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# CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL BUSINESS IN LATVIA

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#### **Annotation**

In developed countries, particular attention was devoted to small businesses. This was demonstrated by special conferences organized by the White House of the United States on the issues of small businesses in 1980 and 1986, thanks to which the Congress amended the law to facilitate the development of small businesses. Small and micro businesses are one of the leading sectors defining the rate of economic growth, the state of employment, structure and quality of the gross national product and, as a consequence, economic independence and security of the country. According to Eurostat data, about 99 % of the enterprises of the European Union are referred to the category of micro and small businesses, which provide two-thirds of jobs in the private sector. Small and micro companies make up 98–99 % of all enterprises in Latvia. The objectives of the article are to identify and specify the main features of the development of small business in Latvia. The novelty of the article is that the features of the functioning of micro and small enterprises in Latvia's economy have been investigated for the first time under the conditions of the global financial crisis and its aftermath. The goal of the research is to analyze the functioning of small and micro businesses in Latvia, determine their impact on the main macroeconomic indicators of the national economy and develop recommendations for improving the business conditions of small companies. Methods of research: analysis of statistical data, mathematical modelling, correlation and regression analysis. The comparison of the main statistical indicators of small business functioning in Latvia with that of the EU developed countries indicates that small business is not given due attention in Latvia and this causes it to lag. To accelerate the pace of economic development, eliminate the imbalance in the development of territories, implement innovations and fight against poverty, it is necessary to stimulate the establishment of new small enterprises.

KEY WORDS: micro and small enterprises; mathematical modelling.

#### Introduction

It is known that many ancient nations, for example, the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Phoenicians and others run a small business successfully. Thanks to the commodities they had produced and trade for more than 4 thousand years, in the countries at that time the civilization began spreading and scientific achievements developing. In our time, the role and importance of small business began rising especially in the second half of the 20th century. This was encouraged by the release of new products and creation of new jobs by small businesses. In developed countries, particular attention was devoted to small businesses. This was demonstrated by special conferences organized by the White House of the United States on the issues of small businesses in 1980 and 1986, thanks to which the Congress amended the law to facilitate the development of small businesses (White House...1980, McDonald 1984). For example, the Small Business Innovation Act and Regulatory Flexibility Act were proclaimed, which contributed to the account of the interests of small businesses in the federal institutions and the allocation of funds for research and development activities of small businesses. Even earlier, in the midtwentieth century, the Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in the United States to assist in the development of small businesses. Many universities began educating specialists in the field of small businesses; scientific journals devoted to the problems of small businesses began to be published. In the US, about half of the country's labor force is employed in small businesses (U.S. Small...1988). Therefore, a small business is vital to the development of the national economy as a whole.

In modern conditions, the economic stability of development of any country is impossible without the functioning of micro and small businesses. Due to specific conditions of the country, the nature of small business may vary. Small and micro businesses are one of the leading sectors defining the rate of economic growth, the state of employment, structure and quality of the gross national product and, as a consequence, economic independence and security of the country. The development of micro and small businesses meets the global trends towards the formation of flexible mixed economy, combination of different forms of ownership and management models. The presence of a welldeveloped small business sector dramatically increases the employment growth, which is especially important in conditions of economic restructuring and structural unemployment accompanying this process. In this regard, micro and small businesses are the basis for the market economy of any developed country.

Small business objectively exists and develops as a relatively independent sector of the modern market economy, involving the coexistence and cooperation of enterprises of different types and sizes. While large business provides the basic needs of the national economy using the effect of economies of scale, small businesses occupy a niche in the market, satisfying local demand or specific requirements for specialized products and services, including in the sphere of innovation (Siropolis 1990). For example, General Motors Co. buys components for its products from more than 30 thousand suppliers, most of which are small businesses. This is mainly explained by economic considerations and customer requirements.

