

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW STRATEGIES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. Sustainable growth from the perspective of new strategies for the European Union social development addresses the problem of importance of the sustainable development paradigm in the proposed and currently discussed document “Europe 2020. The strategy to strengthen smart growth fostering inclusive economy”. It also indicates certain risks that its realization may bring for rural areas and farming.

Key words: social development, sustainable growth, EU development strategies

INTRODUCTION

For many years the paradigm of sustainable growth has been the main position in social development strategies both on the global, regional and local scale. The increase of sustainable development importance arises from globalization processes leading to fast transfer of negative effects of development on the world arena and from increasing significance of social attitudes and ethical standards for economy growth.

The interpretation of the expression *sustainable growth* does no longer refer only to ecological problems; the consensus about the holistic approach to the sustainable growth is already a fact. Thus using the paradigm means equal treatment of tasks and actions concerning the areas of natural environment, economic, social, spatial, technology and ethical, development

Although the awareness that sustainable growth is the right choice towards development is becoming more and more common, the implementation of its principles into practice in economic, social and political areas encounters difficulties and brings about

serious problems. Building development strategies – national, urban and rural based on the idea of sustainable growth when confronted with reality often does not bring satisfactory results.

The real range of taken actions indicates that sustainable growth is unfortunately present more often in declarations and programs do not always translate into daily practice. Nevertheless, difficulties with the strategy realization cannot discourage from building the strategy as through the strategy principles construction the society makes choices according to its values and expectations. The choices, however, are mostly political and the direction of changes depends on them.

The aim of the following elaboration is to indicate the position of the sustainable growth paradigm in the European Union's latest strategies for social development and drawing attention to risks that the strategy realization may bring about for the development of rural areas and farming.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The notion *social development* is no longer considered equivalent with economy growth, which is a significant but not the only element of development. The current meaning of social development includes transformations in different spheres as political, cultural, technological and mental. The coherent meaning of development was proposed in "Human Development Report" by the United Nations Organization published in 1990 [Human... 1990]. Its underlying principle was based on the belief that it was necessary to change the currently dominating model of development which equated economy growth with social progress. The report defined *human development* as "the process of increasing the range of choice possibilities understood by people as creating human abilities and providing suitable conditions for their full use. The aim of social development should be to equip the society with possibilities of making independent choices in all life areas thus enabling them to take greater responsibility for their wealth and social security" [Development Report... 2010]. The idea "refers directly and indirectly to the threads of social thought where development and social progress are considered equivalent most of all with the process of improving the quality of human life and where economy growth is perceived as the means to achieving that goal but not as the goal itself. The source of the idea is also great dissatisfaction with the current results of the economy-social development processes and the conviction of the severe crisis that the state institution, free market and sciences are in" [Książopolski 1995, p. 28].

Such meaning of development is adequate to the use of sustainable growth paradigm because experiencing different disadvantages of development based on global economic growth together with its side effects and costs have brought the need of seeking solutions which could limit the negative consequences of economic growth. These consequences are devastation of natural environment, spreading and increasing poverty in the world and conflicts over the access to natural resources.

Sustainable development refers to a wide spectrum of factors which are crucial for people's level and quality of life. Their actual scale is visible by the indicators proposed in monitoring the sustainable growth in the smallest organizational unit in Poland being a district [Wskaźniki... 2005]. The indicators are divided into groups so that they illustrate the organization on environmental-spatial, economic and social levels.

Table 1. Sustainable growth indicators
Tabela 1. Wskaźniki rozwoju zrównoważonego

