

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THE GOALS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN EU AND ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT: *The Rome Report, published in 1972, drew attention on the contradiction between unlimited growth and consumption in relation to the limited resources of the earth. The report had a powerful impact on the concept of economic development, it contributed to the relocation of the concept of needs within the limits of the thinking that unidirectional development which produces only to assure economic growth in the long run should not affect life on earth. The paper presents the evolution of the concept of sustainable development, which militates for the continuous improvement of quality of life, taking into account the rational and efficient use of resources, how it managed to become, in a relatively short period, the concern of the entire world and why it becomes the principle that lays at the basis of all policies. The paper analyses the relationship between the strategy of sustainable development of EU and the Lisbon Agenda. It also shows that although EU established that sustainable development is the principle on which all European policies are based, and practically competition dominates the political agenda, in fact, the two strategies reinforce each other.*

KEYWORDS: *Sustainable development, Government policy, Regional Development Planning, policy*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *Q01, O2, R58, Y10*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the '80, researchers, politicians and practitioners acknowledged the fact that economic development, uncontrollably followed only by economic growth, would lead on the one hand, in an alarming way, to running out of resources, which are not renewable, and on the other hand, it would have an irreversible effect on environment pollution. Therefore, the concept of sustainable development is born out of a stringent necessity.

Sustainable development, in this context, requires in fact the redefining of the notion of economic development, it asks for relocation from an ethical perspective.

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E. B. Barbier (Barbier, 1987) wrote, in 1987, that sustainable development meant “simultaneous maximization” of *the objectives of the biological system* (genetic diversity, biological productivity, flexibility), *the objectives of the economic system* (satisfying basic needs, equity increase, growth in goods and services) and *the objectives of the social system* (cultural diversity, institutional durability, social equity).

This approach suggests that this is all about a multi-dimensional concept characterized by a high degree of conflict.

Sustainable development, which militates for the continuous improvement of quality of life taking into consideration the rational and efficient use of resources in a relatively short period, becomes the concern of the entire world and the principle on which all policies are based.

2. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 1972, the report of the Club of Rome¹ was published, entitled „The limits of growth”, written by three young researchers Dennis Meadows, Donella Meadows and Jorgen Randers. The report drew attention on the contradiction between unlimited growth and consumption in relation to the limited resources of the earth. This report was due to influence the concept of economic development, to contribute to the relocation of the concept of needs within the limits of thinking in terms of the ecologic aspect, meaning that unidirectional development, which produces only to assure economic growth in the long run, should not affect life on earth. The report presents the results of a group of researchers obtained by means of a mathematical model built using the theory of dynamic systems and known as World3. This aims at the evolution of 5 parameters (population growth, impact of industrialization, pollution’s effects, food production, exhaustion tendencies of the natural resources) and proves that the development in progress cannot be sustained in the long run. The published report was acknowledged as having the biggest impact on protecting the environment. The report has become an alarm signal for politicians, researchers, decision makers at all levels and in all fields. Therefore, conferences, meetings at a high level with the participation of heads of state were organized, on the one hand in order to set the common goals, principles and strategies, and on the other hand, in order to evaluate the level of achievement of the things proposed. In 2009, D. Meadows received a prize from the Technology and Research Foundation of Japan².

3. THE CHRONOLOGICAL EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORLDWIDE

In 1972, in *Stockholm*³, the first conference of the UNO on environment was organized, where it was acknowledged, by the participants, that human activities could contribute to the deterioration of the environment and that the future of the planet was in

¹ <http://www.clubofrome.org/eng/about/4/>

² <http://peakenergy.blogspot.com/2009/01/dennis-meadows-wins-japan-prize.html>

<http://habitat.igc.org/open-gates/wced-ocf.htm>

³ <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=97&articleid=1503>

danger. The resolution adopted by the General Meeting of the United Nations highlighted the importance of the person-nature harmony from an ecological perspective.

In 1983⁴, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), run by the Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, was created. The Commission had worked for three years to release a report that presented the environmental, cultural, economic and social problems.

In 1985, the *Vienna Convention* (Cămășoiu, 1994) was written based on the idea of finding some solutions for reducing the consumption of substances that affected the protecting ozone layer (following the discovery of the ozone hole above Antarctica).

