

**DEZVOLTAREA DURABILĂ A
ROMÂNIE, O ABORDARE
NAȚIONALĂ, REGIONALĂ ȘI
LOCALĂ**

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Abstract

Cercetările efectuate cu privire la operele și documentele publicate au relevat faptul că instituțiile internaționale renumite precum și oamenii de știință au considerat că atât în secolul XX cât și la începutul secolului XXI, dezvoltarea societății umane trebuie să se bazeze pe continuitate și durabilitate. La această etapă, putem spune că România are un concept de dezvoltare durabilă, care se reflectă în politicile și indicatorii specifici, dar trebuie remarcat faptul că acest mecanism nu a fost pusă în aplicare în mod eficient, la nivelul autorităților administrației publice locale. În acest sens, credem că este nevoie de mecanisme care pot fi implementate la nivelul administrației locale; în cazul în care principiile dezvoltării durabile, cu ținte și termene precise pot fi corelate cu resurse securizate financiar care pot ajuta în cele din urmă la ridicarea calității vieții oamenilor și nivelul de civilizație.

Cuvinte-cheie: dezvoltare durabilă, politicile economice naționale, criza economică și financiară

**ROMANIA'S SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT: NATIONAL,
REGIONAL AND LOCAL
APPROACH**

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Abstract:

The research conducted on published works and documents has revealed that famous international institutions, as well as scientists have deemed, both in the twentieth century and the beginning of XXI century, that the development of human society must be based on continuity and sustainability. At this phase, we can say that Romania has a concept of sustainable development which is reflected in policies and specific indicators, yet it should be noted that this mechanism has not been implemented effectively at the level of the local administration authorities. In this respect, we believe there is a need of mechanisms that can be implemented at local administration level, where sustainable development principles with precise targets and deadlines can be promoted, with secured financial resources that can ultimately help in raising the people's quality of life and level of civilization.

Key-words: sustainable development, national economic policies, economic and financial crisis

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Introduction

From the beginning, it should be noted that, in Romania, the concept of sustainable development has been adopted for a short period of time in comparison with the European countries, where this process has been implemented with outstanding results since the 80s.

At present, the key challenge for the authorities is to understand the requirements and procedures to implement the sustainable development at national, regional and local level and, based on a specific accounting system, to ensure the monitoring of the results and their transparency to the public opinion of the local people, concerning the use of the allocated funds for the benefit of the people.

However, first of all we have given special attention to the initiatives and concerns of specialized institutions, scientists, governmental bodies and NGOs on sustainable economic development, and marked especially those works, measures and actions which are essentially elements for substantiating the sustainable development, that can be applied also in our country.

1.Theoretical considerations on sustainable development

In the modern society, based more and more on knowledge, the efforts are directed towards the environmental component of the development, and reducing the disparities between the rich and the poor countries. Nowadays, we are witnessing the globalization process, which is achieved through a variety of mechanisms that aim to harmonize the national economic policies with the international economic policies, these being issues that have attracted interest and

concerns related to the phrase ‘sustainable development’.

International and national organizations, experts in the field, NGOs, public opinion expect and are confident that, in terms of the gaps and existing imbalances, solutions to eradicate poverty and under-development will be found and established in a reasonable period of time.

This confidence is supported by international and national institutions’ efforts to bring on the agenda an open analysis upon the serious problems facing the world economy, and the related solutions to improving living conditions of the peoples.

The most important issues are synthetically presented below.

1.1.Economic Development

In economic theory, there are a many of development-related concepts:

expansion, growth, progress, economic cycle, and economic development. Switching to a new economic development model has become a primary concern because the old economic models (the capitalist and socialist models) have generated large imbalances such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, environmental degradation, etc. The scientific society was urged to rethink economic the development concept as a concept that should be based on the relationship between human activities, natural environment and land resources.

We note that the economic and environmental problems, that accumulated gaps and, thus, they negatively influenced the society, have been associated with each other since 1951. They were analyzed by the International Union for Environmental Protection (IUEP), that published a Report

on Environmental Protection ("The State of Protection for Nature in the World", 1951), which anticipated the issue of reconciling the economic and ecological phenomena. In 1980, the same organization (IUEP) published the World Strategy for the Natural Environment Conservation ("World Conservation Strategy"), a strategy by which communities seek growth opportunities, benefiting by the environment, in order to increase the quality of life, based on the available human and financial resources, and also based on the social and natural environment factors. The classical mechanism of economic development and growth has led to a waste of resources, which has generated criticism from some economists, sociologists, philosophers.