Subject and relevance. In market conditions large enterprises form the market environment, and small businesses adapt to it. Small companies lack detailed strategic plans; therefore, even the most important decisions are often made situationally. Low level of strategic thinking has the most negative effect in the first years of the existence of small businesses, when in fact the need for goods and services they offer is verified. If a small business has found its niche, in the future it will be necessary to maintain a steady-state mode of operation based on standard operative decisions. Such processes take place in the most developed countries of the world. For example, in the U.S. only half of small businesses exist one and a half years, and only 20 % of them operate up to 10 years (Siropolis 1990). The main cause of such business failure is considered to be poor governance: lack of management experience, business incompetence, lack of experience in the industry, etc.

A number of studies refer to small business as to an activity carried out by a relatively small group of persons, or an entity managed by a single owner. As a rule, the most common criteria indicators, based on which the actors of the market economy belong to small business, are the number of employees, the size of the authorized capital, the value of assets, the volume of turnover (profit, income) and others. According to World Bank data, the total number of indicators by which enterprises are considered small businesses, exceeds 50. The most commonly used criteria are the following: the average number of persons employed by the enterprise, the annual turnover and the value of assets. However, in almost all developed countries, the main criterion for classifying enterprises as small ones is a number of employees. According to Eurostat data, about 99 % of the enterprises of the European Union are referred to the category of micro and small businesses, which provide two-thirds of jobs in the private sector (Eurostat 2016).

According to the Commission Regulation (EC) 364/2004 of 25 February 2004, in Latvia businesses are divided into the following groups.

## Micro businesses

- the maximum number of employees -9;
- the annual turnover and / or annual balance sheet do not exceed the total amount of  $\leq 2$  million.

### Small businesses

- the maximum number of employees -49;
- the annual turnover and / or annual balance sheet do not exceed the total amount of  $\leq$  10 million.

## Medium-sized enterprises

- the maximum number of employees 249;
- the annual turnover sheet does not exceed  $\leq 50$  million and / or annual balance sheet does not exceed  $\leq 43$  million.

In other parts of the world, it may be different. For example, in the United States, the maximum number of employees at small companies is 500 people.

Small and micro companies make up 98–99 % of all enterprises in Latvia. The simplicity of the organizational structure, personal involvement and interest of a chief executive in all the activities of the company are the most typical features of small enterprises in the Republic of Latvia. Particular characteristic of management of small

company is that a chief executive can and should take responsibility for solving most problems. In a market economy, a small company as compared with a large company is characterized by a relatively large proportion of living labor costs per unit of output. Small businesses are "inclined" to the laborious work of middle- and lowskill workers. Therefore, to maintain competitiveness, small businesses are forced, on the one hand, to save on wages, on the other, to increase worker productivity. Solving the first problem, entrepreneurs face difficulties in recruiting highly qualified personnel, which is a clear disadvantage for the company's development. Solving the second problem, entrepreneurs strive to increase the degree of involvement of employees in the enterprise activities, creating a special type of intra-relations of people as members of the "big family". In this regard, a majority of workers are employed by small enterprises on a permanent basis, while in developed countries temporary employment is more widespread (CSB 2008).

The tasks of the article are to identify and specify the main features of the development of small business in Latvia. The novelty of the article is that the features of the functioning of micro and small enterprises in Latvia's economy have been investigated for the first time under the conditions of the global financial crisis and its aftermath. The object of the research is a cluster of Latvian companies that are referred to micro and small businesses. The goal of the research is to analyze the functioning of small and micro businesses in Latvia, determine their impact on the main macroeconomic indicators of the national economy and develop recommendations for improving the business conditions of small companies. Methods of research: analysis of statistical data, mathematical modelling, correlation and regression analysis.

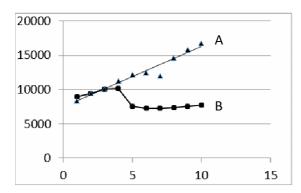
## Computations and analysis

Within the framework of the research, all calculations and analyses were carried out according to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) of Latvia (CSB 2016). Number of enterprises relating to micro enterprises increased in the period from 2005 to 2014 in spite of the global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2010 (Fig. 1, Table 1). The exception was only the year 2011, when the number of micro enterprises declined slightly (by 4 %) compared to 2010. According to the CSB of Latvia, micro enterprises represent manufacturing construction sectors, and small enterprises represent all sectors of the national economy. Diagrams related to micro enterprises are marked with the letter "A" in the article, while the diagrams related to small enterprises are marked with the letter "B". After 2008, due to the global crisis, the number of small enterprises decreased dramatically by 25.6 % in 2009. Then, since 2010 the number of small enterprises has been slowly increasing. According to the calculations, in 2014 the total number of small enterprises in Latvia was about 12 per thousand people, which was much less than in developed countries. For example, according to the official statistics at the beginning of the 21st century in the EU, on average, there were 30 enterprises per thousand people.