By 1987, 60 definitions of the concept, which was meant to describe the development process that did not cease economic growth, stipulated in the first report in Rome, but neither to generalize the role of the environment, as the Greens did⁵, was given.

In 1987⁶, the “Brundtland Report” was published by WCED, also known as “Our Common Future”. G.H. Brundtland, a year after the Chernobyl disaster, formulated a definition of sustainable development, one that has become widely known. “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The published report pleads for reconciliation between economy and the environment.

In 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, the Earth Summit took place, an UNO conference on the topic “Environment and Development”. Conventions were set on climate, biological diversity, ceasing of massive deforestations. For the first time a negotiation at global level was carried out based on scientific reasons – which later became diplomatic arguments (the Americans manifested a reserved attitude towards the climatic issues – the reality of the climate changes). Some of the conference’s results were two core declarations – the “Rio Declaration on Environment and Development”⁷ and the “Declaration on forests”, two international agreements the “Convention on the climate changes” and the “Biodiversity Convention”. The result of the conference was an action plan entitled “Agenda 21”⁸.

The support plan for sustainable development includes the paradigm of sustainable development, an action plan at local and global level, which needs to be implemented within fields where the person-environment interaction is made. In the following years, there were some conferences that consolidated the methodology and strategies for applying Agenda 21. The Agenda consists of 115 programmes, grouped on 4 topics (social economic, preservation and management of human resources, the role of non-governmental organizations and social groups, ways of implementing the established measures). Sustainable development aims for three fields – economic, social and ecologic. Agenda 21 states the principles of sustainable development.

In 1992, once with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, public health officially became a field that falls under the EU competence (pg. 66).

In the following years, conferences and important meetings took place, such as the Conference organized in Cairo, in 1994, on the topic “Population and Development”; in

⁴ <http://www.iisd.org/rio+5/timeline/sdtimeline.htm>, Sustainable development timeline

⁵ <http://www.aSDjb.ro>

⁶ <http://habitat.igc.org/open-gates/wced-ocf.htm>

⁷ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>

⁸ <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=52>

1995, in Copenhagen⁹, the World Summit on social development took place; in 1996, in Istanbul¹⁰. In 1997, between 23 and 27 June, in New York¹¹, within the UNGASS balance conference, it was announced that results were not encouraging. This conference analysed to what extent the objectives of the first World Summit, organized in Rio de Janeiro and which was attended by over 100 heads of state, had been achieved.

In 1997, sustainable development became a political goal of EU, which included it in the Maastricht Treaty, in February. At the 19th Special Session of the General Assembly of UNO, in 1997, convened in order to examine the level of application of Agenda 21, the importance of education was highlighted. The adopted resolution underlined that a corresponding financing of the educational systems was necessary in order to assure a sustainable development (Negru & Vodă, 2005).

In 1997, it was stipulated in the *Amsterdam Treaty* that all policies, in other key domains of the EU's activity, needed to take into account the tasks for protecting human health. The Treaty introduced stipulations on the employment and welfare policy, showing that Member States needed to work together. The states' policies need to contribute to the achievement of the objectives on sustainable development.

In Luxembourg, in 1997, a meeting took place, known as the Luxembourg Process, exclusively dedicated to employment, within which the European Employment Strategy was initiated. It was acknowledged that unemployment is a problem at European level. For the evolution of the European Employment Strategy, meetings were organized in Cardiff (1998), Köln (1999), Lisbon, Stockholm (2000), and Barcelona (2002). The Cardiff Process, in 1998, is known as the economic reform and international market.

In 2000, in Lisbon, the strategic goal for the next decade was set (average employment rate of 70%, women employment rate of 60% until 2010). As *novelty*, the Lisbon documents acknowledge that the issue of employment of the labour force needs to be looked at from a regional point of view taking into consideration local particularities.

In 2000, between 11 and 14 October, in Friibergh, Sweden¹², the declaration on *promoting the sustainability science* was adopted.

4. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN EU

At the Summit in Goteborg¹³, organized in 2001, the European Council adopted the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) of EU.

In *Stockholm*, in March 2001, two intermediate objectives were added to the objective set in Lisbon, i.e. a general average employment rate of 67%, and of 57% for women and reaching an employment rate of 50% for labour force aged 55-64 years¹⁴. In Barcelona¹⁵, in 2002, an external dimension was added to this strategy.

