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### **REGIONAL GROWTH PATTERNS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **Abstract:**

This paper assesses regional economic growth patterns in the European Union at NUTS2 level using changes in the GDP ranking. Choropleth maps are used to illustrate the changes in the ranking and the GDP growth rates in the period 2000-2011. In accordance with the neoclassical growth theory, the highest growth rates were recorded in the least developed regions of the newest EU member states suggesting a convergence process took place. Results show that the top five performers are regions containing the capital cities of Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria, which had not only a high growth rate but also a much higher starting position than the rest. In the same time, the economic relative performance of these regions was much higher than any other region in the respective country suggesting that they acted as regional poles where agglomeration economies take place.

#### **Keywords:**

regional growth, agglomeration, new economic geography, convergence

**JEL Classification:** O47, R12