | % | 8,3    | 7,6            | 14,0     |
| altogether                                                       | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                  | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

Another interesting aspect in the area of innovation was the issue of documenting projects, operations and production processes (Tab. 12). In this respect, more than 57% of Slovak companies declared to always document all projects or do it in a wide range. Almost 50% of Polish companies also have a similar mode of action. In the case of Czech companies this procedure was confirmed by more than 40% of companies.

Tab. 12. Documenting the projects in the company

| To which extent are the ongoing projects, operations and production processes documented in the company? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| not at all                                                                                               | n | 13     | 5              | 13       |
|                                                                                                          | % | 5,2    | 6,3            | 2,0      |
| low                                                                                                      | n | 28     | 20             | 85       |
|                                                                                                          | % | 11,1   | 25,3           | 12,9     |
| moderate                                                                                                 | n | 87     | 21             | 185      |
|                                                                                                          | % | 34,5   | 26,6           | 28,1     |
| high                                                                                                     | n | 79     | 27             | 270      |
|                                                                                                          | % | 31,3   | 34,2           | 41,0     |
| always and every                                                                                         | n | 45     | 6              | 106      |
|                                                                                                          | % | 17,9   | 7,6            | 16,1     |
| altogether                                                                                               | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                                                          | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

Organizational resources were another element evaluated in terms of the competitive potential (Tab. 13), including the aspect of how the employees are informed of the company’s strategy. In half of the surveyed Polish companies a declaration was made that such information is transmitted during regular meetings with supervisors. On the other hand, among nearly 40% of the Slovak companies the most popular way are the cyclical information activities. Contrarily, in the Czech companies most common form of communication are meetings with supervisors (36.7%).

Tab. 13. Awareness of the company's strategy

| In which way can the employees get to know the strategy of the company? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| they can't, it's secret                                                 | n | 10     | 4              | 25       |
|                                                                         | % | 4,0    | 5,1            | 3,8      |
| during meetings with the supervisors                                    | n | 126    | 29             | 198      |
|                                                                         | % | 50,0   | 36,7           | 30,0     |
| from the prepared materials                                             | n | 52     | 15             | 124      |
|                                                                         | % | 20,6   | 19,0           | 18,8     |
| from the external www service                                           | n | 22     | 8              | 53       |
|                                                                         | % | 8,7    | 10,1           | 8,0      |
| from the cyclical information actions                                   | n | 42     | 23             | 259      |
|                                                                         | % | 16,7   | 29,1           | 39,3     |
| altogether                                                              | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                         | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0%   |

Source: Own research.

In terms of competitive advantage the issue of the main objective of the used pricing strategy was assessed (Tab. 14). Almost 35% of Polish companies use a strategy of maximizing profits over a long period of time. In contrast, almost 31% of companies use a strategy of maximizing participation in the sector or market segment. Half of the Slovak and Czech companies declare a strategy of maximizing profits over a long period of time. On the other hand, the largest percentage of the respondents declaring the aim of survival difficult times in the market is in the Czech Republic (16.5%).

Tab. 14. The aim of the pricing strategy.

| What is the main objective of the currently used pricing strategy for all the products or services altogether? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| surviving the difficult Times in the market                                                                    | n | 30     | 13             | 43       |
|                                                                                                                | % | 11,9   | 16,5           | 6,5      |
| maximizing profits over a short period of time                                                                 | n | 57     | 10             | 88       |
|                                                                                                                | % | 22,6   | 12,7           | 13,4     |
| maximizing profits over a long period of time                                                                  | n | 88     | 40             | 324      |
|                                                                                                                | % | 34,9   | 50,6           | 49,2     |
| maximizing the participation in the sector or market segment                                                   | n | 77     | 16             | 204      |
|                                                                                                                | % | 30,6   | 20,3           | 31,0     |
| altogether                                                                                                     | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                                                                | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

The assessment of the competitive position of the surveyed companies was possible, inter alia, thanks to the assessment of their liquidity. Evaluation in this area among Polish companies is relatively high (40.9%) or moderate (26.6%). Among the Czech companies the level is practically moderate, high and very high even, and each was declared by 30% of companies. Among the Slovak companies moderate (34.4%) and high (32.8%) evaluation dominates. Detailed data are presented in Table. 15.

