

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract: The paper discusses the connection between regional development policy priorities and sustainable development goals in contemporary world. Sustainable development is considered as an organizing principle in the efforts to sustain the ability of natural systems to provide resources and services for economy and society. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, is analyzed in the context of the perspectives for regional development policy in next years in Europe. EU regional policy is presented as targeted to EU regions and cities for encouraging economic growth and enhancing life quality through strategic investments and as an active form of solidarity focused on the support of less developed regions. Conclusion and recommendations are provided regarding the priorities of EU regional policy funding: research and innovation, information and communication technology, competitiveness of small and medium-size enterprises and low-carbon economy.

Keywords: sustainable development, regional policy, funding.



THE NEW SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- SDG 1 – No poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- SDG 2 – Zero hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- SDG 3 – Good health and well-being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- SDG 4 – Quality education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- SDG 5 – Gender equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- SDG 13 – Climate action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- SDG 14 – Life below water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- SDG 15 – Life on land: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

- Regional development is accepted as “a broad term” by OECD and it is defined as “a general effort to reduce regional disparities by supporting (employment and wealth-generating) economic activities in regions”.
- Despite the significant public funding such policy was not able to cope with regional disparities, to make an optimal use of the economic potential of the regions and to strengthen social cohesion.
- The alternative is to avoid the redistribution and subsidies for lagging regions and to put the efforts to the measures for increasing the competitiveness of all regions.



THE NEW APPROACH AS PROPOSED BY OECD

- a new development strategy
- a focus in regional assets
- an emphasis on the opportunities instead on the need of support
- a broad participatory approach

In other words this means that:

- regional competitive advantages should be sustained
- stronger regional economies should be developed
- innovative governance models should be adopted and implemented



THE REGIONAL POLICY IN THE EU

- It targets the regions and cities posing objectives of encouraging economic growth and improving life quality through strategic investments.
- This policy is considered as “an active form of solidarity which focuses support on the less developed regions”.
- The four priorities are:
 - research and innovation
 - information and communication technologies
 - competitiveness of small and medium-size businesses
 - low-carbon economy



CONCLUSION

Regional policy accounts for over 1/3 of the EU budget and it is the main investment policy for regional and urban development and growth which are benefiting business and citizens from each EU country through a constellation of projects all over many years.

Undoubtedly, regional policy supported projects have led to the creation of millions of new jobs, a broad and novel infrastructure of strategic transport, energy and broadband, huge investments in research and innovation, renewable energy and energy efficiency, small businesses and entrepreneurs, protection of nature and cultural heritage, etc.

However, there are still targets and challenges to overcome and the future of the policy should be carefully discussed and based on profound analyses of the current outcomes in terms of qualitative and quantitative aspects, regional peculiarities and development.

The priorities, as set regarding research and innovation, information and communication technology, competitiveness of small and medium-size enterprises and low-carbon economy, could be further elaborated and aligned to the sustainable development goals considering their targets and indicators and the contribution of the policies, governance and development on the regional level to the achievement of a sustainable world.



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