

## MANAGING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

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### Abstract

The paper addresses the issue of sustainable development in terms of strategy and policy within the European Union. Of particular importance are the decisions on integration policies and sustainable strategies at all levels and in all cooperative activities and public funding and the development of specific structures, in conjunction with various circumstances and priorities. As regards the regulatory framework necessary for strengthening the European sustainable development this requires consistency and correlation between programs, institutions and international stakeholders, regional and national implementing policies, valuation models and risk management and other related activities and adequate financial support.

**Key words:** harmonization of environmental policies, the concept of sustainable development, sustainable development strategy, mutual recognition

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In December 2009 took place in Copenhagen *15-th Session of the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change (COP 15)*.

Regarding the position of the European Union (EU) to this Conference, the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted a number of conclusions based on negotiating an international agreement on climate protection, which take effect immediately after the Kyoto Protocol.

Preventing the climate change requires a sustainable economic and social development through concerted and sustained efforts allowed by the global regulatory framework UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). It is essential to focus efforts on critical issues: measures and actions in agriculture, poverty alleviation, food security on the and long term, in this context, a framework of action for adaptation work.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

Of particular importance are the decisions on integration policies and sustainable strategies at all levels and in all cooperative activities, as well as on the public funding and development of specific structures, in conjunction with various circumstances and priorities.

As regards the regulatory framework needed to strengthen the European sustainable development, we should mention a few basic requirements:

- consistency and correlation between programs, institutions and international stakeholders, regional and national implementing policies, valuation models and risk management and other related activities;
- adequate financial resources, essential to implement a comprehensive and coherent working framework to support the Copenhagen agreement, based on appropriate contributions from the participating States;
- establish an inclusive entity to provide a consolidated source of international financing for investments related to climate change, revise the balance of the international distribution of public finances by priority, to include relevant actors to assist in this area and ensure synergy with other environmental agreements;
- implementation of EU strategy for disaster risk reduction in developing countries;
- efforts to exploit synergies between the various international conventions.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

##### 1. The general objectives of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of the European Union

The general objectives of the Strategy for Sustainable Development (SSD) of the European Union are:

- Limiting costs and negative effects related to climate change for the society and the environment;
- Minimize the undesirable impact of the transport systems on the economy, society and environment, to ensure that these are convergent with the needs of economic, social and environmental nature;
- Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- Improving the management and avoid overexploitation of natural resources, recognizing the value of ecosystem services;
- Promote a fairly good public health and improve protection against health threats;
- Create a more inclusive society, by taking into account the solidarity between and within generations, by ensuring safety and quality of life of citizens as a precondition for maintaining individual well-being;
- Actively promote sustainable development and ensure that extensive internal and external EU policies are consistent with sustainable development and its international commitments.

In 2008, the Romanian Government discussed and approved the National Strategy for Sustainable Development with the horizon between 2013 and 2020-2030. Detailed requirements documents follows the European Commission and this is a joint project of the Romanian Government, through the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, and the United Nations Development Programme, the National Center for Sustainable Development.

The strategy sets targets for the passage, in a realistic and reasonable timeframe, to a new model for the development of the European Union that of sustainable development, generating high added value, driven by interest and knowledge oriented innovation and continuous improvement of human life and relations between them in harmony with the natural environment.

Strategy development is the result of the obligation assumed by Romania as a EU member state, according to the objectives agreed at EU level, particularly those stated in the Accession Treaty, the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs and the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development in 2006. Following extensive discussion of the project at national and regional levels, with active involvement of stakeholders and support the conceptual level of the Romanian Academy, The Strategy proposes a vision of development of Romania in the perspective of the next two decades, with goals that transcend electoral cycles and political preferences, as follows:

*Horizon 2013:* Incorporating organic principles and practices of sustainable

development policies and programs in all of Romania;

*Horizon 2020:* Reaching the current average level of EU countries for the main indicators of sustainable development;

*Horizon 2030:* Romania will reach that year the average level of EU countries.

Achieving these strategic goals will provide medium and long term, high economic growth and consequently a substantial reduction of economic and social disparities between Romania and other Member States. Synthetic indicators show, as a result of a real convergence process, that the gross domestic product per capita of Romania will approach the EU average in 2020 and will be slightly higher than the European average in 2030.

## **2. The sustainable Development Strategy**

Environmental issues came in the interest of the European community as it became increasingly clear that natural resources and reducing pollution effects could not be fought effectively only within national borders.

In this context, the EU has evolved from a sectoral approach towards sustainable development strategies, integrating environmental problem in all parts of policies. Since developing the first Environmental Action Programme and, subsequently, during the '70s, the European Union has shown considerable interest in the aspects of environmental protection.

In all these years, the EU has adopted over 200 laws, developed more complex instruments to promote research and technological development, as well as to find clean technologies and eco-developed markets.

In essence, the sustainable development requires an integrated approach to the so-called magic triangle: economic growth, environmental protection, social cohesion.

Each of these three coordinates are interrelated, measures taken in case of them inevitably affect the other two developments. In fact, the sustainable development strategy of the European Union identifies environment as the third pillar of action, with the economic and social.

