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POLISH PROGRAMMES OF RURAL AREAS SHAPING AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE EU POLICY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Summary

The paper outlines some chosen Polish programmes of rural areas shaping, developed in a few recent years against the background of permanent and sustainable development.

Development of the village and agriculture in the EU is based mainly on the common agricultural policy, structural policy and regional policy.

Agricultural policy may be defined as price – profit policy and supporting structural policy while structural policy consists in influencing production factors which stimulate the changes on rural areas. Regional policy supports restructuring of agriculture, multifunctional development of rural areas and balancing unfavourable differences between regions. The aim of those activities is creating the value and an economically sustained position of rural areas, especially as a place of living, working and relaxation in natural environment and taking into consideration a sensible development of agricultural structures as well.

Thanks to a consequent policy of sustainable development in the recent dozen of years the EU has reached a considerable progress in LFA (Less Favoured Areas) reduction.

The performed survey of chosen strategies of village and agriculture development worked out in Poland in the years 2001-2006 shows that in most cases they refer to Lisbon Strategy and have various range: from a partial reference to rural areas (The updated concept of the country spatial development) to a slightly broader expression of the problem (Our vision of Poland, The National Programme of Rural Development). The stress put on the needs of sustainable development of multifunctionality has mainly a verbal character. The most valuable from the essential point of view is The National Programme of Rural Development which assumes synchronizing the actions undertaken by various departments and institutions.

Key words: rural areas development, Polish strategies, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable development (SD), meaning equal treatment of the economic, social, ecological and cultural spheres, especially after the Earth Summit in 1992, has been treated as the basis of development strategy of rural development and of current economic policy of the EU [Koreleski 1999].

One of the main assumptions of creating the SD idea (sustainable development, eco-development, *Haltbare Entwicklung*) is the rule: “think globally – act locally”. The SD policy is based on the rules of: target, scale and region, and while realising it legal, market, supporting and financial instruments are used [Kozłowski 1994].

Rural areas are the focus of special care of the EU. This is implied by the awareness of the problems concerning the rural space (fitting with social, technical and cultural infrastructure), rural society (low level of income, unemployment, low level of education), agricultural sector (breaking up and underinvestment of farms, organisation of agricultural market), natural environment (local threats, the level of village and farm sanitation).

The basic aims of rural and agricultural development policy are mainly the following [Koreleski 2005]:

- shaping the country folk conditions of work and life matching the civilisation standards and allowing for the village inhabitants to realise economic, educational and social aims,
- restructuring the agricultural sector creating clues for agricultural adaptation to the changing economic and social situation,
- shaping the conditions of sustainable, multifunctional development of rural areas, protection of natural environment resources together with cultural heritage.

The paradigm of the SD, in reference to EU rural areas, finds its reflection in agricultural, structural and regional policies which are closely connected to each other.

The aim of the paper is surveying, on the basis of own analysis and literature on the subject, chosen Polish strategic documents concerning rural and agriculture development developed in recent years on the background of the concept of sustainable development valid in the EU.

THE POLICY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS IN THE EU

The agricultural policy of the EU being the basic element of the SD rules realisation can be characterised by internationalising the food sector and giving the policy an adequate legal framework.

After a period of successful policy (1962-1968) there was a period of unfavourable changes connected among others with the oil crisis (1968-1978) followed by fruitful reforms period after implementing the Unified European Act (1987) [see Koreleski 2005].

Among other, Santer's Plan (1997) supporting the out-of-production functions of the village agriculture created the foundations of competitiveness of rural economy. European Commission (1998) and Berlin Summit (1999) decisions introduced further regulations of agricultural markets and restricting production (supporting resting of grounds), etc. as well. On the other hand Agenda 2000 underlining the necessity of increasing competitiveness of agriculture, improving the quality of food and ecological values of eco-systems means conjunction of agricultural policy with rural development. Integrated approach towards shaping the environment and a multifunctional village development connected to regional development have become a priority.

Current agricultural policy resolves itself into price-profit policy and supporting structural policy.

Structural policy consists in influencing production factors such as labour, soil, capital or management serving supporting the changes on rural areas.

Such policy, via increasing the economic efficiency of farms and their cultural value, eliminating ineffective units, protection of economic structures and their cultural values, increase of the amount jobs out of agriculture or pro-ecological activities – serves implementing the rules within the SD paradigm.

