

## **Islands of the European Union – A Treasure or a Burden?**

The book presents the results of the fourth stage of the study of small countries and special territories of Europe conducted by the Unit of European Studies at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Science and the Faculty of Political Geography at the Department of Political Geography and Regional Studies of the University in Łódź. The study tackled the status of island-states and islands in the most remote European Union regions. Parts of the study are dedicated to the Mediterranean area, island-states groups or islands which entered the European Union as part of accession treaties of interested member states.

The aim of the study was to answer the question of how the islands located on the peripheries of large state organisms manage, and whether they constitute a burden or a benefit to those states. The study also focused on the effectiveness of EU funded programs, whose goal is to equalize the developmental opportunities of islands through establishing organizational frameworks, including those aimed at supporting business enterprises. The effectiveness of these programs was analyzed and evaluated by individual authors.

Islands are inhabited by approximately 10% of the world's population, which is nearly 600 million people. One fourth of the sovereign countries on our planet is situated on islands or archipelagos. The topic of islands, however, eludes the interest of Polish researchers (except of Maciej Jędrusik, professor at University of Warsaw, Department of Geography and Regional Studies). Studies of islands have been conducted around the world for over a dozen years and a group of researchers from the International Small Islands Studies Association created a solid foundation for a new discipline, namely nissology. Ryszard Żelichowski discusses the theoretical and institutional output of this new, but dynamically developing field of science.

In the year 2010 researchers at the University of Malta – Stefano Moncada, Marguerite Camilleri, Saviour Famosa and Roberta Galea – presented the results of a study of 28 European islands in the “Island Studies Journal”. Due to the significance of this study and the fact that its results are known to a small group of specialists only, the text was reprinted in this book.

The author of the chapter devoted to Sint-Maarten / Saint-Martin, Stefan Kałuski, presents not only the specifics of that island, but also raises questions regarding the conceptual apparatus necessary to conduct studies in the field of nissology. He presents the most recent information regarding the political reform which took place in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the current shape of the Caribbean Netherlands (formerly the Netherlands Antilles). Similar structure is apparent in the chapter written by Marek Sobczyński which is devoted to the lesser known, yet extremely interesting island of Saint Barthélemy, currently a dependent territory of France with a status of an overseas collectivity.

The functioning of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands (a chapter by Marta Sosnowska) is an interesting example of pragmatic administrative solutions. For instance, the creation of two capital cities caused a separation of the offices of the Community’s two highest authorities. Currently the president’s and vice-president’s offices are located in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife respectively. A complicated mosaic of territories is formed by the Spanish isles of the Mediterranean: the Balearic Islands, the island of Alborán located in the Strait of Gibraltar, and a range of properties situated at the coast of Morocco: Isla de Perejil, Peñon de Vélez de la Gomera, Peñon de Alhucemas, Islas Chafarinas. These islands are discussed in the chapter by Magdalena Jabłońska.

The text regarding the Azores, an archipelago of nine volcanic islands belonging to Portugal – written by Łukasz Węgrzyn – is an important contribution to understanding what kinds of problems and benefits islands provide for the countries which they are part of. In the chapter devoted to the autonomous region of Madeira, Aleksandra Furmanek and Anna Gruszczyńska present ways of mitigating the difficulties associated with the distance from the country’s political center.

Aleksandra Nacewska-Twardowska and Łukasz Twardowski present changes to the European Union’s overseas countries and territories developmental support policy; they show the evolution of programs supporting

those countries and territories, as well as how individual countries use them as part of their internal politics. The authors remind that overseas countries and territories of the European Union are constitutionally dependent on one of the four EU states: Denmark, France, Holland and Great Britain. Even though inhabitants of those areas are EU citizens, these countries are not part of the EU territory and their status was established in the Roman Treaties (1957). Such a solution was necessary due to the promotion of economic and social development of the EU territories. A reformed regional development policy will concentrate on sustainable growth and integration of overseas countries and territories with the EU and worldwide economy.

Anna Leśniewska's chapter is devoted to Sicily. Two texts in the book are devoted to issues related to the status of private islands in the European Union member states. Anna Klimek analyzes the legal categories of island ownership, division in terms of their location and their history. Due to the particular concentration of private island estates in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, most of the cases analyzed by the author are associated with this country. Marek Sobczyński writes about the status of private islands in the Channel Islands archipelago. The situation of private islands situated in this archipelago and their titular subjection to the Bailiwick of Guernsey is not only different and interesting but also internally varied, that it merited special attention. The relations prevalent there are a relic of the medieval political map of Europe, an inheritance after the former Duchy of Normandy, to this day formally constituting a dependency of the British Crown.

Due attention was given to two large islands in the Mediterranean Sea area – Cyprus (Jakub Wódka) and Malta (Krzysztof Strzałka), and additionally Iceland (Małgorzata Budyta-Budzyńska) which, even though is not a European Union member state, constitutes a very interesting example of building its own identity and policy towards its continental neighbors (similarly to the island of Saint Barthélemy which following the 2003 referendum left the European Union). Studies of Iceland were included in the project because its dynamic economic development has led to a phenomenon never seen on small European islands before – the establishment of a Polish national minority.