

# FROM LOCAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT TO COOPERATION AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

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## **ABSTRACT**

*SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS HAVE ALWAYS EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO LIVE BETTER USING THE CONDITIONS OFFERED BY THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF INCREASING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THESE COMMUNITIES WAS EMPIRICAL AND HAS BEEN STUDIED DURING THE MODERNIZATION OF SOCIETY. FOR A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETY IN GENERAL AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN PARTICULAR LITERATURE HAS STUDIED SIGNIFICANT STAGES OF EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF THESE SETTLEMENTS FROM THE BEGINNING UNTIL NOW. TOGETHER WITH THE UNDERSTANDING AND PRECISE DEFINITION OF THE PHENOMENON OF DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENTS, DOCUMENTARY SOURCES HAVE BECOME EXTREMELY NUMEROUS, SO THIS PROCESS COULD BE STUDIED IN ALL ITS COMPLEXITY, THUS DEFINING RESEARCH METHODS, DEVELOPMENT MODELS CORRESPONDING TO DIFFERENT STAGES OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AS FUTURE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS.*

*MOST OF THE ISSUE PRESENTATION IS REVEALED FOR THE CHALLENGES CURRENTLY FACED BY MANKIND SUCH AS GLOBALIZATION WHICH LED IN ITS TURN TO A GROWING CONCERN FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT, NAMELY THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT, LAND MANAGEMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING, SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND TERRITORIAL COHESION.*

*THE CURRENT PRESENTATION TACKLES CONCEPTS, PROGRAMS AND MEASURES AND MEASURES ADOPTED WORLDWIDE AND AT THE EUROPEAN UNION LEVEL AND EXAMINES ALSO THE STRATEGIC TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT ‘ROMANIA 2030’.*

**KEY WORDS:** LOCAL DEVELOPMENT; SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT; INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT; LAND MANAGEMENT; SPATIAL PLANNING; SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT; URBAN PLANNING, URBANISM; URBAN DEVELOPMENT; TERRITORIAL COHESION; TERRITORIAL COOPERATION; STRATEGIC CONCEPT OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT.

## **Introduction.**

The present generation witnesses substantial transformations of the planet on which we live and thus we realise that what happens around us is the result of better or poorly managed processes and that makes the planet become increasingly more and more vulnerable. It becomes the duty of this generation to move from a sequential thinking to a structured approach of the territory in all its complexity, in keeping with the values and

diverse needs of communities, with the prudent management of resources and natural and cultural heritage.

The human society is increasingly aware that its future depends on the wisdom they will know to act so that competitiveness and cooperation, specificity and likeness would not be antagonistic but become couples in action. Numerous disorders and needs of territories expect solutions in complex long-term projects and these solutions must be formulated and put into operation in territorial partnership, by interested actors, in terms of continuous acceleration of competitiveness.

The development has always been designed as the general interest of progress towards a new quality, but it acted as a priority objective of each society after the Second World War when there was a growing desire especially in economic terms, particularly through industrialization.

As a general definition of the notion of development, it was accepted that this is a complex process that leads to growth, mainly economic, respectively to material wealth to which are added, with the same importance, education, health, culture and especially the environment and its protection [1].

In these conditions the development is conceived as a set of processes of change, consciously thought, leading to economic and social goals of scheduled.

Reported to the space of analysis of the possibilities and proposed solutions of development, a role of paramount importance is given to the local development related to a particular region or administrative territorial unit that wants economic prosperity and social welfare by creating a complex favorable environment.

In the concept of local development, planning (development of towns, especially urban settlements) as the activity of studying the management and spatial development of a territory (in all its components), examines the human and material resources of a given territory and defines strategic development objectives through the sustainable exploitation of heritage and resources of a territory and it is considered as one of the most important components of local development [2].

To understand how urban development is a major component of local development we must know the historical conditions under which occurred human communities but particularly the urban ones.

As for urban communities, when considering their development in the overall development process and especially the local one, it is compulsory to start with historical conditions of developing of their appearance. Although it is well known that in most part of history, most people lived out of town and only in the last century the balance of the population living in rural and urban communities was balanced although there are also large areas where there is still a large share of the rural population. If we take as reference the entire history of mankind with all known societies, and we would try to highlight the relationship between rural and urban areas, then we easily see that the urban population in history has been no more than a few percent.