The addressee of the EU structural policy are, first of all, the areas which are backward in development due to unfavourable environmental conditions, low employment, considerable distance from economic centres, faulty ground management, low education level, etc.

The regional policy, sometimes called regional structural policy, while addressing rural areas, aims mainly at restructuring farms, regulating the size and structure of agricultural production, multifunctional development of rural areas and levelling unfavourable differences between regions by [Koreleski 2005]:

- planning and programming,
- partnership,
- investing in human capital,
- co-financing (financial subsidising).

While the first Delors' packet (1989-1993) was supposed to prevent regional disproportions by means of creating a single market, the second Delors' packet (1994-1999) introduced privileges in aiding the less wealthy countries, Santer's packet (2000-2006) focused on balancing income and spending in the subsequent years – taking into consideration the enlargement of the European Union by the next member states.

The so-called Union initiatives in the years 2000-2006 meant mainly crossborder, international and interregional co-operation (INTERREG), local initiatives of rural development (LEADER) or fighting discrimination on the job market (EQUAL).

Sustainable socio-economic development of European Union regions after 1989 gave its result in GNP increase and the fall of unemployment. While in 1986 there were 10.8 million people employed in agriculture in the EU countries in 1986, in 1996 there were only 7.6 million [Mouqué1999].

At the beginning of the 21st century the Less Favoured Areas did not exist in such countries as Denmark, Finland, France, Holland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Sweden, the UK [see Koreleski 2004].

SUSTAINABLE SHAPING OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Ecological law of the EU, which is based on the Unanimous European Act (1987) or on the EU Treaty (1991) shows the basic rules of protection and shaping the environment, which are:

- the rule of prevention,
- the rule of clearing the damages mainly at the source of their origin,
- the rule that the polluting party pays,
- the rule of taking the eco-development into account in the social, economic and spatial development on the regional and local levels while considering agricultural facilities, village renewal and ecological-landscape planning.

While assessing regional plans the European Commission pays attention to such points as: zones of special meaning for natural environment, areas of the biggest degradation of the environment, planning indispensable pro-ecological investments, financing strategy for the activities significant for the quality of the environment, legal and administrative framework of the coordination of regional development and environment protection policies in the member states [Pietrzyk 2000].

CHOSEN POLISH RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

In the programmes for the years 2004-2006 the subsidies for technical infrastructure were dominating (ca 73% of the sums within the Integrated Operational Programme of Regional Development), often neglecting the instruments adapted to local conditions such as research-educative infrastructure, information structures, etc.

In the years 2007-2013, development of Poland, including rural areas as well, is mainly connected to the assumptions taken in the second version of the Lisbon Strategy from 2005 which defined three main streams of activity:

- creating regions of attractiveness for investment and work,
- development of knowledge and innovativeness for economic growth,
- a policy allowing companies to create a bigger amount of jobs.

The review analysis below takes into consideration the following strategic government and non-government documents developed in the years 2001-2006:

– “The strategy of the development of Poland until 2020” (SDP) developed in 2001 by The Forecasting Committee at the Presidium of Polish Academy of Science [The strategy ... 2001],

– “The concept of the country spatial development policy” (CCSDP) published Monitor Polski [The concept ... 2001] and “The updated concept of the country spatial development”(UCCSD) worked out by The Government Centre of Strategic Studies in 2005.

– “Our vision of Poland” (OVP) from 2005 developed by ecological NGOs [cited in Siemieński 2006],

– A report from the seminar “For better Poland” from 2005 [Report ...2005],

– “The National Development Plan 2007-2013” (NPD) from 2005 [The National ...2005],

– The Concept of the National Strategy of Regional Development for the years 2007-2013 (NSRD),

– “The National Programme of Rural Development” (NPRD) – [Assumptions ...2006].

The strategy of the development of Poland (SDP) is a programme of activities based on discussions of experts from various fields of science and practice. Its aim is to ensure permanent economic and social development of the state. The SDP substantiates the direction assumptions and the conditions of their realization to a great extent. It was assumed that a country being under a democratic system of government should work on the auxiliary basis with a clear extension of the role of local governments. Among the conclusions concerning rural areas there are general remarks on: village and agriculture changes, restructuring agriculture but without the infrastructure of rural areas.

As one of its strategic aims the concept of the country spatial development policy assumes making development of Poland more dynamic by, among other, shaping the open space for Europe and the world, making that development more ecological and multifunctional development of rural areas by:

- gradual modernisation and restructuring of food economy,
- propelling tourism and ecotourism,
- ecological development of forest and water economy,
- accelerating development of social and technical infrastructure of rural areas.