1.2. The Report between the Economic Development and Growth

Important for this theme is the Nicholas Georgescu Roegen's view (who was the founder of the bio-economic theory) on the development of economic phenomena. His view was reflected in his encyclopedic work "The Entropy Law and the Economic Process", which is supported by a reasoned critique of the economic theory.

Nicholas Georgescu Roegen, who is considered the only Schumpeter's authentic disciple (Joseph A. Schumpeter established the distinction between growth and development: growth means to produce more and development means to produce otherwise), believes that both the economic growth and world population growth should not be limited - if sustainability of biosphere's capacity of being inhabited is intended.

As one of the greatest economists of the twentieth century, Nicholas Georgescu

Roegen has provided a fundamental demonstration on a world scale of the principle that there can be no "sustainable growth", no "zero growth" and that we record an inevitable decline of the truly sustainable development of humanity.

To demonstrate the pragmatism of the theory, Nicholas Georgescu Roegen states that *"a piece of coal is a low entropy substance. By burning it, heat is developed, which together with smoke and ashes, counts the same amount of energy contained in the piece of coal but, if released by the combustion, its energy can be used once for all. That process is not reversible. What practically remains from a valuable resource is garbage."*

Although the law of entropy governs the economic process and the world is dependent on this process, Nicholas Georgescu Roegen shows that the real product of the economic process is "the pleasure to live", and that the true source of economic value is the value of every living organism's life.

Georgescu Roegen's critique on growth's traditional theory is based on the argument that, on the one hand, it is impossible to ignore the natural resources, these being replaced by with man-made resources and, on the other hand, that technological progress does not involve a reduction of the impact on ecosystems but, on the contrary, an increase of the consumption of resources.

World economic crisis is affecting all sectors of industrial civilization that are booming, yet it is not just about pollution and environmental degradation. The international economic development is the core of this unprecedented crisis, and it is being accelerated by the demographic expansion and evolution of technology (Albu, 2006).

1.3. Sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development was first defined in the Report of the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) - "Our Common Future", known also as the Brundtland Report, in 1987. In this Report, sustainable development is defined as the ability of the humankind to ensure the fulfillment of requirements of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition was endorsed unanimously as the concept of the general sustainable development.

After publishing and analyzing the Report, sustainable development has become a target of global concern, which supports the idea that resources consumption (the speed of the resources use) must occur at a lower rate than the ability to find new resources, and technology to extend the "life" non-renewable resources must be used. However, this definition does not include aspects the quality of human life. A current definition of the sustainable development takes into account the fulfillment of the needs of the present generation without compromising the fulfillment of the future generation's needs and the development of the free human being, development that must occur in harmony with the environment and necessarily in a balanced society. Sustainable development has major implications for non-renewable resources due to the countries' different

development. Industrialized countries are required to bear a greater share of the immediate difficulties. Also the Environment Committee of the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OCED) brings a significant contribution that defines sustainable development as maximizing the net benefit of the economic development while maintaining quality and production size at the level of the resources along the time (Glodeanu, Hoffman, 2006).

The concept of sustainable development was the objective of the United Nations' Summit on Sustainable Development, that was held in Johannesburg, 26th August to 6th September 2002, which was attended by a number of 104 state leaders and resulted in: the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Implementation Plan of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which emphasized the idea that governments cannot achieve sustainable development by themselves, but through voluntary partnerships.

Thus, through the Johannesburg Declaration, governments have assumed a collective responsibility to strengthen the three interdependent pillars of the sustainable development, i.e.: economic development, social development and environmental protection at local, regional, national and global level.