However it is recognized that almost everything significant that happened in history, what was related to political and economic history, progress, development of science, arts and culture generally appeared mostly at the city-level. Human history is mostly urban. It is probably shocking that only a minority, a few percent of the population of humanity, actually "wrote" history [3].

It should also be noted that almost everything that was dramatic occurred mainly in cities. . In other words, most of what was good or bad for human history was committed in the cities.

This happened mainly because urban living environment is actually the main human specific living environment for all developed societies.

This is the main reason for which **the development of human communities was associated with the term of urban development**

To determine the role of the city in the development of human communities we must know the different stages of urban development thinking.

Once the urban development has become an obvious requirement of community ,the urban policies were made by engineers and architects, emphasizing the urban development side, but since the 6th decade of the twentieth century, the urban revitalization policies have made the urban management principle become a priority, thus subordinating the technical principles.

Currently the city has become a complex in which social component, economic trade, services, environmental protection, education, culture, science and research are the elements taken into account, so that the urban development issue cannot be addressed punctually but closely related to the relationships created in a territory beyond the administrative limits of the city and especially with neighboring communities including rural communities [4].

From the administrative point of view, the city has become a major player on the national economic scene, with its rights, political importance and position in the professional fields and its capacity to ally with other actors to promote economic growth

**Local community development** corresponds to a mobility process, a shift with deliberative character for achieving economic and social objectives. Local development is the process of development, mainly economic, in a certain region or administrative territorial unit, which determines an increase in the quality of life at the local level. Local development aims to economic prosperity and social welfare by creating a favorable environment for businesses, along with the integration of vulnerable groups in the community, using endogenous resources and the development of private sector [5].

The development that meeting the requirements of the present generation facilitates the future generations by fulfilling their options is the sustainable development.

The concept of **sustainable development** means all forms and methods of socio-economic development that focuses primarily on ensuring a balance between social, economic and ecological aspects on the one side and elements of natural capital on the other side.

Sustainable development aims and try to find a stable theoretical framework for decision making in any situation in which it is found a report of the type man-environment, be it natural, economic or social environment.

Although sustainable development was originally meant to be a solution to the ecological crisis caused by intense industrial exploitation of resources and the continuous degradation of the environment and therefore firstly it seeks to preserve the environmental quality, now the concept expanded to the quality of life in its complexity both economic and social. The purpose of the sustainable development is now a concern for justice and equity between countries, not only between generations.

As for sustainable development within Europe, the first international meeting in which the concept of sustainable development was discussed took place in Stockholm, in

1972, under the auspices of the United Nations. There the developed and developing nations adopted the Final Declaration on the Environment which highlighted the close link between the quality of life and the environmental quality. In the same year, the EU Summit held in Paris highlighted the need to pay particular attention to environmental protection and in the context of economic growth and improvement of living standards.

The next milestone on the international discussions on sustainable development was the establishment, in 1983, of the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission has completed its work by publishing a report entitled *Our Common Future*. It defines sustainable development in the familiar phrase "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In other words, acting so that the present growth should not jeopardize the growth possibilities of future generations. The report provided an analysis of the situation at the time, some general remedies and recommendations for the future.

Also in 1986, the European Union introduced the Single European Act, for the first time, elements of environmental policy in the European Community Treaty. Then in 1993, the Treaty of Maastricht, at which major changes were made to the Treaties since the establishment of the European Community and which laid the foundation of the European Union gave to environmental protection a complete status within European policies.

Brundtland Commission report was used in the international discussions between governments, multinational companies and NGOs., The three summits called Earth Summit in 1992, 2002 and 2012, were the direct result of the activities of this committee.

The first summit in 1992, called the World Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development was held in Rio de Janeiro. At this global meeting, specific programs were gathered in an initiative called Agenda 21 These programs are related to combating poverty, changing consumption habits, including environmental considerations in strategic decisions, protecting water resources, the role of local communities, the role of farmers, the role of technological development, etc. Agenda 21 was passed by the 178 countries present and later by others. It was to be disseminated nationwide and by local governments in each of the states that voted for it.

