

## **STANDARD AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF RURAL AREAS POPULATION IN THE VIEW OF NEW PARADIGM OF DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract.** One of the main tasks of modern civilization is development according to a New Paradigm, so-called sustainable development. It involves economic and social development with respect to the state of environment. Demands of sustainable development involve the notion of intergenerational justice, which provides the possibilities of meeting the requirements of humanity in the future. A man constitutes the centre of interest and is the main subject of sustainable development. Its superior aim is to fulfill the needs and aspirations of people, especially the improvement of their standard and quality of life. The work presents analysis of theoretical and empirical issues connected with the development, as well as the standard and quality of life of rural areas population in the region of Lower Silesia, taking into account its functional regions. The analysis made use of sustainable development indexes, basing on normalization method. The mentioned indexes involved housing conditions, as well as expenses connected with housing, health, culture and sport. Areas situated in the surrounding of larger urban agglomerations with higher potential of development, proved to acquire higher standards and quality of life. From the regional point of view the lowest values featured region I of rural character. Research results clearly defined the standard and quality of life of rural areas population in Lower Silesian voivodeship, as well as the changes in these two examined parameters, which confirmed the results of the research conducted in the territory of the whole country.

**Key words:** rural area, standard and quality of life, sustainable development

## INTRODUCTION

Advancing development of civilization, conditioned by numerous factors, including economic and demographic development, as well as alterations in consumption and culture, has brought about a new paradigm of development. This is the concept of sustainable development, the first one in the history of life on the Earth to consciously define a trial of avoiding self – destruction. Humans have become aware of dangers and have made an attempt to undertake measures preventing negative effects of the progress of civilization. According to Piątek “demand of implementation of sustainable development marks a New Era in the history of mankind. It means that after the stage of land conquering by the human species, then after the stage of rule and domination, born in front of our eyes, a new era of searching for harmonious co – existence between human world and natural environment, called Ecological Era, has come into being” [Piątek 2005]. Therefore, current economic development has to be adjusted to the surrounding environment.

The source of the concept of sustainable development originates from classical economy, from the views by D. Ricardo, T. Malthus and J.S Mill., who reflected on the limits of growth in the conditions of decreasing soil fertility, or on the relations between resources and the development of humanity. Special services can be attributed to the representatives of the Roman Club, who indicated natural limits of growth and development, as well as the necessity of reducing exploitation of natural resources and their protection [Jeżowski 2007]. In the modern sense, sustainable development is the subject of interest for a number of economic and scientific fields, as well as social and cultural science. This notion appeared in 1987, in a famous Report by G.H. Brundlandt “Our common future” and it meant “meeting the needs and aspirations of contemporary generation in the way which does not limit the possibilities of meeting the needs of future generations” [Jeżowski 2007]. Understanding and interpretation of this notion has still been the ground for a number of elaborations and interpretations. According to Piątek “this is a set of mechanisms enabling an organisation of human world so that it could harmoniously and permanently coexist with biosphere, in order to ensure human self – realisation”. The notion of sustainable development includes, apart from economic rules determining socio-economic governance, law of nature as world ecology. Such an attitude introduces the need of equal treatment of environment, capital and labour. Demands regarding sustainable development also include the idea of intergenerational justice, providing for the possibilities of meeting the demands of humanity to come. On the basis of the above notions it can be concluded that a man constitutes the centre of interest and is a central subject of sustainable development. Superior aim of a man is meeting the needs and aspirations of humans, especially the improvement in their standard and quality of life. Social issues, along with economical and ecological ones, are a basic purpose of sustainable development.

Human resources play a double role in sustainable development – firstly, they constitute production resource which is the element of social order and, secondly, they create goals and methods of achieving this development. Social sustainability most often refers to the effect of environmental pollution on human health and, therefore, broadly speaking, on standard, prosperity and quality of life. As far as social order is concerned, to the stressed features belong dignified life and self – realisation, cultural diversity, protection of human health, justice division and equality of opportunities.

Gawroński, after Kuszpit, claims that the subject of quality of life is human and, as further consequence, the whole society. In this meaning, the quality of life involves sociological field describing mutual relation between people, determines possibilities of full development of an individual in particular conditions, expresses satisfaction of achieved living conditions and introduces the factor of value as an element of human activity [Gawroński 2000].

Social order, because of containing categories of the quality of life in sustainable development, is treated as a superior goal. In nearly all documents dealing with sustainable development a special attention is paid to the quality of life: The United Nations Charter, Rio Declaration, Jahanesburg Declaration, The Rules of the European Union in eight Millenium Development Goals. In all the documents mentioned above there are particularly stressed the rules of dignified life and self – realisation, cultural diversity protection of human health and equal chances strengthening of social cohesion [Borys 2005]. In this view the quality of life can be interpreted as the degree of meeting all the needs of man and society.