 Table 1. The results of computation of factor dependence

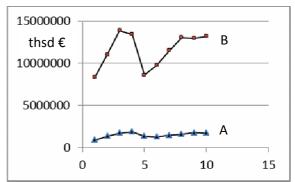
No	Dependence, years	Regression equation y=f(x)	R - squared	Correlation coefficient <b>r</b>	Fisher	Statistics	DW statistics
					F act.	F crit.	
1.	Change in the number of micro (A) enterprises, Fig. 1. (2005-2014).	y = 882.65x + 7443.8	0.9473	0.9733	143.85	5.32	1.6568
2.	Change in the production value of micro (A) enterprises, Fig. 3. (2009-2014).	y =111920x+ 1E+06	0.8847	0.9406	30.71	7.71	2.2163
3.	Change in the production value of small (B) enterprises, Fig. 3. (2009-2014).	y =220559x+ 2E+06	0.8914	0.9441	32.83	7.71	1.8611
4.	Change in personnel costs at micro (A) enterprises, Fig. 4. (2009-2014).	y = 20930x+ 49630	0.7902	0.8889	15.06	7.71	1.3976
5.	Change in personnel costs at small (B) enterprises, Fig. 4. (2009-2014).	y = 22373x+ 245157	0.7363	0.8581	11.17	7.71	1.4514
6.	Changes in the number of persons employed by micro (A)enterprises, Fig. 5. (2005-2014).	y = 928.32x+ 26581	0.4681	0.6841	7.04	5.32	1.7645
7.	The relationship between GDP and the production value of micro (A) enterprises, Fig. 6. (2008-2014).	y = 9.2078x+ 7E+06	0.9391	0.9691	77.05	6.61	2.5384
8.	The relationship between GDP and the production value of small (B) enterprises, Fig. 7. (2008-2014).	y = 4.9564x+ 8E+06	0.9633	0.9815	131.34	6.61	2.0573
9.	Changes in the share of production value of A and B enterprises to GDP, Fig. 8. (2009-2014).	y = 0.5592x+ 16.666	0.699	0.836	9.29	7.71	1.686
10.	The relationship between the unemployment rate and the total number employed by A and B enterprises, Fig. 9. (2005-2014).	y = -0.0002x+ 49.4	0.829	0.910	38.78	5.32	0.9565

Thus, micro enterprises in comparison with small enterprises were more resilient to the global economic cataclysm. The coefficient of determination of the calculated regression equation  $R^2 = 0.9473$  indicates that the equation explains almost 95 % of the variation in the number of micro enterprises in the period under consideration (Table 1). Consequently, the correlation coefficient r = 0.9733 indicates strong correlation dependence of the number of micro enterprises on time. Testing the resulting regression equation by the Fisher's exact test showed its statistical significance and the possibility of its practical application (Fact.> Fcrit.). The dependences investigated in the article are related to time series. Therefore, all regression equations calculated within the framework of the research were tested for the absence of first-order residual autocorrelation by Durbin-Watson (DW) test at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . If the criterion fell in the zone of uncertainty, the graphic residue analysis was performed. In all cases, it was found that first-order residual autocorrelation was absent.



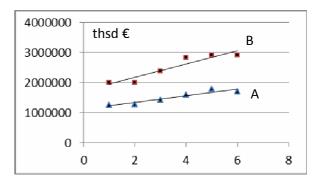
**Fig. 1.** Changes in the number of micro (A) and small (B) enterprises, 2005 – 2014. The OX axis: 1 – 2005; 2 – 2006; ... 10 – 2014.