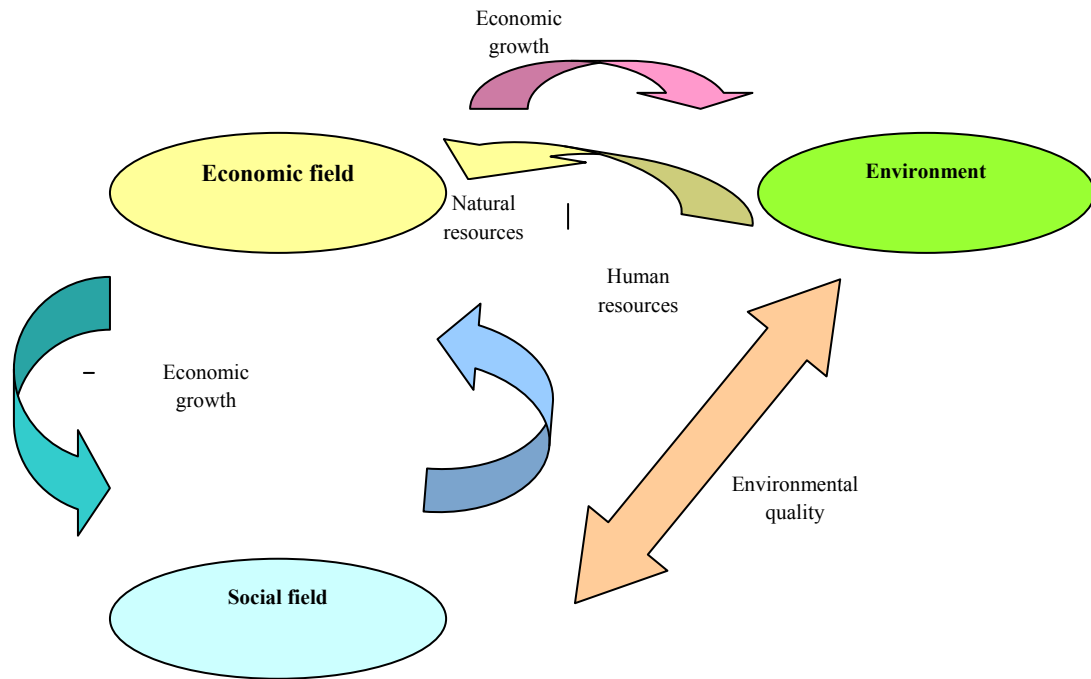


Figure 1: Theoretical scheme of sustainable development

Source: Lucian Liviu Albu, coordinator, "Analysis of factors of sustainable development on very long-term", cited work, page 24

2. Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy: national, regional and local approach

Obviously, for Romania, implementing the objectives of sustainable development, as a member of

the European Union, is a big challenge because it requires the implementation of structural reforms at all levels, the ensuring of the material, human and financial resources, and the improvement of the employees' training in the field.

Agreeing on a set of accepted indicators of sustainable development, including reflecting the ecological and social factors of the development in the national accounts system, through specific instruments, remains a constant concern of the European Community Statistical Office (EUROSTAT), the Economic Commission of the United Nations for Europe (ECUNE), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

(OECD). Romania, through the National Institute of Statistics, is actively engaged in this process.

Currently, the National Institute of Statistics sent to the European Community Statistical Office a partial system of indicators, integrated into in the European system of sustainable development, based on the available data.

To track and verify the implementation of National Strategy, a national system of statistical indicators on sustainable development was created, in harmony with the indicators used within the European Union, to monitor states' progress in line with the Strategy for Sustainable Development of the European Union.

The research that was undertaken revealed that, so far, Romania has worked to establish laws by whose help to ensure the practical implementation of the sustainable development aims.

Regarding the measures and actions on the application of the sustainable development, Romania has achieved so far the following:

a) At the Government level, the Ministry of Regional Development was established, whose tasks include policy development in order to stimulate the initiative of the local authorities in what concerns the goal setting related to the development status of each locality, which can form the basis of their own sustainable development programs.

For this purpose, important tasks are being assigned to both the Ministry of Interior and Administration Reform, and the Ministry of Finance.

The public policies developed with a view to support the sustainable development include economic and social objectives that aim at: an economic growth which takes into account the protection of natural resources, meeting the employment demands, energy and water supply, housing, healthcare, a controlled growth of population, preserving and increasing the reserve of resources, technological reorganizing, environmental protection, etc.

b) Specific strategies were prepared and stimulated, substantiated from theoretical, economical, technological, social, political, cultural, environmental and institutional points of view. Thus a model of sustainable development was created based on three principles, as follows: to protect especially the

biosphere; efficiently use of human, material and financial resources; to promote an equitable distribution of financial resources for the environmental protection among the different segments of the population, and among the generations (the public debt burden of the investment process or even placing the investment for the natural environment protection to the future generations).

c) In Romania, the Sustainable Society Index - SSI Romania 2008 was developed. It highlighted the current level of sustainable development in our country, indicating the things are going well and the things that need improvement. This Index was developed to meet the need for a transparent instrument to measure the current level of sustainability of the Romanian society, showing to which extent the society is sustainable and emphasizing and supporting at the same time both the positive and the negative elements. In other words, the Sustainable Society Index (SSI) integrates the most important aspects of life quality and sustainability and it is built on a solid definition, namely the Brundtland definition, in its extended version.

