

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR POLAND UP TO 2025

Dagmara Zuzek
Agricultural University in Krakow, Poland

ABSTRACT

In recent years the term of sustainable development has gained additional importance. The concept of sustainable development assumes the approach to planning and decision making process focused on attaining a real and lasting reduction of the economic and social differences but also protection of the natural environment.

The Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025 should recommend the adjustment of already developed qualitative indicators to Polish conditions and development of research work towards creating an optimal system for various decision-making options basing on well recognized state of natural resources and capabilities of the society (ecological space) and on qualitative indicators of progress and efficiency of development activities.

Key words: sustainable development, economic aspects, social dimension

Introduction

The meaning of economic and social dimension of sustainable development has been properly highlighted by "The Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025". Developing this strategy was forced by the resolution of Polish Parliament (Sejm) of 2 March 1999, which obliged the Government to prepare by 30 June 1999 a suitable document determining the direction of the country development until 2025. The resolution underlined the fact that "Sustainable development is perceived as the model of development where fulfilling the current social needs and needs of future generations will be treated in the same way..." and expressed the expectations of Polish Parliament (Sejm) that the Strategy "will harmoniously combine the care for conservation of natural and cultural heritage of the nation with civilizational and economic progress with participation of all social groups". At the same time it is obvious that the "The Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025", like the other socio-economic strategies, policies or sector programmes must also consider the current state of Polish economy, requirements resulting from Polish legislation and the definitions they contain, but also social expectations concerning the direction of the country development in the following years of the 21st century.

1. Aim and scope of "The Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025".

Prepared Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland should primarily support creating conditions for the stimulation of development processes, which would pose the least possible hazards for the natural environment. Therefore, it is necessary to successively eliminate the processes and economic activities

harmful for the environment and human health, promoting "environment friendly" management system and accelerating processes leading to the environment rehabilitation, everywhere where the natural balance has been disturbed. However, these postulates cannot at the same time lead to unwanted slowdown of the economic growth or widen the poverty margin, i.e. aggravating or creating new tensions in the society. At the same time the strategy should consider the needs in the following areas:

- territorial and ecological security of the country
- maintaining the state sovereignty
- health safety and social security of each citizen
- a necessity of Poland's fulfilling the obligations

resulting from the signed international contracts in force and international declarations made by Polish Government.

It is obvious that due to its international commitments and integration process with the European Union, but primarily because of health and natural environment protection in the whole country and all its regions, Poland had to base its environmental policy on the principles of sustainable development, where integration and coherence of economic, ecological and social aspects in the process of the country development are the most important.

2. Social dimension

The first principle of sustainable development in the Rio Declaration stated that "human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development and entitled to healthy and productive life in harmony with nature". It is obvious that poverty and poverty accompanying low level of education do not favour either development or appreciative life in harmony with nature. Poor people are disposed to meet their basic needs passively, they are more susceptible to

diseases and social pathologies, incapable of actively participating in decision making process which influence their conditions for development. Therefore, the fifth principle of sustainable development determines the necessity to counteract the poverty and its outcomes in all possible forms.

The social dimension of sustainable development in Polish conditions must therefore comprise:

- guaranty to fulfill the basic needs of the society, particularly concerning suitable housing standards, adequate biological minimum including potable water and sanitary needs in adequate amount and of satisfactory quality, as well as healthy food to meet the dietary needs;

- guaranty of protection against any hazards for health and life, primarily toxic effects of pollution caused by economic activities, protection against noise and vibrations, ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, as well as against the results of applied genetically modified organisms, but also crime prevention

- guaranty of access to education, at least on the primary level and assistance in acquiring knowledge for the most talented persons on higher levels of education;

- guaranty of active health protection through prophylaxy, proper conditions of medical treatment and prevention of social diseases;

- guaranteed social security for old, infirm and disabled people, to ensure the pre-determined social minimum and possibility of life in the society;

- ensured fair distribution of incomes and social securities, to reduce social differences, preventing the forming of significant poverty areas and marginalization of single persons or social groups

- ensured access to employment, in the first place by creating new jobs, supporting small and medium sized enterprises, access to trainings and courses upgrading qualifications or changing qualifications, access to cheap credits;

- equal access to the natural environment and its resources, recreation in the healthy and unpolluted environment.

Implementation of The Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025 must be supported by the integrated policies and sector programmes, primarily social policy, financial and fiscal policy, health protection policy, ecological policy, educational policy, labour and wages policy, policy of science and technology development, policy for agriculture and rural development, policy of cities and urbanized areas development, policy of cultural development, policy of development of physical culture and tourism, crime prevention policy, immigration policy but also inter-sector plans and programmes, proper administrative,

institutional and legal solutions. Responsibility for creating conditions for social development cannot lie solely on social security department, it must be distributed proportionately to planned tasks on all 28 departments of state administration mentioned in the Law on state administration of 4 September 1997, but also on self –government authorities and economy managers.

4. Economic dimension

Economic dimension of sustainable development must base on the assumption that the other two dimensions of this development, i.e. social and ecological dimensions are not nor will be the inhibitors of progress, on the contrary, they are and will be its stimulants through technological progress forced by these dimension, raising the education level of the society, its bigger share in decision-making process and responsibility for these decisions, creating new jobs, development of activeness and entrepreneurship, more effective utilization of raw materials, materials and human labour and finally improvement of safety.