Development and, equally, environmental policy are based on a set of principles which have emerged gradually as institutional development for environmental action programs. In this sense, the principle of accountability and "polluter pays" has the polluter to bear the costs of pollution control measures established by public authorities. The principle of preventive action means that any decision aimed at launching a production or investment must relate to the expected impact on the environment.

The sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union faces many challenges. Some of these challenges are very similar to problems encountered by another Union strategy, the Lisbon agenda. Although the EU has established that sustainable development is the overarching principle of all EU policies, in reality the issue of economic competitiveness has come to dominate the political agenda. The three pillars of the Lisbon Strategy (economic competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental protection) were compared with three children, one of which - economic competitiveness - needs more attention.

In this process, the Sustainable Development Strategy is sometimes reduced to the environmental pillar - the Lisbon Strategy. EU needs economic growth first, before they can act to protect the environment or to implement social protection policies. Because sustainable development is a very broad concept, sometimes too many different problems are put under the umbrella of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, removing attention from the true direction to the non-sustainable (no sustainability).

The declared purpose of the act is renewed for a continuous improvement of quality of life, both for present and for the future. But this can be obtained only in communities able to use resources rationally and efficiently and to discover ecological potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion. The renewed Sustainable Development Strategy applies to the whole of Europe and therefore proposes ways of improving cooperation with the government and other stakeholders, with NGOs and citizens, and other entities implied in the sustainable development. Cooperation for sustainable development should be a concern for both the EU and its Member States. Community policy on sustainable development should be complementary to the policies implemented by the Member States

### 3. Actions taken at EU level

This section presents a chronology of major events that took place in the field of sustainable development in the European context.

- 1972 - Paris summit showed the need to allow an eye to environmental protection in the context of economic expansion and improving living standards.
- 1987 - Single European Act is a landmark of European environment policy, which was first mentioned in a treaty of the European Community.
- 1993 - Treaty of Maastricht gave full status of environmental protection in European policies.

- 1999 - Treaty of Amsterdam strengthened the legal basis for policies aimed at environmental protection and sustainable development within the European Union.
- 2000 - Heads of EU Member States sitting in the Lisbon European Council pledged to create "2010, most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world."
- 2001 - Gothenburg Summit which adopted EU the Strategy for Sustainable Development.
- 2005 - The Commission launched a review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, a process which involved several steps.
- 2006 (June) - was adopted the Sustainable Development Strategy for an enlarged European Union.
- 2007 - Treaty of Lisbon, formally called the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community was signed at a summit in Lisbon. Treaty include additional protocols on climate change and combating global warming. Also, some provisions of the Treaty refers to solidarity in energy supply problems and changes in European energy policy.

The tools used in implementing sustainable development are projects that support environmental management system, ISO certification, financial instruments, and others. Through the EMAS (environmental management system and audit) approved by the EU Council, the EU regulations are implementing an environmental management system. The project is voluntary and requires a statement of environmental probity which can be verified by an accredited verifier.

The **ISO 14001 certification** is the proof of an organization's commitment to continuously improve process performance for environmental protection and compliance with stated policy. Meanwhile, it offers significant financial advantages in terms of improving performance and minimizing waste. ISO 14001 is widely applicable by bodies of all types and sizes, providing a dynamic mechanism for developing an effective environmental management system.

The **LIFE** tool of the member states support the draft environmental and nature conservation. Since 1992, LIFE was used in about 2750 projects, thus contributing to a saving of €1.35 billion on environmental protection.

In 2007 came into force the **LIFE +**, financial tool. With a budget of €2.143 billion (for the period 2007 to 2013), LIFE + is focused on supporting the development and implementation of Community environmental policy and associated legislation. At least 78% will be used for co-action projects, of which at least 50% will be allocated to

nature and biodiversity projects. The European Commission will use the remaining amount for operational costs.

LIFE + comprises three components:

- Nature and Biodiversity, which co-finances projects that promote best practices, demonstration projects, projects that help implement the Birds and Habitats Directives.

- Governance and policy environment that continues and expands the original LIFE-Environment program. Through this component are financed projects that contribute to the implementation of Community environmental policy, development of innovative policy approaches, technologies, methods and tools, basic knowledge on environmental policy and legislation, monitoring environmental pressures (including the monitoring of forests and environmental interactions).

- Information and Communication, a new component of the program, will co-finance projects aimed at the implementation of communication campaigns and environmental awareness, nature protection and biodiversity conservation, and also projects that relate to forest fire prevention (awareness campaigns, specific training).

## CONCLUSIONS

The change of the "philosophy" with respect to the production and consumption, put in evidence by the transition from production and consumption at any price (the price being related to the disposal of the „catabolic” products of the economic

systems, a price greater in some circumstances, in the project phases, but more expensive later on, also lead to the sustainable production and consumption. These include all prices and avoid directing the bill to others (from other geographical area or for the future).

This process should be promoted by the following institutions:

- Government and state institutions, like the EU, will facilitate business access to various tools dedicated to sustainable production and consumption;
- Enforcing business by pressures from both the government and state institutions and from civil society;
- Awareness of civil society to demand products and services that were designed following the patterns of sustainable production and consumption.

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