If we consider the changes in turnover of micro and small enterprises, it can be stated that during the global crisis these changes differed in the two groups of enterprises (Fig. 2). Due to the crisis, micro enterprises experienced 28 % decrease in turnover in 2009 compared to 2008. In the same period of time, in small enterprises a decrease in turnover accounted for 35.84 %, which was even more significant. In 2012, both groups of enterprises almost achieved the pre-crisis level of turnover. According to the volume of turnover of micro enterprises, the CSB of Latvia took into account the results of the companies in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Statistics on small enterprises comprised all sectors of the national economy similar to data on the number of enterprises. Regression and correlation analysis performed to establish the dependence of turnover of micro and small enterprises on time showed the inability to use directly proportional linear relationships. Thus, for micro enterprises the estimated value of Fisher's criterion  $F_{act.}$  was 3.22, and the critical value  $F_{crit.}$  was 5.32 ( $F_{act.}$ <F<sub>crit</sub>). Consequently, the regression equation was not statistically significant. In that case, it was also impossible to use the regression equation due to the low value of the coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.287$ . In general, it can be stated that the total turnover of small enterprises over the period under consideration exceeds more than 7.5 times the turnover of micro enterprises.



**Fig. 2.** Changes in turnover of micro (A) and small (B) enterprises, 2005 - 2014. The OX axis: 1 - 2005; 2 - 2006; ... 10 - 2014.

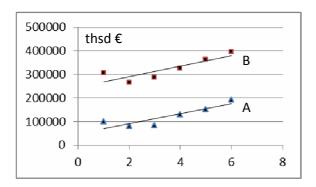
Due to the global economic crisis of 2008-2010, in Latvia both micro and small enterprises experienced a sharp decline in the production value. In 2009, the production value of Latvian micro enterprises decreased by 34.2 %, i.e. more than one-third, compared to 2008. At the same time, the production value of small enterprises decreased by 37.5 %. Since 2010, growth of production volume has resumed in both sectors of the economy under consideration (Fig. 3). According to the CSB of Latvia, by the production value manufacturing and construction sectors are represented in both sectors of small business. Statistical data were used to calculate regression equations of changes in the production value for micro and small enterprises in the period of 2009–2014 (Table 1). The coefficients of determination were obtained respectively for micro enterprises  $R^2 = 0.8847$  and for small enterprises  $R^2 = 0.8914$ . Thus, the obtained equations explain almost 90 % of the variation in the production value in the given period of time, which is a good indicator. The calculated actual Fischer's criteria considerably exceed critical values. Therefore, the equations are statistically significant and can be used to draw practical conclusions. The correlation coefficients for micro (r = 0.940) and small (r = 0.944) enterprises are sufficiently high, which indicates strong dependence of the production value on time.



**Fig. 3.** Changes in the production value of micro (A) and small (B) enterprises, 2009 - 2014. The OX axis: 1 - 2009; 2 - 2010; ... 6 - 2014.

The databases of the CSB of Latvia provide information on the personnel costs of micro and small enterprises in the manufacturing and construction sectors. As it was expected, in the period under consideration from 2008 to 2014 changes in personnel costs were similar to that in the production value at the same time.

Thus, in 2009 due to the crisis personnel costs of microenterprises decreased by 29.2 % compared to 2008, and at the same period of time personnel costs of small enterprises decreased by 34.3 %. Since 2010, the growth of personnel costs has resumed in both sectors of small business (Fig. 4). Statistical data were used to calculate regression equations of changes in personnel costs in the sectors of small business in the period from 2009 to 2014 (Table 1). The following coefficients of determination were obtained:  $R^2 = 0.7902$  and  $R^2 = 0.7363$  for micro and small enterprises, respectively. These equations explain respectively 79 % of the variation in personnel costs for micro enterprises in the given period of time, and almost 74 % of the variation in personnel costs for small businesses. According to calculations, the actual values of the Fisher's criteria exceed the corresponding critical values. Therefore, the equations are statistically significant and useful for drawing practical conclusions. The following correlation coefficients were obtained: r =0.8889 and r = 0.8581 for micro and small enterprises, respectively. This indicates strong linear directly proportional dependence of personnel costs on time in the period from 2009 to 2014.