Social order Ład społeczny	Economic order Ład gospodarczy	Environmental-spatial order Ład środowiskowo-przestrzenny
Demography Demografia	District finances Finanse gminy	Ecology – conscious town-and-country planning Ekologizacja planowania przestrzennego
Education Edukacja	Enterprise (economic subjects and workers) Przedsiębiorczość (podmioty gospodarcze i pracujący)	Preservation of environment and natural scenery Ochrona przyrody i krajobrazu
Social aid Pomoc społeczna	Economic subjects structure Struktura podmiotów gospodarczych	Forests preservation and sustainable growth Ochrona i zrównoważony rozwój lasów
Health Zdrowie	Employment level and structure Poziom i struktura zatrudnienia	Soil preservation and waste Ochrona gleb i odpady
Public security Bezpieczeństwo publiczne	Housing construction Budownictwo mieszkaniowe	Preservation of minerals Ochrona zasobów kopalin
Housing industry Mieszkalnictwo	Tourism Turystyka	Preservation of subsoil and underground water Ochrona wód powierzchniowych i podziemnych
Culture, sport, recreation (lifestyle) Kultura, sport, rekreacja (styl życia)	Agriculture Rolnictwo	Preservation of air. (quality, emission, climate protection) Ochrona powietrza atmosferycznego (jakość, emisje, ochrona klimatu)
Public participation Partycypacja społeczna	Technical infrastructure Infrastruktura techniczna	Preservation of acoustic climate (emission, noise influence) Ochrona klimatu akustycznego (emisje, oddziaływanie hałasu)
Labour market participation Aktywność na rynku pracy	Use of materials and resources (including industrial waste and its use) Wykorzystanie materiałów i surowców (w tym odpady przemysłowe i ich wykorzystanie)	Renewable energy (use) Energia odnawialna (wykorzystanie)
Institutional-political order Ład instytucjonalno-polityczny	Availability of products and services Dostępność produktów i usług	Biological, chemical and electromagnetic security and prevention from industrial failures Bezpieczeństwo biologiczne, chemiczne, elektromagnetyczne i przeciwdziałanie skutkom awarii przemysłowych

Source: Borys [2008].
Źródło: Borys [2008].

The suggested methodology of sustainable growth monitoring corresponds to the currently accepted assumption of holistic approach to development – preserving the balance between wide aspects of actions aiming at providing ecological and social-economical cohesion.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN THE STRATEGIES OF EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT

“The sustainable growth paradigm has not gained due position in programs and actions of European institutions until the end of the 90’s of XX c. Although the recognition of the importance of ecological conditions of development as the main element of sustainable growth has been increasing since the 80’s of the last century, the slowly maturing political elites fully started to believe that it is necessary to fill the European strategies with practical solutions considering the demands of sustainable growth not until the European summit in Cardiff in 1998. At the turn of the centuries the European Union created many well-thought-out program documents and took clear actions in order to prepare a new strategy of sustainable growth” [Toczyski 2004]. The improvement of the sustainable growth paradigm has been mentioned in numerous European Union documents. The Lisbon Strategy has gained importance in that matter as it assumed, among many other things, completing tasks where the priorities were taking care of stable foundations of development and reaching the balance between economy and social growth. Moreover, the issues of the natural environment, the limits of climate changes and preserving natural resources have taken a special place in the strategy.

Nowadays the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy undoubtedly has not brought the expected results and the strategy principles have not been realised to the satisfactory extent as far as European ambitions are concerned. The failure of the Lisbon Strategy encouraged the European Union to take actions aiming at realisation of the most important principles of development. “The implementation of the new development strategy is significantly important in the situation of the difficulties caused by the world financial crisis and the recession resulting from it. It is also important for the problems connected with functioning of the euro zone. The crisis disclosed the weak points of the union economy and finances and drew attention to the development limits of the Community resulting from globalization, natural resources deficiencies and aging of western European societies. The European Commission have claimed that the recent limits of Community development could be faced up to only by radical changes based on building innovative ecological and society-friendly economy” [Nowa strategia... 2010]. The response to the challenges of the contemporary world is “Europe 2020. The strategy to strengthen smart growth fostering inclusive economy”. As José Manuel Barroso writes in the introduction to the “Europe 2020”: “To achieve a sustainable future, we must already look beyond the short term. Europe needs to get back on track. Then it must stay on track. That is the purpose of Europe 2020. It’s about more jobs and better lives. It shows how Europe has the capability to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to find the path to create new jobs and to offer a sense of direction to our societies” [Barroso 2010, p. 4].

