Unveiling the Potential of European Special Economic Zones: Assessing Their Impact on Polish Enterprises

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Special Economic Zones are defined as delimited regions within a state's borders, featuring a streamlined regulatory and fiscal framework to foster diverse, productive activities, operations, and commercial transactions. These zones have emerged as pivotal economic development instruments also in Europe since their application. The objective of such initiatives is to catalyse economic expansion by generating employment opportunities and enhancing competitiveness, innovation in the European territories. Among the European pioneers emerged the Italian government, which developed a regulation framework to establish Italian SEZs, conceiving them as catalysts for economic advancement in the southern regions and for augmenting national competitiveness. Unfortunately, this initiative has never gotten off the ground due to excessive bureaucracy and disorganised governance. Investigating the factors that buttress such policies has become imperative for contemporary Italy. To do so, the researchers has firstly detected the European experiences, identifying in the Polish case the best one, with his implementation of fourteen SEZs, and then conducted a difference-in-difference analysis for the period 2002-2018 to understand how the special economic zones have positively influenced internationalisation, employment growth, and technological development of the firms. The results obtained will provide valuable insights to the Italian government, enabling them to enhance the SEZ application.