A number of rules of sustainable development contained in Earth Charter directly refer to the quality of life.

Rule 1 – People constitute the center of interest in the process of permanent and sustainable development; they have right to health and creative life in harmony with nature.

Rule 3 – The right to development should be enforced so, that equitably addresses development and environment all needs of current and future generations

Rule 5 – In order to ensure permanent and sustainable development, as well as to reduce differences in the standard and quality of life of most people in the world, countries and nations should undertake cooperation, which will allow to perform essential job – poverty eradication.

Rule 8 – Countries should reduce or eliminate models of production and consumption disturbing sustainable development and promote appropriate demographic Policy, which will allow to achieve permanent and sustainable development, as well as the improvement in the quality of life for all people [Borys 2005].

Therefore, the issues connected with analysis of standard and quality of life have become very important. Their special role is highlighted when creating the concept of development for particular areas, both in local and global attitude.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS IN RELATION TO THE STANDARD AND QUALITY OF PEOPLE'S LIFE**

Rural areas of Poland are diverse in respect of a number of factors. This diversification is the resultant of many economic, social, political and cultural processes. Both historical events through which the Polish State passed have significantly affected diversity of rural areas of our country and current processes connected with economic changes not of the least importance has also been localization of particular areas, since it conditions the pace and developments of alterations resulting from availability of resources and their attractiveness. The pace of development is governed by many factors of endogenous and exogenous nature. Endogenous factors, reduced to natural resources, the ones produced by human activity, institutions dealing with promotion and development of a particular region, its culture, tradition and attractiveness.

In last years, foreign capital has continuously been becoming more important in the development of particular areas. Joining the European Union by Poland proved to offer numerous opportunities of gaining financial means for development both at a local and regional level, in nearly all fields of life.

Research conducted by Rosner showed diversity of rural areas regarding their social-economic development. Rural areas of eastern Poland feature backwardness in relation to western part of our country. The most developed areas can be found in the vicinity of urban centers, while with distance away from these centers, the level of development is reduced. Rural areas in the so-called suburban areas are characterized by easy disposal of products and more numerous possibilities of employment for population living in the areas, which considerable affects the standard and quality of people's life. Backward areas feature tendencies of reducing employment, as well as worsening of demographic structures of human and social capital [Rosner 2011]. Similar dependencies can be also observed in the territory of the Lower Silesian voivodeship [Adamska 2006]

## AIM AND METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The aim of the conducted research was determination of the standard and quality of life of rural areas population in the Lower Silesian voivodeship. The latter one characterizes diverse environmental and economic conditions, which determines the development of its particular areas, which, in turn, directly translates to the quality of life of local population.

In the concept of sustainable development, the standard and quality of life are classified to the notion of social order. Among numerous fields featuring social order, the field involving the standard and quality of life covers as many as 68 indicators. Not all of them can be introduced to characteristics of the quality of life of rural areas population. According to Borys, indicators of sustainable development belong to elements allowing to monitor its processes, including the standard and quality of people's life [Borys 2005].

To determine the standard and quality of life of rural areas population in the Lower Silesian voivodeship, there were taken into account indexes determining people's living conditions, i.e. housing – a flat, its size and density of people expressed by the following indicators: number of flats per 1000 inhabitants, average flat surface in m<sup>2</sup>, number of rooms in a flat, number of dwellings completed. The second element affecting the standard and quality of life is community care to improve conditions through expenditures on different social purposes, like flat, health, culture and sport, expressed per 1000 dwellers. These indicators were analysed in 2000-2010, taking into account communities of the Lower Silesian voivodeship of a rural character, introducing division into five functional regions of rural areas. Region I of intensive agriculture, whose aim is modernisation of food economy complex, II agriculture – recreation – development of tourism and recreation, III industry – recreation – tourism – shaping the natural terrain regarding mountain and foothill areas, IV Industry – agriculture – rise residents income through multifunctional development and V agriculture – industry – recreation – as the area of high natural values, where special attention should be paid to reclamation and protection of natural landscape.

