

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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Abstract: *This paper presents aspects of the present situation existing at the European level concerning regional sustainable development, primarily aimed at monitoring and evaluation of integrative regional sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development has begun to take shape in recent years, as a potential solution to problems facing humanity. The continuous growing living level and human life quality can be realized only using industrial and technological methods. These methods involve the growth of energy consumption and uncontrolled pollution of the environment. These effects are unwanted and this is the reason for a lot of debates in the whole world in order to find the appropriate solutions. Currently there is a tendency of increasingly emphasized of institutionalizing the concept of sustainable development in European and global level. This involves mainly: setting goals to be achieved, specifying the time for analysis, establishing the measures and the period of their application, developing control and assessment tools (Sustainable Development Indicators - SDI), mathematical modeling in the analysis system, checking results and also their interpretation and analysis. For this purpose, there has to be defined the concept of sustainable development for each case particularly, it's indicators and established a mathematical model to describe more precisely the interactions of the analyzed system. These shortcomings are primarily due to hard quantifiable measurements. In terms of practical applicability, there must be formulated rules and strategies of sustainable development and highlighting the values of certain parameters that process characteristics in a given time. Thus, sustainable development is a complex process, which can be applied successfully to regional and then national level, by quantifying the data obtained. The importance of sustainable development refers to increasing the quality of human life, by finding possible solutions for increasing living standards and environment protection.*

Key words: *sustainable development, institutionalizing the concept of sustainable development, sustainable development legislation, sustainable development indicators SDI*

INTRODUCTION

The continuous growing living level and human life quality can be realized only using industrial and technological methods. These methods involve the growth of energy consumption and uncontrolled pollution of the environment.

These effects are unwanted and this is the reason for a lot of debates in the whole world in order to find the appropriate solutions: The United Nations Conference in Stockholm, 1972, concerning the impact of human activity on environment, or The World Strategy of Conservation, developed by environmental organizations, which sustain the concept of protecting the environment for humanity.

This concept was elaborated by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the president of The World Commission for Environment, in 1987, and contains three important elements: environment protection, economic growth and social impartiality.

The World Conference concerning Sustainable Development from Johannesburg, in 2002, highlighted the sustainable development and encouraged the application of global measures against poverty, environment protection and rational management of natural

resources. Also, here it was assumed the responsibility for economic and social development and environment protection.

Almost ten years after the Conference from Rio de Janeiro, The European Council from Göteborg adopts the first sustainable development strategy for European Union, and in 2006 the sustainable development strategy for extended European Union. Throughout Europe began to give attention to the concept of sustainable development, which is also subject to numerous European projects.

The new European model of economic growth was introduced by the EU Sustainable Development Strategy at the European Council in Göteborg, in 2001, and calls the need for balanced operations: political, social or economic actions should be aimed at an environmental component (European Commission, A Sustainable Europe for a Better World-Bruxelles 2001).

This has been materialized into concrete objectives in the Sixth Environmental Action Program, and includes:

- limiting climate change and energy use that does not harm the environment;
- responsible management of natural resources;
- improve land use and transport systems;
- combating poverty.

At the XXIII Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology (Re-inventing the rural: between the social and the natural) in Finland was brought into question the cultural dimension of sustainable development (often neglected dimension).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

With global recognition of global stringent existing problems, there were created a number of institutions to deal with the application of the concept of sustainable development, institutions that were created both globally and in Europe. These are government institutions, research institutions or transpositioning into practice sustainable development.

Worldwide, the institutionalization of the concept of sustainable development was held in the framework of international institutions such as ONU (www.un.org/en) or OECD (www.oecd.org).

For example, in the ONU there is a structure called the UN Division for Sustainable Development, which deals with most highlighting stringent global issues and their possible solution, such as lack of drinking water in many parts of the world (www.un.org/esa/dsd).

Worldwide there is non-governmental organization the Club of Rome, founded in 1968, which was involved in highlighting the global problems of humanity by defining global issues, highlighting problems and making proposals for their resolution.

European Level

At European level, the activity of institutionalization of the concept of sustainable development is coordinated by the *European Commission*, in particular Sustainable Development Strategy, which was adopted in June 2006, the Renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy. The main objectives adopted by European Commission are: limiting climate change; nature and bio-diversity - protecting a unique resource; health and environment; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and waste (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/>).

At the European level, there is activating the *European Environment Agency*, which has the main fields: material flows, energy, industry, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, transport, and tourism. The main objectives of the European Environment Agency are: climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, air pollution, chemicals, waste, water, soil degradation and technological and natural hazards. The indicators used by the European Environment Agency are based on a positive trend, moving towards qualitative objectives or

quantified targets; some positive development, but either insufficient to reach qualitative objectives or quantified targets, or mixed trends within the indicator; or unfavorable trend.

Germany

In Germany there is a national committee for sustainable development, *Rat Für Nachhaltige Entwicklung*, founded in 2001.

Another research institution in Germany is located in Karlsruhe, *Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis*, being in a wider assessment of current technologies and systems analysis.

Also in Germany there is the *Federal Environment Office*, Umweltbundesamt, which defined one of the priorities in the coming years, ensuring sustainable development in Germany.

Another institution in Germany preoccupied with sustainable development is *The German Council for Sustainable Development*, activating based on the Renewable Energy Law (2006) and The Environmental Law on Pollution Control. The German Council for Sustainable Development established some important objectives: Renewable energies and CO₂-free fossil energies as two key – and partly competing – technologies for supplying energy, Energy efficiency in buildings, Water technologies (supply and waste water disposal systems), Material efficiency, Transport infrastructure and mobility, as well as Accelerating the diffusion and innovation processes in the 5 above fields of technology as a cross-cutting topic.