⁹ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/agreements.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/Conferences/habitat/>

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/>

¹² www.ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/BCSIA/sust.nsf/pubs/pub3/.../FW_statement.pdf

¹³ www.ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/.../docs/goteborg_concl_en.pdf

¹⁴ The evolution of the European policy in the field of labour force employment, Report Bucharest, August 2007, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equality of Chances, Direction programme and strategies Labour force

¹⁵ www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/.../ec/71025.pdf

In 2002, in Johannesburg¹⁶, a broader definition of sustainable development was formulated “living equitably within the limits imposed by nature”. The meeting was dedicated to the stating of some concrete, quantifiable measures on the best implementation possible of Agenda 21.

The Spring European Council in Brussels¹⁷, organized between 22 and 23 March 2005, is considered extremely important for the European construction, having as main goal the reinvigoration of the ambitious project of growth in the European economy competition, launched in 2000 in Lisbon.

In 2005, the European Commission initiated a revising process of the sustainable development strategy. In February 2005, the Commission published an initial and critical evaluation of the progress made in 2001 and highlighted future directions to be followed. In June 2005, heads of state and government of EU adopted a declaration on the guiding lines of sustainable development, which incorporate the revised Lisbon Agenda for economic growth and creation of new jobs, as an essential component of the sustainable development goal. On 13 December 2005, the Commission presented a revision proposal for the sustainable development strategy from Goteborg. It formulated *6 priorities*: climate change, health, social exclusion, transport, natural resources, poverty and contained the identification of solutions.

On 9 June 2006, the renewed sustainable development strategy¹⁸ was adopted for the EU, having as general objective the continuous improvement of quality of life. The Council of Europe, on 14 December 2007, approved the progress report¹⁹ from October of the European Commission. The need to give priority to the implementation measures is thus broadly accepted.

In this period of over 30 years after the publication of the report in Rome, many definitions for sustainable development were stated. All these definitions, although formulated differently, have some common ideas, and they refer to some extent to surviving and assuring needs in the long run. It is well known that sustainable development focuses on assuring economic, human and environmental wellbeing. Different approximations define the notion of sustainability in a weak sense and a strong one respectively²⁰. From the specialist literature, some definitions of sustainable development can be mentioned, such as the one given by J. Coomer (Coomer, 1979) - society is not a society without growth, but society needs to acknowledge its limits and to look for alternative ways to assure growth. Different definitions are presented in the book of Rumen Gechev (2005), *Sustainable Development, Economic aspects*, University of Indianapolis²¹. A comparative analysis of the emerged definitions was published in 2009 (Remigijus, Jolita, & Bronislovas, 2009). The concerns in the domain of sustainable development gain more and more field. Finding some compromise solutions between the concept of needs and the concept of imposed limits, drawing up the corresponding

¹⁶ http://www.un.org/jsummit/html/basic_info/basicinfo.html

¹⁷ www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/.../84335.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.sd-network.eu/?k=quarterly%20reports&report_id=1

¹⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/>

²⁰ <http://www.ssfindex.com/sustainability/notes-and-definitions/>

²¹ http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=fPq_zx_vGm4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Allaby,+sustainable+dvelopment,+1988&ots=FGJdWhRIF&sig=fMIFN8Z-QqgwucN6jAP5p2t741M#v=onepage&q=Allaby%2C%20sustainable%20development%2C%201988&f=false

strategies and methods of evaluation of the level of implementation become the subject of the events, conferences organized (figure 1) by the United Nations Organization, Economic and Social Development (UNESD).