Analysis of research problem made use of the method of theory of normalization. The first step was standardization of features, i.e. expressing them in the same units and then synthetic indicator was determined (SW), which is mean value of standardized diagnostic features.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

Research results prove certain diversity of the standard and quality of life of rural population in functional regions of rural areas in the Lower Silesian voivodeship. These results express analysed housing conditions and communities expenditures on municipal economy, health protection, sport and culture. The mentioned diversity is expressed by mean value of synthetic indicator (SW) (Fig. 1). In 2000-2010 its values did not exceed the range from 0.2 point to 0.4 point. On the basis of the values obtained it is not possible to strictly determine which region is characterized as the most satisfactory and which the least satisfactory conditioning regarding analysed indicators. Each year the regions were characterized by slightly different conditioning and obtained results indicate average conditions of the standard and quality of life. That situation can reflect

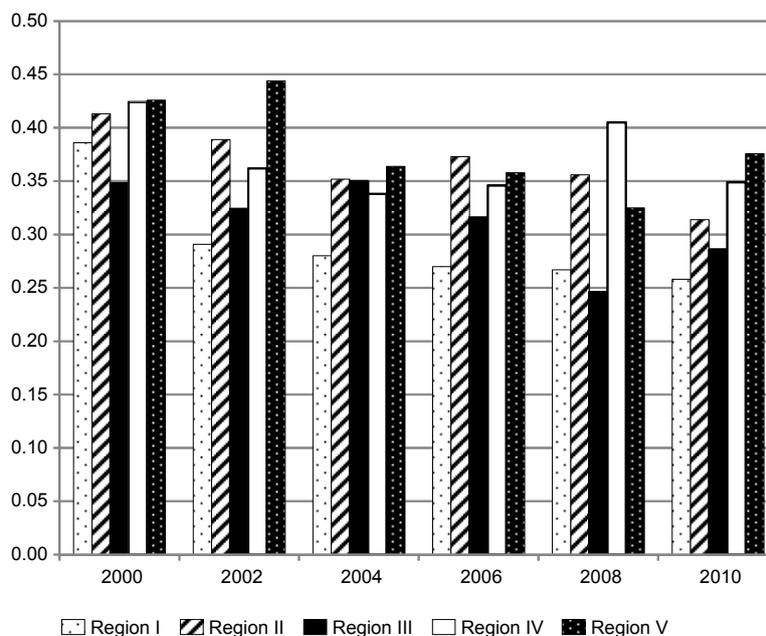


Fig. 1. Mean value of synthetic indicator of the standard and quality of life of rural areas population in functional regions of the Lower Silesian voivodeship  
Source: own calculations on the basis of data [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl).

Rys. 1. Średnia wartość syntetycznego wskaźnika poziomu i jakości życia ludności obszarów wiejskich w regionach funkcjonalnych województwa dolnośląskiego  
Źródło: obliczenia własne na podstawie danych [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl).

insufficient involvement on the side of communities in the improvement of the examined parameters. Low expenditures on housing, health and culture purposes can result from the activities connected with other priorities in particular communities, as well as from their poor financial condition. Among all the regions, the worst conditions featured region I, of agricultural character. The data regarding this region show that synthetic indicator of the standard and quality of life was of the lowest value and it did not exceed, except for 2000 (0.386 points.), 0.3 point. The second place belonged to region III, where in 2008 this indicator was of the lowest value in all the regions. Generally, the highest values were recorded for region V in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2010, which testifies the best standard and quality of life. In this region the highest indicator value was observed in 2002 and it amounted 0.444 point. Yet decreased value of synthetic indicator in region V since 2004 is worth considering, as, previously, it had ranged above 0.4 point. Similar situation took place in the remaining regions, where since 2002 indicator value decreased and did not reach the value from 2000. Diminished value of mean synthetic indicator (SW) was caused, first of all, by decreased communities expenditure on housing purposes.

Taking into account particular communities in functional regions, a higher diversity was observed. In all regions there were communities of very high and very low synthetic indicator determining the standard and quality of life (Table 1). Minimum values were obtained for the so-called peripheral communities, without prospects of development, Chile maximum values belonged to communities situated in the vicinity of large urban agglomerations, with advantageous conditions for development. Among communities of region I maximum values of synthetic indicator, referring to the standard and quality of life, within all the years of research was obtained by Kobierzyce, Długoleka and Czernica communities, in region II – Wisznia Mała, in region IV – Kunice and Lubin and in region V – Zgorzelec and Bolesławiec. The lowest values, however, featured Domaniów, Dziadowa Kłoda community from region I, Niechlów in region II, Marciszów from region III, Ruja and Pęcław community from region IV, as well as Siekierzyn and Radwanice from region V.