The belief that the European Union needs a new development strategy to overcome the crisis is becoming more and more obvious in the situation of growing problems of certain European Union member states, including the euro zone, which arouses concerns about preserving the European Union cohesion. Fortunately, there is high awareness that breaking the cohesion is harmful for all the European Union member states as it could put their roles to the sidelines and blight their chances of development. In this situation the proposal of a new strategy for Europe (attempts to accept it taking place in 2011) seems promising. There are many hazards, though, resulting not only from the financial crisis. The greatest danger for “Europe 2020” strategy realisation is the quite clear tendency to economic nationalism which could put integration at risk.

The strategy records, however, express, the belief that Europe can succeed if it acts together as the Union. The introduction says: “We need a strategy to help us come out stronger from the crisis and turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion” [Europe... 2010, p. 7].

“Europe 2020” strategy includes mutually connected priorities:

- smart growth: economic development based on knowledge and innovation;
- sustainable growth: supporting economy that is resource efficient, environment-friendly and competitive;
- inclusive growth: supporting economy of high level of employment, providing social and territorial cohesion [Europe... 2010].

The “Europe 2020” strategy records clearly show that the development indicators will determine its success. The most important of them are connected with achieving the 75% employment rate for people at the age of 20-64, allotting 3% of the European Union GNP to research and development. It is also vital to achieve goals “20/20/20” concerning climate and energy, to limit the number of people untimely stopping their education to 10%, provided that at least 40% people of young generation should gain higher education, and to decrease the number of people facing poverty by 20 million.

The most important goals set in the “Europe 2020” strategy are presented in the Table 2.

However, constructing a New European Union strategy raises a lot of doubts. While the goals set are obvious and accepted, the way of accomplishing them brings about numerous questions. There is no doubt that the choice of the “Europe 2020” strategy priorities is to a great extent the effect of former discussions among the members of the European Union. They claimed that “less of the European Union money should be spent on agriculture and more on purposes mentioned in the Lisbon Strategy. In the way that the Union spends 40% of the budget on agriculture while farmers make 5% of the EU population and constitute less than 2% GNP at considerably lower expenditure on science, technology and innovations” [Rowiński 2006, p. 128], there is high risk that the priorities change could lead to development of some rural areas at a slower pace than expected by the inhabitants. According to Danuta Hübner “the greatest threat to the “Europe 2020” strategy is the fact that the budget of the EU will be divided into sectors corresponding to certain goals. Because there is little chance that the leaders of the EU member states increase the amount of the EU budget (over the present less than 1% GNP), there is a risk that the means for the new space will have to be searched for by reducing the means for cohesion policy and agriculture, the two main expenses of the EU budget currently” [Hübner 2010]. It means that the economy strategy of the EU for

Table 2. The crucial aims of “Europe 2020” strategy
Tabela 2. Najważniejsze cele strategii „Europa 2020”