In summarizing the information on guidelines for sustainable development in Romania, we prepared the table below:

Table no. 1 Sustainable Society Index 2008

No.	Category of significant indicators in terms of sustainability	Name of sustainable development indicators
I.	Personal development	1. life expectancy
		2. poverty rate
		3. sufficient drinking water
		4. appropriate waste cleaning services
		5. educational opportunities
		6. gender equality
II.	Healthy environment	7. air quality
		8. surface water quality
		9. soil quality
III.	Balanced society	10. good administration
		11. population employment
		12. population growth
		13. income distribution
IV.	Sustainable use of resources	14. public debt
		15. waste recycling
V.	Sustainable world	16. use of renewable water resources
		17. energy consumption from renewable sources
		18. forests condition
		19. biodiversity preservation
		20. emissions of greenhouse gases
		21. carbon footprints
		22. international cooperation

d) The Foundation for a Sustainable Society in Romania, together with partners supported financially by the Social Transformation Program (MATRA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, developed the Sustainable Society Index for Romania's Development Regions - IRDS Romania 2009.

Regional sustainability priorities are the following: energy, waste, biodiversity, poverty rates, employment, and prioritizing programs and projects in accordance with regional needs and regional indicators.

The implementing measures refer to: improving data collection and ensuring data accuracy in all regions, coordination of data collecting for the 8 development regions in Romania so that only one collection framework can exist, based on

the same methodology and the same form of presentation; ensuring the maximum effectiveness to the regional policies by

including the results of the Sustainable Society Regional Index (SSRI) into the regular cycle of sustainable development policies of each region, monitoring the sustainable development project performance and updating SSRI for each region and at national level every two years.

Since 1998, Romania has decided to implement the regional organization system, also used in the European Union, based on larger regions of development. Although there are regulations concerning the operation of these basic administrative structures, however they didn't succeed to

govern at the regional level as decision makers.

The decision center continues to be at the county level, and this situation is due to the lack of harmonization of regional interests and especially due to the „fears” of reforming and restructuring.

In each region, a Regional Development Agency (RDA) was established by, and these agencies are coordinated by the Regional Development Council and have as their main task the implementation of regional development policies, strategies, programs and regional plans.

In Romania, the main objectives of regional development policy is to reduce the regional imbalances, by emphasizing the stimulation of a balanced development

and revitalization of the disadvantaged regions, stimulating the inter-regional, national and international cooperation in order to contribute to economic development.

The principles underlying the development and implementation of the regional development policies in Romania are the following: decentralization of decision-making process from the governmental level towards the regional / local communities; partnerships among all actors involved in the regional development; regional planning; and regional co-financing of the projects.

The research on the 8 development regions of Romania and of the 22 indicators above- mentioned is presented in the table below:

Table No.2 Regional Index of Sustainable Society 2009

No.	Name of indicator	Average of the 8 regions	Region N-E	Region S-E	Region S	Region S-V	Region V	Region N-V	Centre	București (Ilfov)
1.	life expectancy	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.6	8.6	8.7	9.0
2.	poverty rate	4.6	2.0	3.4	3.4	2.4	7.2	5.8	4.6	8.2
3.	sufficient drinking water	6.1	5.5	8.0	5.6	4.1	6.6	7.4	6.3	4.9
4.	appropriate waste cleaning services	6.3	5.3	6.2	4.6	5.0	7.0	6.0	6.7	9.3
5.	educational opportunities	7.6	7.7	7.0	6.7	7.5	7.9	7.8	7.6	8.6
6.	gender equality	7.5	-	7.3	7.2	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.5	8.1
7.	air quality	7.8	9.8	8.3	6.0	3.0	8.0	9.7	8.3	9.4
8.	surface water quality	7.0	7.5	-	6.8	6.0	8.1	6.7	8.4	5.6
9.	soil quality	5.7	5.4	6.2	6.2	6.1	5.4	4.7	4.5	7.3
10.	good administration	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2
11.	population employment	4.9	5.5	4.1	3.9	4.9	5.3	5.5	4.1	6.2
12.	population growth	8.9	8.4	8.6	8.9	8.9	9.4	8.9	9.0	8.7
13.	income distribution	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4
14.	public debt	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5
15.	waste recycling	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
16.	use of renewable water resources	9.4	9.6	8.4	9.1	9.5	9.3	9.9	9.7	-
17.	energy consumption from renewable sources	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
18.	forests condition	6.1	5.3	5.3	4.6	4.1	7.6	5.0	10.0	6.6
19.	biodiversity preservation	3.1	1.6	10.0	2.0	4.8	0.7	3.6	1.1	1.0
20.	emissions of greenhouse gases	5.9	8.1	6.7	6.6	0.4	3.5	8.3	5.8	7.8
21.	carbon footprints	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2
22.	international cooperation	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