Table 1. Synthetic indicator of the standard and quality of people's life in functional regions of Lower Silesia in 2000-2010

Tabela 1. Syntetyczny wskaźnik poziomu i jakości życia mieszkańców regionów funkcjonalnych Dolnego Śląska w latach 2000-2010

Specification Wyszczególnienie	Year – Rok					
	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Region I						
Average – Średnia	0.386	0.291	0.280	0.270	0.267	0.258
Maksimum	0.528	0.444	0.608	0.567	0.725	0.489
Minimum	0.194	0.134	0.165	0.164	0.110	0.105
Region II						
Average – Średnia	0.413	0.389	0.352	0.373	0.356	0.314
Maksimum	0.661	0.610	0.531	0.738	0.830	0.849
Minimum	0.243	0.221	0.190	0.122	0.151	0.099

Table 1 – cont. / Tabela 1 – cd.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Region III						
Average – Średnia	0.348	0.324	0.350	0.316	0.246	0.286
Maksimum	0.500	0.497	0.506	0.519	0.402	0.537
Minimum	0.239	0.195	0.209	0.179	0.123	0.144
Region IV						
Average – Średnia	0.424	0.362	0.338	0.346	0.405	0.349
Maksimum	0.652	0.584	0.664	0.639	0.623	0.621
Minimum	0.108	0.115	0.116	0.084	0.170	0.134
Region V						
Average – Średnia	0.426	0.444	0.364	0.358	0.325	0.376
Maksimum	0.628	0.656	0.623	0.562	0.483	0.513
Minimum	0.322	0.261	0.226	0.241	0.225	0.257

Source: own calculations on the basis of data [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl).  
 Źródło: obliczenia własne na podstawie danych [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The quality of life and its development is a superior goal in shaping the concept of social, economic and environmental development and it should be a starting point for creation of any paradigms of development. The standard and quality of people's life is one of basic assumptions of the concept of sustainable development. This idea is expressed in care regarding future generations, as well as in equality and justice governing the chances of development for inhabitants of different regions.

Ten-year-lasting analysis of the standard and quality of life allowed to draw the following conclusions:

In 2000-2010 mean value of synthetic index of level and quality of life (SW) in particular functional regions of rural areas in the Lower Silesian voivodeship ranged from 0.267 to 0.426 points. In each region decrease in its value can be observed. As the main reason should be regarded diminishing share of communities financial expenditure on housing, health and cultural purposes.

Among all functional regions the lowest values of synthetic index of level and quality of life characterized region I of intensive farming, where basic source of income was agriculture. This founding confirms the fact that, nowadays, farming does not act as a developmental stimulus.

Localization of particular communities determines their development. The population of communities situated in the vicinity of large urban agglomerations enjoys more possibilities resulting from disposal of products and earning money, which is reflected in the level and quality of their life. This situation is expressed by minimum values obtained by the so-called preferential communities, as well as maximum values featuring communities localized close to large urban agglomerations.

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## POZIOM I JAKOŚĆ ŻYCIA LUDNOŚCI OBSZARÓW WIEJSKICH W KONTEKŚCIE NOWEGO PARADYGMATU ROZWOJU

**Streszczenie.** Jednym z głównych zadań dzisiejszej cywilizacji jest rozwój według nowego paradygmatu tzw. zrównoważonego rozwoju. Jest on procesem uwzględniającym rozwój gospodarczy i społeczny z poszanowaniem stanu środowiska. Postulaty zrównoważonego rozwoju zawierają pojęcie sprawiedliwości międzypokoleniowej, dającej możliwości zaspokajania potrzeb ludzkości w przyszłości. Człowiek stanowi centrum zainteresowania i jest centralnym podmiotem zrównoważonego rozwoju. Jego nadrzędnym celem jest zaspokojenie potrzeb i aspiracji ludzi, a szczególnie poprawa ich poziomu i jakości życia. W pracy przedstawiono analizę zagadnień teoretycznych i empirycznych dotyczących rozwoju oraz poziomu i jakości życia ludności obszarów wiejskich Dolnego Śląska z podziałem na jego regiony funkcjonalne. W analizie posłużono się wskaźnikami zrównoważonego rozwoju z wykorzystaniem metody normalizacji. Wskaźniki dotyczyły warunków mieszkaniowych, a także wydatków na mieszkania, zdrowie oraz kulturę i sport. Obszary położone w otoczeniu większych aglomeracji miejskich, z większymi możliwościami rozwoju, wykazywały się korzystniejszymi warunkami poziomu i jakości życia. W ujęciu regionalnym najmniejsze wartości uzyskiwał region I o charakterze rolniczym. Otrzymane wyniki jednoznacznie określiły poziom i jakość życia ludności obszarów wiejskich województwa dolnośląskiego oraz jego zmiany, potwierdzając badania prowadzone na terenie całego kraju.

**Słowa kluczowe:** obszar wiejski, poziom i jakość życia, zrównoważony rozwój

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