Poland is still in the transformation process, therefore it may avoid the mistakes which other countries made. In specific conditions in Poland the economic dimension of sustainable development must comprise:

- inviolability of private property,

- guaranteed political and economic support for individual entrepreneurship, primarily the development of small and medium-sized enterprises,

- state support for scientific research, technological progress and implementation of research results aiming at more efficient utilization of energy, raw materials and mineral fuels, as well as supporting manufacturing processes based on renewable materials,

- continuity and stability of state financial, fiscal and investment policy ensuring competitiveness of cleaner ecological products and manufactured by more modern technologies on domestic and foreign markets,

- guaranteed progressive withdrawal of state subsidies, including also indirect ones, for enterprises and support for economically and ecologically unjustified production,

- assurance of political, administrative and financial support for cleaner production , waste recycling and recover of raw materials,

- improvement of information and communication technologies, basing decision making processes on proper information and analysis of gains and losses, including ecological and social costs, socialization of decision making processes.

Considering the above mentioned tasks the

Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025 must be supplemented by properly developed policies and sector programmes including the policy of economic development, energy and fuel policy, transport policy, policy of the country and region spatial management, social policy, ecological policy, financial and fiscal policy, public purchases policy, as well as plans of development prepared for various branches, plan of activities for administration, and various legislative and institutional solutions.

Responsibility for the realization of tasks mentioned above lies primarily on the sector of economy. However, its must be shared by budgetary sector, public finance sector, marine economy and water economy sector, but also by institutions of finance, research bodies, agriculture, State Treasury, legal institutions, higher education institutions, transport, environmental institutions and social security and health agencies.

Decisions concerning economic, social and ecological development should be taken on the basis of thorough assessment of the current state and confirmed scientific prognosis on the economic results and ecological and social outcomes. Such decisions should be corrected according to needs, i.e. depending on changes of initial parameters for individual decision model revealed by monitoring.

Such decision model requires suitable indicators of the form to which initial data will be processed, on the basis of which progress will be monitored and limits of individual stages of development and its sustainability will be established, as well as corrections of policies, programmes and planning of sector development.

Such indicators have been worked out for many years by the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, Committee for Ecological Policy OECD (EPOC) and by the European Commission.

So far none of these indicators have been implemented in decision-making practice, primarily because of considerably conservative character of national and international statistical systems (e.g. EUROSTAT), which are particularly resistant to any changes in the scope, procedures or methods of collection, processing and distribution of information.

Another element delaying practical implementation of these indicators is the fact that people in charge are used to existing routines and most unwilling to use other than traditional information packages. This applies even to relatively modern management systems used by the European Commission and in the most economically developed countries in the world, e.g. by the governments of the US, Germany, the United Kingdom or Japan. So far only simulated reports of sustainable development have

been created which comprise only a part of problems of this development.

Two kinds of these indicators should be used in order to properly plan development activities, monitor their effectiveness or possibly correct directions of these activities:

- quantitative indicators of the state of resources, production, consumption, increase or decrease in incomes, demographic indices, currency position and inflation level and finally GNP,

- qualitative indicators, such as energy, water and raw material consumption per GDP unit, per capita national income, level of growth or decrease in purchasing power, degree of raw materials consumption and other non-renewable materials, quality of the natural environment elements and pressure on the environment resulting from economic activity, development of technologies owing to research results implementation and effectiveness and finally the influence of external conditions.

The first type of indicators provides orientation about the initial state and local potential, whereas the second type considers the interrelations between the three pillars of sustainable development, i.e. economy, environment and society, allowing for an assessment and prediction of the results and a correction of activity.

The Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025 should recommend the adjustment of already developed qualitative indicators to Polish conditions and development of research work towards creating an optimal system for various decision-making options basing on well recognized state of natural resources and capabilities of the society (ecological space) and on qualitative indicators of progress and efficiency of development activities.

Conclusion

The above presented reflections and assumptions unanimously lead to a conclusion that sustainable development is an ongoing process and balancing its three basic dimensions: economic, ecological and social is a condition crucial for such development. Any weakening or reinforcing of one dimension must in result lead to crisis in all three dimensions. It also results that this kind of development will undergo the influence of unknown and impossible to predict changes of both internal and external conditions. Therefore the main task for the authors of the Strategy and resulting policies, programmes and sector plans, as well as for the main actors of the sustainable development process will be construing and constant improving of mechanisms, which almost automatically will allow to even off simultaneously the levels of all dimensions. The Sustainable

Development Strategy for Poland up to 2025 must remain the same in the area of programme assumptions, whereas it will be a document susceptible to changes of its instruments, open to corrections resulting from an objective assessment of internal and external conditions and predicting their changes.

Thus a constant balance of the three dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. economic development, social development and rational utilization of environmental resources (ecological space) combined

with a stable mechanism of correcting the levels of these dimensions development will be an ideal solution.

References

1. Janikowski R., 2006, Zrównoważony rozwój lokalny: teoria i praktyka, PAN, Warszawa
2. Więzik B., 2005, Zrównoważony rozwój a ochrona środowiska, Wyd. Akademii Techniczno – Humanistycznej, Bielsko – Biała