The accepted rule was a strive at harmonious coexistence of all functions, minimising or cancelling conflict situations between economy and environment while taking into consideration the supremacy of ecological policy and extending and modernising the whole sphere of technical and socio-cultural infrastructure of the village based upon the existing network of small towns and bigger village settlements by locating production units, small industry connected with agriculture, forestry, tourism, building trade, etc.

The subsequent updated concept of the country spatial development lacks place for rural areas while stressing the priority of “efficiency over equality” leading at acceptance of market economy natural tendencies of spatial polarising of development.

Our vision of Poland referring to the NPD from 2005 stresses the need of taking into consideration an additional priority in that plan, which is the sustainable development of rural areas, including, among other: the use of chances resulting from natural resources (healthy food production), development of service potential (simple manufacturing, dwelling construction, etc.). The vision drives the attention towards the increase of endangerment of naturally valuable areas, decreasing the base for tourism and ecological agriculture – requiring reconstructing the NPD in a pro-ecological spirit.

The Report from the seminar concerns the state of the country and the ways of its repair. In the point concerning the rural areas it puts the stress on, among other, the necessity of:

- renegotiating the accession treaty in the points concerning agriculture and food economy,
- leaving the strategy of making agriculture “a business”,
- revising the rules of land sale for foreigners,
- creating legal regulations concerning out-of-industry food production on farms,
- implementing education and pilot programmes within ecological, integrated farming and establishing producers’ groups.

The National Plan of Development, which forms a prolongation of the NPD 2004-2006 is a Polish version of the Lisbon Strategy putting, among other, the following priorities: protection of the market, ensuring permanent economic growth, investment in science and technologies or replacing the sector policy with the regional one. Problems of the country and agriculture are scattered in the text of the Plan and form a margin of the considerations only (e.g. the development of towns and rural areas development, development of electrification, development of social infrastructure on rural areas, supporting the development of rural areas).

The Concept of the National Strategy of Regional Development assumes “harmonising development programming in Poland with EU programming”, and defines the conditions of supporting regional development

by the country together with the sector policy coordination rules in the provinces. The priority concerning rural sphere was described as supporting multifunctional character of rural areas and strengthening effective and environment friendly agricultural sector without defining the means used for its realisation.

The National Programme of Rural Development is a coordination tool of the state activities aiming at rural areas, undertaken and realised in various departments. Its objective is:

- coordination of activities foreseen in operational programmes within the framework of EU policies,
- harmonising the instruments of national government policy for rural areas with the EU policy,
- coordination of activities within rural areas development - self-governments, public and private institutions – on the basis of various laws worked out by the Minister of Regional Development in co-operation with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

CONCLUSIONS

The presented review of chosen government and non-government strategies developed in recent years shows that the issues of rural and agriculture development in Poland are treated in various ways, although refer to the assumptions of the Lisbon Strategy in most cases. They have various scope of matter concerning rural and agricultural problems: from a total lack of reference to rural areas or only a partial one (The Updated CCSD) until a broader approach towards that problem (CCSDP, OVP, the NPRD).

Most programmes concern a multifunctional character, sustainable development, ecologising, etc. without stating the means of realisation of such aims precisely, which is particularly visible in the cases of NPD and NSRD. The lack of overall approach towards the issues of rural and agricultural development is a common disadvantage of the analysed strategies. Furthermore, the stressed needs of sustainable development or a multifunctional character has mainly a purely verbal character.

The most valuable of all the analysed strategies from the point of view of the matter content is the recently developed National Programme of Rural Development assuming harmonising activities undertaken by various government departments, coordination of activities of various institutions (public, private, self-governmental) on rural areas.

The report from the seminar contains suggestions of significant changes in the policy of rural areas development performed so far.

Considering a considerable regional diversity of the state it is necessary to develop a differentiated instrument set for shaping rural areas having in mind the fact that social capital should be the focus of attention [see Hunek 2006].

Realising agriculture infrastructure work together with the tasks implemented within village renewal programme are important elements for rural areas development. However, it is alarming to observe a standstill in the area of land consolidation which is so indispensable for creating order in the agricultural structure space. Apart from issuing a new law it is necessary to organise a broad publicity action supported financially by suitable operational programmes.

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