In December 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated by 160 countries. This agreement regulated the reduction of GHG emissions for industrialized countries by 5.2% in the period 2008-2012. Through this protocol some mechanisms were put in motion to reduce the negative impact on the environment in the countries that have ratified it.

In 1997, sustainable development (including the three aspects: economic, social and environmental) became a political objective of the European Union, being included in the Maastricht Treaty. This position will be strengthened by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999.

In 2000, the Heads of Member States of the European Union have committed in front of the European Council in Lisbon to create, by 2010 "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world". One year later, in the Summit in Goteborg, the Member States adopted the Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union.

Globally, the next essential moment in developing the concept was represented by the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, when Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted. These consist of a set of eight international development goals that all 193 UN Member States present at the summit and 23 international organizations agreed to attain by 2015.

In 2002, the Earth Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. During the summit all participating states reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of Agenda 21. The Summit also led to the prioritization of certain objectives, namely the elimination of poverty, changing consumption habits, disposal of harmful and protection of natural resources. However, during the summit there were not established any concrete measures with deadlines. Among the few that were made clear we can specify: setting a deadline for halving, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation -yet no clear definition of funding sources, reducing energy consumption and "significant reductions" in the number of species of extinct animals and plants.

In 2005, the European Commission launched a review of the Sustainable Development Strategy consisting of two steps:

- An initial assessment, which outlined a number of ways to be followed, highlighting the specific directions of non-sustainable development that had negative effects: climate changes, threats to public health, increasing poverty and social exclusion, depletion of natural resources and impacts on biodiversity;
- The adoption of sustainable development guidelines, which included the objectives of the renewed Lisbon agenda.

This process was completed by the adoption, in 2006, of the Sustainable Development Strategy for an enlarged European Union.

**Sustainable development in Romania** was defined by the National Strategy for Sustainable Development as the geographical planned and inhabited space - including physical, natural and man-made elements but also cultural and institutional ones – it is a functional complex that supports quality of life of the population and represents that part of the national wealth that is beneficial to all citizens.

**Territorial cohesion** involves adequacy of territorial resources (natural and anthropogenic) to the socio-economic needs of the development in order to eliminate disparities and disfunctionalities between different spatial units while preserving the natural and cultural diversity of the regions

The objective to achieve territorial cohesion of the European Union appears in the Lisbon Reform Treaty (13 December 2007) and progressively emerged in the documents adopted at the ministerial level since 1983, with a more precise systematization in the Leipzig Charter (May 2007).

Even in the absence of specialized authorities with permanent activity in the European Union, the agreed guidelines produced significant effects in promoting territorial cohesion by coordinating sectoral policies on spatial planning concepts and techniques.

EU documents expressly emphasize the need to make national policies of land management and spatial planning become an essential dimension of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the revised Lisbon Strategy.

Settlements, as a subsystem of the inhabited territory, are the space where economic, social and environmental needs should be coordinated at different spatial scales, the instruments of implementation being land management and spatial planning. The territory, as the geographical inhabited area includes physical, natural and human, institutional and cultural elements, all integrated in a functional complex whose main goal and resource is the human population. The settlements as functional, physical, institutional and cultural entity represents the framework of insurance for a higher level of life quality. Settlements should be viewed as resource-consuming and welfare generator as well as a potential resource of creativity, especially in urban areas.

Land management has a predominantly strategic character establishing the directions of development in the spatial profile which is determined by multidisciplinary analysis and synthesis. Documents resulting from this process are so technical, through spatial coordination on the principle of maximizing potential synergies in the area of sectorial development in the territory and legal sector, given that, after approval documentation, these become rules of spatial development for the respective territory.

Technical, legal and political aspects integrated into the land management plans of the territory are elements that underpin regional development plans and represent the spatially and temporally coordinated expression of development policies.

Land management plans are the technical foundation and political and legal taking of strategies to access financed programs and projects of national and European funding, particularly through the Operational Programme and Sectorial Operational Programs. In the implementation of the National Spatial Plan several sections have been approved so far.

Within the specific conditions of Romania, clarifying the legal status of land ownership – either inside a city (building) and outside it (mainly agricultural, forestry or protected perimeters) - through an appropriate cadastral system, is the main subject of territorial healthy development and precedes the setting of a technical and economical regime through planning documentation.