Source: www.dezvoltare-durabila.ro

According to the calculation methodology, the overall score was calculated based on the weighted average of the scores of the 5 categories of indicators.

Life quality has consequences mainly inside the borders of a country, while sustainability has serious effects both on other countries and the world. Therefore, the first 3 categories of indicators (I, II, III), which emphasize the life quality, received a single share, and the last 2 categories (IV, V) received a double share.

The score of each category is calculated as an average score of the indicators included in that category. For each indicator, the same weight was used because there is no scientific evidence based on which one indicator should be given a greater weight than the other indicators. All scores for the overall index, categories and indicators are expressed within a scale from 0 to 10. Score 10 means maximum sustainability and score 0 means a total lack of sustainability.

The analysis shows that the essential indicators that require immediate attention and quick action on short term are the following: energy consumption form renewable energy sources, waste recycling, biodiversity preservation, and poverty and employment rates.

Also for the indicators recording low scores within a region, each region must define its own approach concerning the established priorities: ecological footprint, good administration, quality of soil, emissions of greenhouse gases, forests condition, sufficient drinking water, and appropriate waste cleaning services.

In the context of regional development, it is necessary to understand the place and role of the local development, the development partnership and the types of relationships at various administrative levels.

3. Conclusions

The analysis of the published documents has showed that different prestigious international institutions and scientists believed, both in the 20th century and the beginning of 21st century, that human society must be based on continuity and sustainability.

Thus, we noted that sustainable development was defined as an action meant to fulfill the needs of the present generation without compromising the fulfillment of the future generation's needs and the development of the free human being, development that must occur in harmony with the environment and necessarily in a balanced society.

The new vision calls for each country that, depending on the available resources and development stage, to develop its own strategy in order to bring its own contribution to achieving the sustainable development both at national level economy and worldwide.

It should be noted that Romania, as a country participating in the meetings of those organizations, endorsed the thesis and principles related to sustainable development, so that, depending on the local conditions, to be able to develop strategies and policies in this field.

The analyses undertaken on this subject have pointed out that sustainable development of local administration units (municipalities, cities, communes) require

structural reforms and policies related to: modernizing and strengthening the local administration; making efficient the local transport and the local public services; planning and managing the local public finance policies with a view to allocating a significant part of funding to achieving the goals of sustainable development (infrastructure); decentralization of the healthcare and education units from central to local level, thus ensuring an increased involvement of local administration towards a more efficient operating of these units and meeting the needs of the local people; strengthening the capacity of preserving the public order and protecting the population against the crime elements; strengthening the professional training of the public servants with a view to knowing and implementing the sustainable development process and other reforms to be implemented at local level.

It is no less true that, currently, we are facing the economic crisis that may affect the rhythm and evolution of implementing the objectives of sustainable development, which requires actions to counteract the negative effects.

To track and verify the implementation of National Strategy, has created a national system of statistical indicators of sustainable development, harmonized system of indicators used throughout the European Union, to monitor national progress in line with the Strategy for Sustainable Development of the European Union.

Among these indicators, sustainable development indicators at national and regional level need to be mentioned. Under this mechanism, the Regional Development Ministry plays an important role. Through this Ministry, the Romanian Government draws up its policies to

stimulate the local authorities' initiative in terms of planning and setting goals, according to the state of development of each locality.

We can say that, at this stage, Romania has a concept of sustainable development, reflected in policies and indicators, but need to note that this mechanism has not been implemented effectively by the local administration units.

In this direction, we believe there is a need to implement mechanisms at local administrative level, where the principles of sustainable development must be promoted based on precise targets and deadlines, with secured financial resources, which ultimately help to increase the degree of civilization and people's life quality.

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