**Fig. 4.** Changes in personnel costs at micro (A) and small (B) enterprises, 2009 – 2014. The OX axis: 1 – 2009; 2 – 2010; ... 6 – 2014.

Due to the financial and economic crisis, the number of persons employed in small business decreased but in different ways at micro and small enterprises. For example, from 2005 to 2007, before the crisis, the number of persons employed by small enterprises had been increasing. But after 2008 it declined sharply – by 25.4 % in 2009. The growth of the number of persons employed by small enterprises has resumed since 2011. At the same time, in 2009 the number of persons employed by micro enterprises decreased by 4.3 % compared to 2008. In general, in the period from 2005 to 2014 the number of persons employed by micro enterprises changed insignificantly; despite the crisis, it even gradually increased (Fig. 5). The regression equation was used to estimate the number of persons employed by micro enterprises; the coefficient of determination was small R<sup>2</sup> = 0.4681 (Table 1). Although the obtained regression equation explains only about 47 % of the variation in the number of persons employed by micro enterprises, according to Fisher's exact test, the equation is statistically significant: F<sub>act.</sub> > F<sub>crit.</sub>, and can be used for drawing practical conclusions. Thus, the obtained equation reliably enough characterizes the current trends towards the growing number of persons employed by micro enterprises. The calculated correlation coefficient r = 0.6841 indicated a moderate degree of direct linear relationship between the number of persons employed by micro enterprises and time in the period under examination.

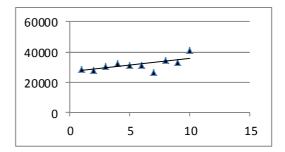
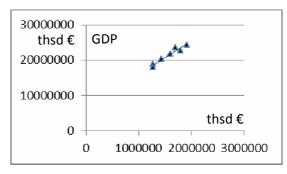


Fig. 5. Changes in the number of persons employed (the OY axis) by micro enterprises, 2005 - 2014. The OX axis: 1 - 2005; 2 - 2006; ... 10 - 2014.

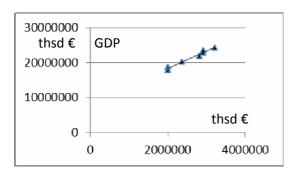
Production value of micro and small businesses exerts quite a significant impact on gross domestic product (GDP) of Latvia. To determine the extent of this impact, the regression and correlation analysis of the relationship of these factors was performed using the data of the CSB of Latvia. The author used statistical data on GDP and the available data on the production value in the manufacturing and construction sectors for micro and small enterprises in the period of 2008–2014. The calculations revealed that between the production value of micro enterprises and GDP there was a positive direct linear relationship (Fig. 6).



**Fig. 6.** The relationship between Latvia's GDP and the production value of micro enterprises, 2008 – 2014.

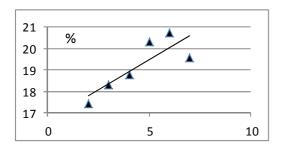
As the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  was 0.9391, the approximation quality was very good (Table 1). Analysis of variance showed that the observed actual value of Fischer's criteria significantly exceeded a critical value. The obtained regression equation is statistically significant and can be used for practical conclusions. The calculated value of the correlation coefficient r = 0.9691indicated a strong degree of linear relationship between the GDP and the production value of micro enterprises. The same situation was observed in relation to the impact of production value of small enterprises on GDP (Fig. 7). The coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.9633$  indicated very good approximation quality (Table 1). The regression equation was also statistically significant according to Fisher's criterion: Fact> Fcrit and suitable for the analysis. The correlation coefficient r = 0.9815 also indicated a strong degree of linear relationship between

GDP and the production value of small enterprises. Thus, it can be stated that Latvia's GDP is closely correlated with the production of small and micro businesses, and, to a large extent, its growth depends on the success of small and micro enterprises.