**Land management and Spatial planning**, and related to sustainable development, the geographical planned and inhabited space - including physical, natural and man-made elements but also cultural and institutional ones – it is a functional complex that supports quality of life of the population and represents that part of the national wealth that is beneficial to all citizens.

Documents resulting from this process of land management are so technical, through spatial coordination on the principle of maximizing potential synergies in the area of sectorial development in the territory and legal sector, given that, after approval documentation, these become rules of spatial development for the respective territory.

**The concept of spatial planning** is a plurality of methods, programs, projects and actions that determines focused development, guided by explicit strategies of physical space to balance the economic, social, cultural and historical elements, landscape and natural environment of a territory. Spatial planning means interdisciplinary approaches and includes different levels of analysis and design, providing the conceptual basis of regional development policies and corrects any anomalies and malfunctions that may occur in their conduct.

Strategies, programs and integrated development plans in the territory and towns in Romania will have to incorporate common guidelines for European planned space, with particular emphasis on maintaining a rational balance between private and public interest in strict compliance with the legal regime of the ownership of the land. It is to avoid the dispersion of residential areas, thus providing social and cultural diversity within cities, control over the speculative games of occupancy of public spaces and landscapes, the best mix of functional and social elements. Thus, the balanced development of the cities, combined with respect for cultural and natural space will provide an essential contribution to improve the quality of life in harmony with the environment, the proper use of resources and to prevent irreversible negative development.

Using local development indicators, appropriate for each situation should allow collectivities evolution towards sustainable development. From the perspective of spatial planning as a component of local development we should consider the following elements:

human settlements, Local Agenda 21, spatial development plans, land management and sustainable development of the territory, agriculture and rural areas, tourism and transport. The activity of land management and spatial planning consists of transposition at the level of the whole national territory of strategies, policies and programs for sustainable development in spatial profile and tracking their implementation in accordance with legally approved documentation.

Related activities of land management have as their object:

- a) research into spatial and urban planning and creating studies of substantiating the strategies, policies and documentation of land management and urbanism;
- b) the establishment, maintenance, expansion and development of the database and documents;;
- c) developing strategies and policies in the field;
- d) endorsement and approval of land management and urbanism documentation
- e) development of normative acts or acts in the field;
- f) monitoring and control of transposition of strategies, policies, programs and operation of land management and urbanism

**Land management policy in the European context** was defined in the early 60's, by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe concerned about excessive concentration of regional disparities, and which stated in Resolution 210/1961: the fact that "it is convinced that the harmonious spatial development of the economic, social, cultural activities is unattainable without land management".

Through Resolutions 525 and 526/1968 Parliamentary Assembly proposed to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to hire a new form of European cooperation in the field of spatial planning and set up for this a permanent ministerial European Conference tasked with developing new policy of territorial development of the European continent and harmonizing national policies in the field of spatial planning.

The First European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) took place in 1970 in Bonn - Germany. Since 1970, CEMAT met in 12 sessions and adopted over time, the basic documents for European spatial planning. After 1991, Romania has constantly participated in CEMAT sessions with representatives of the Ministry responsible for regional planning.

"European Charter of land management" adopted in 1983, by CEMAT in Torremolinos - Spain defines land management as "spatial expression of economic, social, cultural and ecological policy of all societies" with the following objectives: balanced socio-economic development of the regions, improving quality of life, responsible management of natural resources and environmental protection, rational use of soil.

The main documents of European legislation that synthesize the experience of land management and that Romania abides to are:

- European Charter of land management -document of the Council of Europe, adopted by the 6th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT), held in Torremolinos, Spain (May 1983)
- the Scheme of Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) - balanced and sustainable spatial development of the territory of the European Union - EU document adopted at the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the EU countries - Potsdam, Germany (May 1999)
- Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent - document of the Council of Europe adopted at the European

Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) - Hannover, Germany (September 2000)

- European Territorial Agenda - European Commission document (May 2007)

Territorial development in Romania is defined as a process of transformation of the geography of the inhabited territories (physical elements: infrastructure, landscape, cities and also the territorial structure and geographical distribution of the population and human activities). Territorial development is a comprehensive concept also used as a public policy objective seeking not only economic growth in these regions, but also sustainability, with its economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects. In the current European context characterized by low growth rates and sharp regional imbalances, territorial development has become a general priority in order to improve services, employment and reduce regional imbalances.