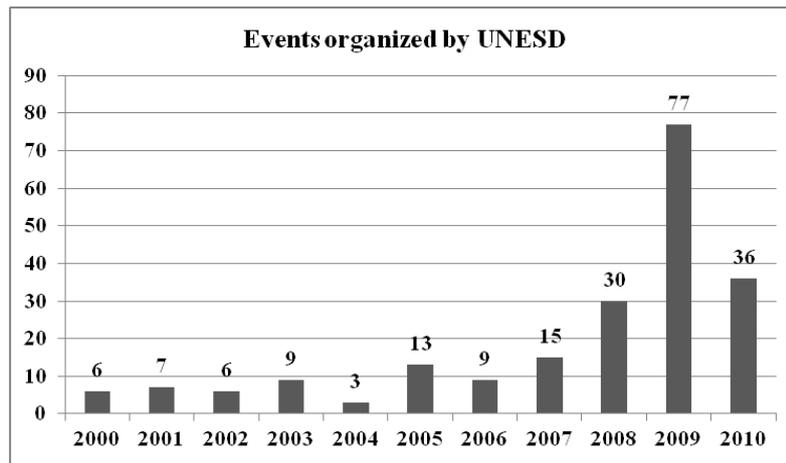


Figure 1 Source: UNESD²²

After the meetings and debates between researchers, politicians, governmental institutions and NGO, industry (with representatives from the civil society, local and central administration, with the presence of economic sectors), an increasing number of results was accumulated. These results support the initiatives in the economic, human, environmental and technological sphere, thus contributing to the process of continuous improvement of quality of life, taking into account the rational and efficient use of resources.

Achieving the results implies, on the one hand, the progress's simultaneity in all four dimensions (economic, human, environmental, technologic), and on the other hand, it requires the adaptation of the sustainable development concept to the conditions specific to each country (Cămășoiu, 1994).

Within the meetings, education is given special attention. The role of education in promoting principles, in the implementation process, in reaching the sustainable development objectives is highly acknowledged and it is suggested this to be carried out during the whole life.

Sustainable development means getting trade-off between the concept of needs of the disfavoured ones, and the concept of limits imposed by the current state of technologies and economic-social organization. A compromise solution in this direction can be obtained only if education has a main role. The bringing up and formation of some researchers is needed on the one hand, as well as mass education both horizontally and vertically, on the other hand. After such an approach, we may consider that education becomes a basic pillar under the umbrella of sustainable development, even the basis of sustainable development, which forms the basis of all pillars (figure 2).

²² <http://esango.un.org/irene/dsd.html?page=calendarList&year=2011>

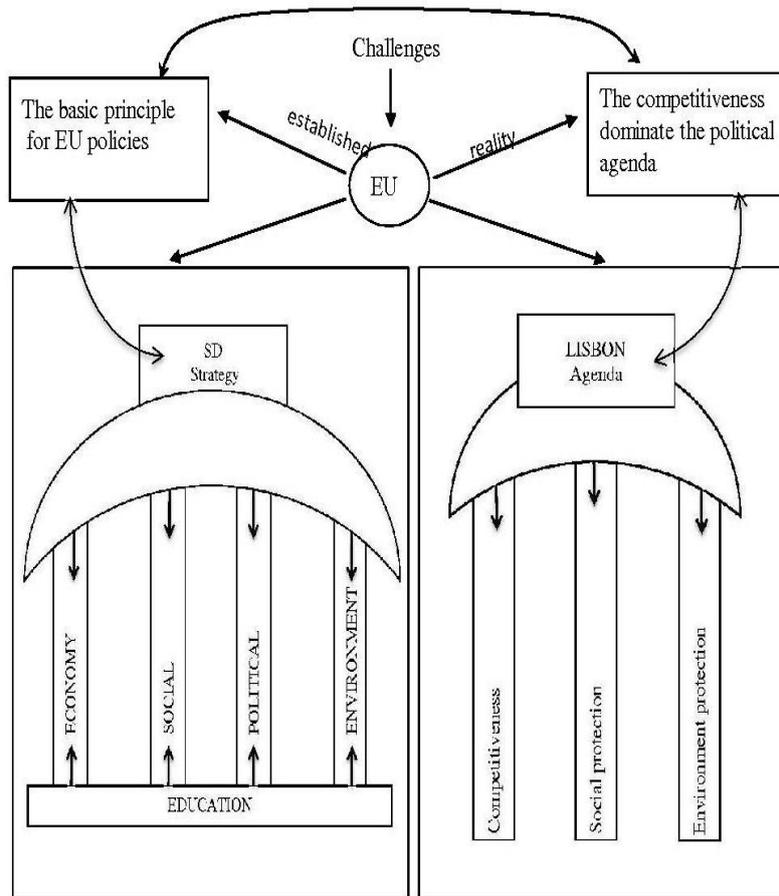


Figure 2

5. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN ROMANIA

After 1989, the area of preoccupations in the SD field has extended in Romania. Numerous nongovernmental organizations and ecologist political parties have been set up. Institutions focusing on the environmental issue (ministry, parliamentary commissions) have been created at the level of executive and legislative structures and the first acts of primary and secondary legislation have been issued in this field. Under the impulse of the debates within UN, the incorporation of the SD principles in public policies is achieved.

