

Introductory Notes

The analysis of social relations between science, innovation, and the economy is an interesting issue, more and more widely referred to in the related literature. In the Polish scientific space, however, this topic is still new and not fully recognised, even though the genesis of the above subject matter derives from the conceptual framework that dates back to the 1960s. The social dimension of innovation is more and more elaborated upon in the strategic documents of the European Union, being an important component of the development strategy of the EU and the Member States. The essence of social innovation is the creation, development, and dissemination of ideas to effectively address crucial social concerns at the level of society, a specific social group or an individual. It is therefore worth attempting to further exemplify this concept by identifying the true links between a social need and a specific good, service, method or process.

Social innovation, similarly to technological innovation needs a stimulator of growth, which mainly manifests itself in the form of a market niche or a specific need and a requirement. Hence, it is often difficult to clearly separate social innovation from technological innovation. As a matter of fact social innovation is supposed to contribute to the improvement of society's life, thus appropriate actions should be taken to intensify the innovative processes, as they constitute a prerequisite for the progress of civilisation. The new EU perspective 2021–2027 provides the development opportunities for social innovation. All of the cohesion policy programmes put forward by Poland in its capacity as the Member State have been approved by the European Commission, which means that investments worth almost EUR 76 billion will be implemented in the coming years. In the new EU perspective, projects implemented to the extent of digital transformation, education, culture, social innovation, entrepreneurship, the health care system, energy efficiency, climate, transport, tourism and post-Covid-19 recovery and resilience or mitigating the effects of the Ukrainian crisis will be awarded the EU financial assistance.

This study constitutes the deliverable arising from the implementation of the Project financed by the Ministry of Education and Science under the „Science for Society” Programme. It is the Project No NdS/539367/2021/2021 entitled „*The impact of footwear design, materials and proper fit on the health of children and adolescents*”. In effect of the Project the monograph was developed in cooperation with the Lukasiwicz – Lodz Institute of Technology and the Faculty of Economics

and Sociology of the University of Lodz. The study focuses on presenting and discussing various types of interrelations amongst theoretical issues related to social innovation and economic practice. An interesting and unusual combination is the presentation of social innovation in the context of solutions used in the footwear industry, which is developing more and more dynamically in Poland (especially in the area of e-commerce). Poland is also one of the leading European footwear manufacturers, occupying the 7th position in terms of production volume in the EU, with the market share of 2.5%, following Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Romania and France. In addition, there is a fierce competition in the industry, which is conducive to the emergence of new types of innovation but it is also susceptible to various types of social needs as well.

The monograph consists of five theoretical and empirical chapters.

The first Chapter entitled '*The Importance of Social Innovation in the Knowledge-based Economy*' addresses the concept and taxonomy of social innovation. This part of the study draws attention to the issue of innovation funding sources in the new EU financial perspective.

The second Chapter '*Footwear Innovation to Improve the Comfort of Use*' contains theoretical and practical references to innovation in the footwear industry. The authors of the Chapter give examples of modifications of footwear materials that have been used in economic practice, and the improvement of the health conditions of footwear users becomes the related measurable output.

The third Chapter of the study entitled '*Waste Management Methods and Unit Processes in the Tanning Sector*' refers to the environmental aspects of social innovation in the footwear industry. The Chapter deals with the issue of utilisation of production residues or their re-use.

The fourth Chapter entitled '*Lower limbs. Ontogenesis, anatomy, deformations*' presents the most common complications occurring in children and adolescents in the field of incorrect use of footwear or the lack of adaptation of footwear to the needs of a demanding society in this respect. The Chapter draws attention to the essence of making innovative technological arrangements in the area of improving the comfort of footwear use.

The fifth Chapter entitled '*Social and Economic Benefits Assessment in Terms of Social Innovation*' displays the results of the research surveys aimed to recognise awareness and perception of benefits arising from innovation implemented into economic practice. In the study 408 respondents took part in the period from October till December 2022. On the grounds of the research output and the analysis of the related statistical figures, the attempt was taken to outline the social innovation development prospects in the footwear industry by 2050.

The topics addressed in the monograph may contribute to the development of the further scientific research on the footwear industry and its significance for the development of social innovation in Poland and in the world.