Tab. 15. Liquidity of the company

| What is a financial liquidity in your company (can the company timely pay off their obligations)? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| very low                                                                                          | n | 4      | 1              | 9        |
|                                                                                                   | % | 1,6    | 1,3            | 1,4      |
| low                                                                                               | n | 22     | 10             | 36       |
|                                                                                                   | % | 8,7    | 12,7           | 5,5      |
| moderate                                                                                          | n | 67     | 23             | 227      |
|                                                                                                   | % | 26,6   | 29,1           | 34,4     |
| high                                                                                              | n | 103    | 22             | 216      |
|                                                                                                   | % | 40,9   | 27,8           | 32,8     |
| very high                                                                                         | n | 56     | 23             | 171      |
|                                                                                                   | % | 22,2   | 29,1           | 25,9     |
| altogether                                                                                        | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                                                   | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

The platform of competition was assessed by the means of the legal environment in which the surveyed companies operate (Tab. 16). An aspect, selected in the presented analysis, was the question of the possibility of using flexible forms of employment. In this area, in Polish companies dominated high (32.1%) and moderate (28.2%) scores. Only 7.5% of the surveyed companies indicated that such a possibility does not exist. These opportunities increase with an increase in the number of employed people. Among Czech companies moderate (36.7%) and high (25.3%) scores dominated. The situation is similar in Slovakia, where more than 27% of the companies declare the possibility of using flexible forms in a moderate and high range.

Tab. 16. Flexible forms of employment in the company

| To which extent can your company use the flexible forms of employment? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| there is no such a possibility                                         | n | 19     | 11             | 65       |
|                                                                        | % | 7,5    | 13,9           | 9,9      |
| low                                                                    | n | 55     | 12             | 153      |
|                                                                        | % | 21,8   | 15,2           | 23,2     |
| moderate                                                               | n | 71     | 29             | 183      |
|                                                                        | % | 28,2   | 36,7           | 27,8     |
| high                                                                   | n | 81     | 20             | 181      |
|                                                                        | % | 32,1   | 25,3           | 27,5     |
| fully                                                                  | n | 26     | 7              | 77       |
|                                                                        | % | 10,3   | 8,9            | 11,7     |
| altogether                                                             | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                        | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

The technological environment and the aspect of changes in the technology used in the past 5 years was also evaluated and assessed as part of the platform of competition (Tab. 17). In 42.5% of Polish companies significant changes in this area were introduced, extreme responses (no change or a complete change) accounted for a total of 6%. Every fourth Slovak company declared an introduction of significant changes in the field of applied technologies, and one in five companies recognized that technology has changed a lot. Almost every fourth Czech company declared that the technology remained unchanged. Almost 18% of companies stated that appropriate technology has changed a lot.

Tab. 17. Extent of preserving the technology in the company

| To which extent in the last 5 years was the technology that you use in your company preserved? |   | Poland | Czech Republic | Slovakia |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|--------|----------------|----------|
| no change                                                                                      | n | 7      | 19             | 105      |
|                                                                                                | % | 2,8    | 24,1           | 15,9     |
| changed a bit                                                                                  | n | 69     | 22             | 198      |
|                                                                                                | % | 27,4   | 27,8           | 30,0     |
| significant changes were introduced                                                            | n | 107    | 17             | 16       |
|                                                                                                | % | 42,5   | 21,5           | 24,9%    |
| it changed a lot                                                                               | n | 61     | 14             | 13       |
|                                                                                                | % | 24,2   | 17,7           | 20,3     |
| a complete change                                                                              | n | 8      | 7              | 58       |
|                                                                                                | % | 3,2    | 8,9            | 8,8      |
| altogether                                                                                     | n | 252    | 79             | 659      |
|                                                                                                | % | 100,0  | 100,0          | 100,0    |

Source: Own research.

## CONCLUSIONS

The presented results of the research conducted in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia show some similarities in the functioning of companies in countries that are members of the European Union. The differences identified in a range of researched aspects of knowledge management, creativity and innovation are interesting and need to be confirmed in the next test cycle. Due to the limitations of the length of this paper, the full cross-section analysis of the criterion of the age and size of the surveyed companies was not presented. Some limitation are also differences in their number of the research sample in the three countries.

Except of a scientific research thread, the attention should also be paid to the question of the possibility of an individual evaluation of the companies involved in research on the background of companies that joined the

study. This reflection thread could improve the level of competitiveness of companies by identifying their weaknesses in the examined areas. In addition to the presented simple structural analysis, it is possible to carry out the analysis of cause and effect based on the assumptions presented in the research model.

Another study, conducted on a bigger sample with more countries participating in the project, will expand the horizon of research and promote the idea of increasing the competitiveness of enterprises.

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## WYNIKI KONKURENCYJNOŚCI PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW WEDŁUG BAROMETRU BIZNESU 2014 W POLSCE, CZECHACH I NA SŁOWACJI

**Z a r y s t r e ś c i:** Competitiveness is a concept that evaluates the entities participating in the competition in terms of the results, as well as the ability to achieve benefits in the future by a company. The company referred to as “competitive” is able to achieve from its economic activity relatively greater benefits than their competitors. In this article the authors present some results of the Company Competitiveness Barometer, conducted in 2014 on a group of 992 companies from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Barometer is based on the Competitiveness Integrated Model.

**S ł o w a k l u c z o w e:** competitiveness; competitive potential; strategy of competition; competitive advantage; competitive positioning.