Smart growth Inteligentny rozwój	Sustainable growth Rozwój zrównoważony	Inclusive growth Rozwój sprzyjający włączeniu społecznemu
<p>Innovation EU flagship initiative “Innovation Union” to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation so as to strengthen the innovation chain and boost levels of investment throughout the Union.</p> <p>Innowacje Przewodni projekt UE „Unia innowacji” ma na celu poprawę warunków ramowych i dostępu do finansowania badań i innowacji, co powinno wzmocnić łańcuch innowacji i zwiększyć poziom inwestycji w całej Unii.</p>	<p>Climate, energy and mobility EU flagship initiative “Resource efficient Europe” to help decouple economic growth from the use of resources, by decarbonising our economy, increasing the use of renewable sources, modernizing our transport sector and promoting energy efficiency.</p> <p>Klimat, energia, mobilność Przewodni projekt UE „Europa efektywnie korzystająca z zasobów” ma celu uniezależnienie wzrostu gospodarczego od wykorzystania zasobów poprzez zmniejszenie udziału emisji węgla w europejskiej gospodarce, większe wykorzystanie odnawialnych źródeł energii, modernizację transportu i propagowanie efektywności energetycznej.</p>	<p>Employment and skills EU flagship initiative “An agenda for new skills and jobs” to modernize labour markets by facilitating labour mobility and the development of skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand.</p> <p>Zatrudnienie i umiejętności Przewodni projekt UE „Program na rzecz nowych umiejętności i zatrudnienia” ma na celu modernizację rynków pracy poprzez zwiększanie mobilności siły roboczej oraz rozwijanie kwalifikacji przez całe życie, co powinno podnieść współczynnik aktywności zawodowej i lepiej dopasować do siebie popyt i podaż na rynku pracy.</p>
<p>Education EU flagship initiative “Youth on the move” to enhance the performance of education systems and to reinforce the international attractiveness of Europe’s higher education.</p> <p>Edukacja Przewodni projekt UE „Młodzież w drodze” ma celu poprawę wyników systemu kształcenia oraz zwiększenia atrakcyjności europejskiego szkolnictwa wyższego na arenie międzynarodowej.</p>	<p>Competitiveness EU flagship initiative “An industrial policy for the globalization era” to improve the business environment, especially for SMEs, and to support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally.</p> <p>Konkurencyjność Przewodni projekt UE „Polityka przemysłowa w erze globalizacji” ma na celu poprawę otoczenia biznesu, szczególnie w odniesieniu do MSP oraz wspieranie rozwoju silnej i zrównoważonej bazy przemysłowej, przygotowanej do konkurowania na rynkach światowych.</p>	<p>Fighting poverty EU flagship initiative “European platform against poverty” to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.</p> <p>Walka z ubóstwem Przewodni projekt UE „Europejski program walki z ubóstwem” ma na celu zapewnienie spójności społecznej i terytorialnej, tak aby korzyści płynące ze wzrostu zatrudnienia były szeroko dostępne, a osoby ubogie i wykluczone społecznie mogły żyć godnie i aktywnie uczestniczyć w życiu społecznym.</p>
<p>Digital society EU flagship initiative “A digital agenda for Europe” to speed up the roll-out of high-speed Internet and reap the benefits of a digital single market for households and firms.</p> <p>Spoleczeństwo cyfrowe Przewodni projekt UE „Europejska agenda cyfrowa” ma na celu upowszechnianie szybkiego Internetu oraz umożliwienie gospodarstw domowym i przedsiębiorcom czerpanie korzyści z jednolitego rynku cyfrowego.</p>		

Source: Europa... [2010].
Źródło: Europa... [2010].

the oncoming decade carries the risk of segmentation of the European Union budget at the cost of the cohesion policy and does not guarantee achieving noble goals by the states. Thus the greatest hazard is connected with the rules of realisation of the strategy regulations, as it might spell reducing the means for rural areas development. That, considering the scale of problems our country problems is dealing with, might result in stopping positive trends taking place in the recent years.

Many politicians of the European Union express a similar concern, as in their opinion "Europe 2020" strategy carries the risk of segmentation of the EU budget at the cost of cohesion policy and financing new aims such as fight against climate changes or innovation could take place by the reduction of means for agriculture. The critical evaluation of the prepared strategy derives from fears that its realisation will favour the member states of the so called old European Union which with their already high potential will be more able to use the opportunities of the investment in innovations and research than the new Union member states. Both the facts are of great significance for European agriculture and thus they have great influence on the situation of the Polish countryside. Limiting protective agricultural policy for economically weaker Polish farms might spell serious threat.

CONCLUSION

The discussion and further decisions taken in 2011 will finally define the form of the "Europe 2020" strategy and will determine actions taken in the oncoming decade. The crucial for both the European Union itself and directly for our country is working out the consensus where the matters of rural areas and agriculture will not be made peripheral. It is vital that financing new aims does not veil the importance of the aims accomplished until today.

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ROZWÓJ ZRÓWNOWAŻONY W PERSPEKTYWIE NOWYCH STRATEGII ROZWOJU SPOŁECZNEGO UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

Streszczenie. *Rozwój zrównoważony w perspektywie nowych strategii rozwoju społecznego Unii Europejskiej* porusza problem miejsca, jakie zajmuje paradygmat rozwoju zrównoważonego w proponowanym i dyskutowanym obecnie dokumencie *Europa 2020. Strategia na rzecz inteligentnego rozwoju sprzyjającego włączeniu społecznemu*. Wskazuje również na pewne zagrożenia, jakie może nieść ze sobą jej realizacja dla rozwoju obszarów wiejskich i rolnictwa.

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój społeczny, rozwój zrównoważony, strategie rozwoju UE

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