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Information on the debate:

“The Role of Science and Technology in Reducing Poland’s Civilization Gap”

which took place on the 21st of January 2010 at the

Polish Economic Society headquarters at Nowy Świat 49 in Warsaw

The introduction to discussion was made by:

Leszek Grabarczyk, Director of Innovation and Implementation Department at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education

Prof. Andrzej Jasiński, Department of Management at the Warsaw University

Dr. Stanisław Kubielas, Department of Economics at the Warsaw University

Prof. Ewa Okoń-Horodyńska, Department of Management and Social Communication at the Jagiellonian University

Dr. Krzysztof Piech, President of the Knowledge and Innovation Institute

The debate was led by : Prof. Stanisław Rudolf, Vice-President of the Polish Economic Society

Prof. E. Okoń-Horodyńska stressed the importance of organizational structure in the development of innovation. Such structure should provide modern development, and result from specific state policy and combining entities at various levels of economy and their activities should be co-related. Here in Poland we have too many entities and structures involved in promotion of innovation. The adequate feedback between national and regional systems has not been developed. This situation demonstrates that instead of institutional order we have achieved

institutional disorder caused by a lack of technological transformation in Poland. The conclusions of the National Foresight Poland 2000 Programme have been neglected. The development of innovativeness is hampered not only by the lack of sufficient funds. The funds have been dispersed, the good law is missing and there is a surplus of nonsense law, hampering development of science. Students and university teachers are insufficiently motivated. Many interesting ideas have been developed at the universities and are ready to be implemented but universities are not able to cope with them. The idea to support development of innovation is not popular among universities.

According to Prof. A. Jasiński instead of continuing or correcting innovation policy it is necessary to make a radical breakthrough. In terms of innovation indices Poland lags behind other countries. Poland has not been following the EU recommendations to increase expenditures on science and to reach 3% of GDP in 2010 and the expenditures have been consistently decreasing and account for as little as 0.6 % of GDP. The last 20 years saw technological development – a result of foreign technological thought – our domestic contribution was relatively small. It is disturbing that our business participates only to a small extent in expenditures for science, accounting for a mere 5-6 per cent against more than 50 per cent in the well developed countries in the West. Currently, it is not the scientist or the scientific centre who are the engines of technological development but an innovative businessman. Thus, one should seek the acceleration of innovativeness in business research and innovative activity which should become the main object of state policy on science and technology. The state should focus on distinct increase of R&D expenditure. Radical reform of R&D should serve business and support company innovative behaviour.

According to L. Grabarczyk it is not feasible to create a good system of innovative support in an administrative way. This was demonstrated in the USA where pragmatic approach was adopted and in France where a paradigm of central constructor was adopted. The US case proved much more successful. The system did not work in Poland due to a single flaw in the tax regulation bill, which took place during negotiations between various ministries. All activities supporting innovativeness in Poland should be constructed considering the needs of business and businessmen. Such way of thinking may be termed as a civilization breakthrough. The state should provide conditions for free flow of scholars from universities or scientific centres to business and secure their safe comeback should they wish so. The radical increase in public

spending on R&D will not result in increased private spending on R&D unless the said civilization breakthrough takes place.

Dr S. Kubiela devoted his address to the role of science in reducing technological gap. This role may be different in various sectors and particular countries hence the selective approach is necessary. The premise that the backward countries will develop faster since they can take advantage of better developed countries knowledge has not always proved right. Better developed sectors can catch up faster since their ability to copy is better and after bridging the gap they can better develop their own solutions. The same process is much slower in backward sectors because of their poor absorption potential.

Dr K. Piech pointed out poor expertise in economics among Poles who rank 80th in the world in this respect. There is no sense to promote innovativeness everywhere and at every possible price. It is sufficient to use imitation in the weakest regions. There is no economic thinking in Poland, every region, every ministry must get something, must manage something, financing is dispersed. It is easy to spend money but the effects are usually miserable. The programme for innovativeness of Poland's economy brings very poor results. The market will not solve problems of innovativeness in economy, the state should get involved and support cooperation between scholars and business. The increased financing will not help much. What is necessary is an immense transfer of knowledge from abroad.

The introduction to the debate was followed by agitated discussion with seven participants. It was pointed out that economic development varies between poor and highly developed countries mainly due to different technological openness. The state should promote innovative mentality which should be developed as early as in the kindergarten.

The most vital barrier in the development of innovativeness in Poland has been caused by mentality barrier. The surveys demonstrate that every third Pole in five is against innovations. More attention should be paid to recipients of innovation. Some disputants thought that radical breakthrough was necessary since for many years we had been in a standstill. On the other hand, some found it necessary to consider long-term solutions which proved successful in China.