**Fig. 7.** The relationship between Latvia's GDP and the production value of small enterprises, 2008 - 2014.

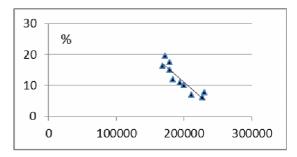
The paper presents the study of changes in the amount of interest, which is the ratio of total production value of small businesses to Latvia's GDP in the period of 2008–2014. It was found out that on the eve of the financial crisis of 2008, the share of the total production value of small business to GDP was 21.14 %. In 2009, the share decreased by 3.73 %. In subsequent years, it began increasing. The regression equation obtained as a result of calculations showed directly proportional linear relationship (Fig. 8, Table 1).



**Fig. 8.** Changes in the share (%) of production value of micro and small enterprises to Latvia's GDP, 2009 – 2014. The OX axis: 2 – 2009,...7 – 2014.

The coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup>=0.6990 indicated good enough approximation. Approximately 70 % of variation in the share of production value of small business to GDP is explained by the obtained equation. The observed actual value of Fisher's criterion exceeded the critical value. Therefore, the equation was suitable for trend analysis. The correlation coefficient r=0.8361 indicated a strong degree of direct linear relationship between the amount of interest and time in the period under examination. Therefore, it can be stated that the total production value of micro and small businesses is about 18-20 % of GDP in Latvia, and its value tends to rise. This indicator is significantly lower than in the developed EU countries, where the share of the production value of small business accounts for, on average, about 70 % of GDP.

In all countries, the development of small business helps reduce the unemployment rate. In order to establish the relationship between the level of unemployment in Latvia and the number of persons employed by micro and small enterprises, the author performed the regression and correlation analysis of the relationship between these factors in the period of 2005–2014. The increase in the total number of persons employed by small businesses was found to be quite significant and inversely proportional to the unemployment rate (Fig. 9, Table 1).



**Fig. 9.** The relationship between the unemployment rate and the total number of persons employed by micro and small enterprises, 2005 - 2014.

The coefficient of determination  $R^2$ =0.8290 indicated very good approximation quality. About 83 % of the variation in the unemployment rate caused by the change in the number of persons employed by small businesses was explained by the obtained regression equation. The observed actual value of Fisher's criterion was significantly greater than its critical value. Consequently, the obtained equation was suitable for analysis. The correlation coefficient r = -0.9105 indicated a strong degree of linear inverse relationship between the level of unemployment and the number of persons employed by small businesses. Thus, the development of small business in Latvia will help reduce the unemployment rate, increase employment of population and facilitate the return of economic immigrants to Latvia.

### **Conclusions**

Although a certain number of small businesses operate in Latvia, by the number of such enterprises per 1000 people Latvia lags behind the leading EU countries by almost 3 times. The global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2010 exerted a negative impact on small enterprises. Micro enterprises with up to 9 persons employed suffered this crisis more successfully than small businesses employing from 10 to 49 people. A number of micro enterprises and their turnover during the crisis fell to a much lesser extent in comparison with small enterprises. During the crisis, the production value and personnel costs fell in small businesses, but in micro enterprises these indicators were better. During the crisis, the number of persons employed by small enterprises fell more than in micro enterprises. The total number of persons employed by small businesses in Latvia, as a percentage of total employment in the country, lags behind that in the developed countries of the EU by more than 3 times. The same relationship holds for the share of production value of small business to Latvia's GDP - this share is 3 times less than in the developed European countries. Small business development in Latvia and increase in the number of persons employed by small

enterprises significantly reduce the unemployment rate in the country.

The comparison of the main statistical indicators of small business functioning in Latvia with that of the EU developed countries indicates that small business is not given due attention in Latvia and this causes it to lag. Opportunities of small business in Latvia are neither exhausted nor used to a sufficient extent. To accelerate the pace of economic development, eliminate the imbalance in the development of territories, implement innovations and fight against poverty, it is necessary to stimulate the establishment of new small enterprises. This should become one of the priority areas of economic development of the country and increase competitiveness. Taking into account the limited resources and opportunities to support business in Latvia, it is necessary to identify the main development areas of small business in regions and provide targeted assistance to it.

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