The basic aim of land management is constituted by the harmonisation for the entire area of economic, social, environmental and cultural policies, nationally and locally established with a view to ensuring the balance in the development of different areas of the country, and increasing the cohesion and effectiveness of their economic and social relationships. Land use planning is therefore the spatial expression of economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of society.

The concept of land management in Romania is connected to the main European documents in this field. It takes the form of studies, plans, programs and projects which locally harmonize economic, social, cultural and environmental policies in order to ensure sustainable development in the spatial profile of the various areas of the country.

In our country, the activities of land use and urban planning are carried out in accordance with Law 350/2001 on land use and urban planning, as subsequently amended, setting the following land management objectives: the well-balanced economic and social development of regions and areas, with respect to their specificity, improvement of the quality of human life and human communities, the responsible management of natural resources and environmental protection, rational use of the territory. According to the Law 350/2001, activities of land management are carried throughout Romania on the basis of the hierarchical principle, cohesion, and spatial integration at the national, regional, county, city and communal level, creating an appropriate framework for the well-balanced development and the rational use of land and responsible management of natural resources and environmental protection.

The activity in the field of land use planning at national level is coordinated by the Government, which sets in relation to the contents of the Government Programme, priority programs, guidelines and sectoral policies.

The Ministry of Regional Development and Local Administration is the specialized body of the Government in the field of land use planning, with the following tasks:

- to ensure the development of the National Land Use Plan - NLUP;
- to ensure the elaboration of the Regional Land Use Plan -RLUP- underlying regional development;
- to ensure the collaboration with ministries and other local government bodies in order to underlie, in terms of land use planning and sectoral strategic programs;
- to ensure the collaboration with the regional development councils, county and local councils, as well as tracking the way in which government programs are applied guidelines in the field of land use planning at regional, county and local levels;



- to ensure the documentation approval for land use planning, according to the powers established by law.

The tasks of the county government - County Council – in the land use planning are the following:

- to coordinate the land use planning at county level, according to the law and set guidelines on land use planning; To this end, the County Council coordinates the work of local councils, giving them specialized technical assistance;
- to ensure the takeover of the provisions from the national, regional and zonal land use plans.
- to ensure the elaboration of the County Land Use Plan, zonal land use plans which are of county interest and are approved according to the law.

The tasks of local government – the City Council – in the field of land management ensure the compliance with the provisions of the authorized land management documentation. In carrying out its tasks in the field of land use planning, the local council uses information from all areas of socio-economic activity.

Integrated urban development has recently become of particular concern for the development of cities based on the finding that these are the engines driving the European economy and can be considered as catalysts for creativity and innovation across the whole EU. Around 68% of the population of the EU lives in a metropolitan area, and these regions are also the ones that generate 67% of the GDP of the European Union. However, this is the area where a series of some permanent problems such as unemployment, segregation and poverty also occur. Therefore, policies for urban areas have a greater significance for the EU as a whole.

The various dimensions of urban life such as the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects are closely related and the success in terms of urban development can be achieved only through an integrated approach. Measures concerning the physical renovation of urban areas should be combined with those promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. In addition, the development of some solid partnerships between local citizens, civil society, local economy and other various levels of government represents a mandatory requirement.

Such an approach is particularly important at this time, given the seriousness of the challenges that European cities are currently facing. These challenges range from specific demographic changes to the consequences of economic stagnation in terms of job creation and social progress, as well as the impact of climate change. Responding to these challenges will be crucial for achieving the objective of an intelligent, sustainable society and in favour of inclusion as provided by the Europe 2020 strategy.

The European Commission’s proposals on the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 intend to stimulate the integrated urban policies with a view to enhancing sustainable urban development and strengthening the role that cities have in the context of the cohesion policy.

Basically, a series of programs and measures are suggested in order to support sustainable urban development via integrated strategies that address the economic, climatic, social and environmental changes within the rural areas, funding reservation for integrated urban development, innovative actions in urban areas and more emphasis on the urban development at a strategic level.

The practical effects should be found in partnerships with the regional, local and urban authorities who should get involved in the elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of urban development programs.