Between 1997 and 1999, a national strategy for SD was drawn up for the first time, benefitting from assistance from the UN programme for SD (UNDP).

After Romania's adherence to EU, this strategy was the object of an intermediate report for the European Commission (EC) on applying the SD objectives, in July 2007. The second report for the European Commission was prepared in September 2009, and the following report on implementing the EU strategy for SD had to be submitted in June 2011.

The *Romanian Adherence Treaty*, signed in April 2005, contains concrete commitments.

The *National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 (NDP)* is a document of strategic planning that stimulates the country's social and economic development in accordance with the principles of the Cohesion Policy of EU, details the objectives specific to the process on 6 priority directions (pg. 17), estimates investments of 58.67 billion Euros.

The *National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 – 2013 (NSRF)*, approved by EC on 25 June 2007, presented the socio-economic situation of Romanian in the moment of adherence, a SWOT analysis. NSRF with the *National Reform Programme and the Convergence Programme* is responsible for reaching the convergence objectives.

The measures taken by Romania in order to reach the 8 goals set within the UN on the global issue of SD are presented in the 2nd Report on the Millennium Development Goals – adopted by the Romanian government on 18 September 2007.

Romania was the first European country that ratified the Kyoto Protocol, at the Framework Convention of the United Nations on climate changes.

The EU strategy for SD is the basis of the national strategy of Romania in this field. As far as the current situation of Romania is concerned, it can be stated that the target goals and the ways of action for the future 2013, 2020, 2030 focus strictly on the logical topic of SDS of EU in 2006.

On the other hand, there are a series of aspects on SD that do not appear in SDS because those issues were overcome by the countries that form the core of EU (indicators pg. 99). For this reason, *regional development and local action* are an issue specific to SD.

From the point of view of the SD principles and goals, evolutions at regional level present crucial importance, underlined in the specific conditions of Romania of a growth tendency of territorial disparities as far as social and economic development, rational use of resources and environmental infrastructure quality are concerned.

6. CONCLUSIONS

EU established that sustainable development needs to be the principle laying at the basis of all European policies, but reality shows that the aspect of competition dominates the political agenda. There are voices that state that, first of all, EU needs economic growth in order to have resources for the implementation of some policies for protecting the environment and for social protection. The relocation of issues is a challenge that EU has to deal with. Jose Manuel Barroso, chairperson of the European Commission highlighted the importance of sustainability and stated that the sustainable development strategy and the Lisbon strategy reinforce each other.

In 2000, the strategy set for the following decade, the Lisbon Agenda, as novelty suggests the employment issue to be regarded from a regional point of view taking into consideration local particularities.

The monitoring report for 2009 (the third report in his sense, the first two being published in 2005 and 2007) of the sustainable development strategy of EU pinpoints the progresses made in terms of applying the strategy's goals based on the EU set of SD²³ indicators²⁴.

It is extremely important to acknowledge the fact that global policies cannot be applied for the implementation of the sustainable development goals, strategies must be applied according to national, even regional and local particularities. Within the UN countries there are huge differences at socio-economic level, and at national level there are inequalities at regional and local level. Therefore, in order to reach the goals set, strategies need to be applied from a lower level, from local, regional, national and international level.

Without a thorough analysis, without a real evaluation of the situation and the needs, adequate policies cannot be stated. The evaluation has to follow scientific methods, fact which requires indicators.

Agenda 21 stipulates the necessity for all the countries to be concerned with the elaboration and identification of indicators for sustainable development that may assure a solid foundation for decisions at all levels, for the general and socio-economic evolution of a particular country. It has been suggested that such *indicators to be set at regional, national and global level*.

The economic and financial crisis creates difficulties for monitoring the application of SDS in the UN. The impact of the economic dysfunctions on the set of ISD indicators may be observed in the 2011 issue of the report.

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²³ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/865-RO/RO/865-RO-RO.PDF

²⁴ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/sdi/indicators/>

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***<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/>. Retrieved 2011, from <http://ec.europa.eu>.

***<http://www.clubofrome.org/>. Retrieved July 2011, from <http://www.clubofrome.org/?p=1161>.