Austria

Also at European level there is another non-governmental institution based in Vienna and is affiliated to the Club of Rome, *European Support Center of the Club of Rome*, an organization which aims mainly at European level coordination activities of the World Club of Rome and coordination projects in this area, but throughout Europe. In Austria there are initiatives at government level, namely in Vienna, where there are developed strategies for sustainable development, the first version since 2002. The objectives formulated by the Club of Rome refer to: a global perspective, recognizing the increasing inter-dependence of nations; a holistic approach, seeking a deeper understanding of complex contemporary problems; an inter-disciplinary and long-term perspective, focused on the choices and policies determining the destiny of future generations.

Also in Vienna there is a research institute on assessment of technology used in the society, called the *Institute of Technology Assessment*, an institution where the field of activity is sustainable development at local and national level in Austria: environment and resource management, innovation processes and technology impacts, knowledge society and knowledge policy. One can mention here DESERTEC project in the field of solar energy usage, which is a very important example in applying the concept of sustainable development at regional level (but in a large region). In this project aims at combining the existing opportunities in different countries (including African countries) for the effective utilization of solar energy and transform it into heat and electricity by photovoltaics. The project aims to obtain power in the Sahara Desert using photovoltaic panels and its transport in several European countries (<http://www.itas.fzk.de/>).

Romania

In Romania, UNDP Bureau for Sustainable Development, founded in Romania in 1971, to support development through consulting, technical assistance, training and logistics support, founded in 1997 the *National Center for Sustainable Development*, which in 2001 set up as non-governmental organization responsible for supporting and coordination of initiatives aimed at sustainable development in Romania.

So, in our country there is the National Center for Sustainable Development, based in Bucharest, which was the first main objective of implementing Local Agenda 21 (LA21) in

different regions and cities. The organization program, Building Capacities to Implement Local Agenda LA21, was launched in 2000 for 9 pilot cities in Romania (Baia Mare, Galati, Giurgiu, Iasi, Miercurea Ciuc, Oradea, Ploiesti, Targu Mures, Ramnicu Valcea), according to the National Center for Sustainable Development [9]. Extended implementation of Local Agenda LA21 included 13 localities in the period 2003-2004 (Arad, Bolintin Vale, Campina, Falticeni, Medias, Pitesti, Sibiu, Sighisoara, Slatina, Targu Jiu, Targoviste, Vatra Dornei, Zimnicea), 3 towns, and one county in 2004 -2005 (Bistrita, Borsec, Brasov, Mures County), and in 2005-2006 3 localities and one county (Constanta, Gura Humorului, Medgidia, Brasov county). As a result, for rural areas in Romania, the LA21 is a functional tool in two counties, Mures and Brasov counties.

One can mention here also the *Environment Ministry*, which has been coordinating the release of the national strategy for sustainable development – Horizons 2013-2020-2030 (National Strategy 2008) (<http://www.mmediu.ro/>). This strategy formulates for horizon 2013 the objective of incorporating organic principles and practices of sustainable development policies and programs in all of Romania as EU member state. The National Strategy sets out the following aspects which are demonstrated in the last 2 decades:

- an active process of erosion of biological diversity;
- habitat fragmentation and connectivity between multiple species habitat;
- restricting or eliminating certain types of habitats or ecosystems in areas of transition;
- changing wide, sometimes beyond the critical threshold, the structural configuration of the river basin and river water rates;
- excessive simplification of the structure and its multifunctional capacity specific for ecological formations of intensive agricultural ecosystems;
- destructuring and reducing capacity of bio-components of natural capital in the agricultural sector;

In Romania there is a number of *Environmental Protection Agencies* (APM), active at regional level and having major concerns about sustainable development, primarily through the activities for environmental protection as a basic component of sustainable development (<http://www.apm-alba.ro/>).

There are also *Regional Development Agencies* (ADR) that are meant to contribute to sustainable and equitable development, by removing disappearances and imbalances between areas of the region for the benefit of residents (<http://www.adrcentru.ro/>).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This concept began to be spread among national environment policies in Rio de Janeiro, since 1992 (ONU Conference for Environment and Development), for establishing the principles of sustainable development.

The requirements for sustainable development are:

- resizing the economic growth;
- technological modifications or changings;
- forwarding to other energy resources and matters in order to save unrenewable resources;
- the controlled growth of population;
- poverty reduction;
- more states participation in taking global decisions.

Romania adopted in 2007 National Strategy for Sustainable Development with horizons 2013-2020-2030, which is a program designed to implement the strategic guidelines

of the European Union and ensure the transition to a more successful business model

Despite all the progress made so far to propose a rethinking of the concept and methodology development policies of the new century (Re-thinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century, W.M. Adams 2006), saying the concept is elastic but imprecise, while the three pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, environmental protection and social progress are not viable as inspiration that there could swap between the pillars in the deficit.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to address systemic issues of sustainable development, the current situation at European and national level was analyzed concerning monitoring and evaluation systems of sustainable development. From this analysis it appears that, on European level, in some countries such as Germany or Austria, there are major concerns in terms of monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development, using relevant indicators. In our country, there are some institutions dealing with sustainable development research.

There are also individual and institutional concerns highlight certain indicators of sustainable development, but the organized use of indicators for monitoring and evaluating sustainable development is still not organized.

In conclusion, in this area there is a number of steps to be taken in this direction in the near future, to make it complete alignment of our country to European Union policies.

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