The basis for distinguishing borderland areas is the geographical criterion – these are regions adjacent to the state frontier. A characteristic feature of such regions is the closeness of ethnically and culturally diverse groups. In economic terms, borderland regions are relatively less developed than the rest of the country. This is also true about the eastern regions of Poland. That is why peripherality of the borderland is a frequently used concept, in the economic, social and cultural context.

Peripherality is a relative notion. Specific manifestations of peripherality of a given region depend on the economic, political and social contexts. Such contexts include: the status of the central regions and that of the other regions of the area or of the neighbouring regions, the degree of closeness or remoteness from the current global centres, the functioning mode of the state, social discords on the regional level, the magnitude of social, political and economic problems, as well as cultural and national relations.¹

It should be emphasised that in recent years regional development policy has been gaining significance. Apart from globalization and civilization challenges, such policy should address the endogenous factors of regional growth and the specific needs of local communities. This is connected, among other things, with Poland’s membership in the European Union, which provides borderland regions with an excellent chance to overcome their peripherality and to raise the level of economic development. Such an opportunity is offered, for instance, by the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland and by regional programmes, which enable funding of activity aimed primarily at economic development of borderland regions. These new circumstances enforce, but also facilitate, greater activity of local inhabitants, which strengthens the regions’ competitiveness.

The main purpose of this monograph is to present thoughts, views and experiences, and also to present results of studies concerning changes that borderland regions have been recently undergoing. The publication is an attempt to analyse the socio-economic situation of the borderland areas against the dynamic political and economic background of the twenty-first century. It takes into account recent socio-economic changes and, above all, Poland’s membership in the European Union, accession to the Schengen Area and the current economic crisis.

Bearing in mind that the issue of borderland areas is of interest to many fields of science, the publication includes articles written by economists, sociologists and politologists. This variety of perspectives allows a multi-faceted insight into different areas of development of borderland regions.

The monograph consists of sixteen papers. They offer an analysis of the way in which borderland regions are faring in the twenty-first century in terms of economic development. The questions of peripherality of those regions, their competitiveness and development possibilities are discussed. Considerable attention is devoted to local enterprises and the problems of their development. A large number of the papers deal with the eastern borderland of Poland. Possible ways of promoting tourism in the region are suggested. As the authors of the included papers come from different science centres, the above issues are presented from various points of view.

Both the editors and the authors hope that the considerations included in the monograph will be a significant voice in the discussion of the prospects of borderland development.

[Introduction]