**The Strategic Concept of Territorial Development Romania 2030** has been adopted in Romania as a strategic document on sustainable and integrated territorial development in the medium and long term. The concept provides a framework for grounding the territorial development of Romania in connection with the developments in the European and international space and is based on current practices in the field of territorial planning (e.g. in Finland, Ireland, Hungary, the Netherlands and France). Its specificity consists in the fact that it requires a vision integrating development actions, where attempts are made to suggest solutions to problems arising from the needs and characteristics of different areas and not simply general solutions.

This Concept establishes the guidelines for the territorial development of Romania on a regional, interregional, national scale by means of integrating relevant relationships at a cross-border and transnational level, linking the concepts of cohesion and competitiveness in the territory.

The aim of the Concept is to highlight, from the integrated territorial perspective, the ways to exploit the national potential with a view to recovering the development disparities from the European countries, to stimulate a well-balanced development of Romania and strengthen its role as a Member State of the European Union and an active player within Central and Eastern Europe. The document aims to maximize the impact of foreign and domestic investments, direct them to relevant areas by means of national strategic projects and local policies developed in accordance with its objectives.

A new issue of general interest related to sustainable territorial development is the sustainable spatial development which can be defined as that development that provides a territorial balance of meeting the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations at the same rate.

This concept is equivalent to those of sustainable *territorial development*, *sustainable development in a territorial context*, *sustainable spatial development* and any other combination of the synonymous terms.

Given the complexity of contemporary human settlements, if *spatial development* can be understood in all three aspects determined by the interpretation of spatiality, *sustainable spatial development* involves the third sense of spatial development through proper understanding of sustainability.

In recent years there has been a significant dynamic within the European Union in an area still under development: *territorial cohesion*. Under the new Lisbon Treaty, currently being ratified by the Member States, territorial cohesion has become the third dimension of cohesion policy, in addition to the social and economic components.

The objective assigned to territorial cohesion adds the dimension of trans-sectoral and trans-territorial (cross-border, trans-regional, etc.) political process: this allows decision makers to perceive the European territory from a new perspective - not necessarily the regional or the national one, but at an integrated cross-border and macro-regional level - that can help territories to build their future on the basis of territorial capital by ensuring the most effective opportunities at various geographic levels.

The definition of the concept of territorial cohesion is still under debate in Europe, but there are some items that are accepted by everyone such as the well-balanced territorial development, the reduction of disparities and exploitation of the territorial potential. A

general definition suggested for the concept of territorial cohesion following the consultation of Romanian institutions consists in: *Territorial cohesion constitutes the expression of the well-balanced, coherent and harmonious development of territory, in terms of economic, social, endowments, accessibility and environmental quality activities and also in terms of the existence of equitable living and working conditions of existence for all citizens, regardless of where they are located.* Territorial cohesion policy should aim at reducing disparities in development between geographical regions, between urban and rural areas, between centre and periphery, and preventing the amplification of territorial disparities.

The future of Cohesion Policy during 2014 - 2020 is getting clearer due to the new regulations recently launched by the European Commission within the debate. European Commission's proposal highlights a greater importance given to the territorial dimension and the integrated policy approach by considering the diversity and specificities of local and regional policies and their conversion into territorial - based policies.

In general, territorial cohesion should ensure the harmonious development of different regions, allow citizens to exploit the potential of the territory in the best way possible, turn this diversity into an asset that contributes to the sustainable development of the whole territory, and particularly complete and strengthen economic and social cohesion. Thus territorial cohesion policy should aim at reducing disparities in development between geographical regions, between urban and rural areas.

### **Conclusions**

For our country whose major interest consists in integrating the new development philosophy widely shared at the European Union level, The National Strategy for Sustainable Development 'Horizons 2030' constitutes the programmatic document essential for sustainable development.

Romania is recognized, despite the progress made in recent years to catch up with the considerable differences from the other EU member states, to still have an economy based on intensive use of resources, a society and local government still in search of a unitary vision and a natural capital facing the risk of potentially irreversible damage.

The sustainable development strategy sets specific objectives for acceding, within a reasonable and realistic period of time, to the development model generating high added value, driven by the interest in knowledge and innovation and oriented towards the continuous improvement of the quality of people's lives and their relationships in harmony with the natural environment.

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