

Regional and rural sustainable development

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Abstract

The regional and territorial dimension of cohesion policy is very important. The strategic decisions should take into account situation in view of regional and rural areas perspective roles in regional sustainable development, competitiveness and employment. It is necessary to create more and better jobs for participation more young people into employment or entrepreneurial activity so as not to leave rural areas.

Key words: Regional and rural, sustainable development, employment, young people.

1 Introduction

The regional and rural development is playing an important role in helping rural areas to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges. Rural areas make up 90 % of the territory of the enlarged EU and over 60 % of the population of the European Union living in rural areas [1], 19 % of the population live in predominantly rural regions and 37 % in significantly rural regions. These regions provide 53 % of the employment [2], but tend to lag behind non-rural areas as regards a number of socioeconomic indicators, including structural indicators. In rural areas, per capita income is around a third less, activity rates for women are lower, the service sector is less developed, higher education levels are generally lower, and a smaller percentage of households has access to broadband internet.

Remoteness and peripherality are major problems in some rural regions. These disadvantages tend to be even more significant in predominantly rural regions, although the general picture at EU level can vary substantially between Member States. Lack of opportunities, contacts and training infrastructure are a particular problem for women and young people in remote rural areas [2].

The rural development is a vitally important policy area. Farming and forestry remain crucial for land use and the management of natural resources in the EU's rural areas, and as a platform for economic diversification in rural communities. The strengthening of EU rural development policy has, therefore, become an overall EU priority [1]. The Economic and Cohesion policy will support business activities in agricultural, non-agricultural enterprises, micro-enterprises, including new trade licenses.

2 Project

This is the project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic: No.1 J016/04-DP2: „Socio - Economic Development of Rural Area and Agricultural in the Czech Republic“ [3].

The aim of the project is complex and systematic collection and analysis of information related to social-economic and demographic phenomena and processes in Czech agriculture and rural areas.

The research will cover basic spheres of work and life of agricultural workers and inhabitants of rural areas with regard to their living conditions in rural areas, stabilization of rural settlement and creation of prerequisites for ecologically sustainable social and economic development of the region. The research will have such structure that it will be possible to integrate additional spheres of problems into individual research phases, which will touch the Czech countryside after joining EU. The outcomes of the individual phases will be published and presented for immediate use by local administrative and executive authorities to choose suitable policies for rural development.

3 Rural Development Policy

Rural Development policy 2007-2013 gives the direction of boosting growth and creating jobs in rural areas and improving sustainability. EU strategic guidelines identify the areas important for the realisation of Community priorities and a range of options, which Member States could use in their national strategy plans and Rural Development programmes. The strategic guidelines are [1]:

- Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors.
- Improving the environment and the countryside.
- Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification.
- Building local capacity for employment and diversification.

National Strategy Plans are translating the guidelines into the national context in the light of identified needs of regions; Rural Development programs are implementing the National Strategy Plans.

Agriculture continues to be the largest user of rural land, as well as a key determinant of the quality of the countryside and the environment. The importance and relevance of the CAP and rural development have increased with the recent enlargement of the European Union.

Without the two pillars of the CAP, market and rural development policies, many rural areas of Europe would face increasing economic, social and environmental problems. The European model of agriculture reflects the multifunctional role farming plays in the richness and diversity of landscapes, food products and cultural and natural heritage [2].

The future rural development policy focuses on three key areas: the agrifood economy, the environment and the broader rural economy and population. The new generation of rural development strategies and programmes will be built around axes: on improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; on improving the environment and the countryside; on the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy.

4 Regional and Cohesion Policy

European Union aims at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions, including rural areas. The

strategic guidelines on economic, social and territorial cohesion should be established with a view to promoting the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of the Community. In meeting the objectives set out in the Treaty, and in particular that of fostering real economic convergence, the actions supported with the limited resources.

Available to cohesion policy should be concentrated on promoting sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment [4]. The territorial dimension of cohesion policy is important and all areas of the Community should have the possibility to contribute to growth and jobs. Accordingly the strategic guidelines should take account of investment needs in both urban and rural areas in view of their respective roles in regional development and in order to promote balanced development, sustainable communities and social inclusion.

5 The roles for rural areas in tomorrow's Europe

Rural areas cover 90 percent of Europe's land and host approximately half of its population. They provide food, jobs and open space for leisure and cultural activities. They also constitute a reservoir of biodiversity and natural resources such as water, clean air and renewable energies. They are, in short, a key element of Europe's heritage.

All these areas can be located within a suite of interlocking considerations on policy matters related, for example, to agriculture and rural development, regional development, social affairs, transport, energy, the environment, spatial planning, education and culture.

The European Citizens' panel felt appropriate across the themes and identified core dimensions of the rural challenge and potential ways by which these could be related to EU policy domains [5] and the results were as follows:

Education
Health Youth
Transport
Energy
Agriculture
Employment
Participation
Land use planning
Infrastructure
Conservation
Housing
Enterprise and Industry
Services
Funding
Tourism
Public administration
Population

The most important themes of the Roles of Rural Areas in Tomorrow's Europe, where were identified, concerned in:

Young people: the need to strengthen opportunity for young people in rural areas, more youth education, retaining young people in rural areas and encouraging them to return to rural areas, listening to young people and their needs, giving support to their self-initiated project ideas, improved bus services especially late evening services and free travel for those under 18 years of age.

The vision content young people in rural areas having the same opportunity as those in urban areas, more youth associations and youth groups with improved leisure time activities, better apprenticeship opportunities and a climate in which young people are listened-to. The EU should divert some funding from agriculture to invest in infrastructure (e.g. sports facilities, education, services) that will make rural areas as attractive as cities to young people.

Education: there where identified the following concerns: the need for educational opportunity for all sections of society, in both urban and rural settings, with particular attention being given to young people, the elderly, minorities and the disabled, the availability of multiple levels of educational provision, training including internships, and maintaining local schools.

The vision content under this heading relates to access to education and training being enjoyed by all age groups, education and training standards harmonised across Europe, entrepreneurship knowledge as part of the curriculum and students from disadvantaged backgrounds being able to more easily enter higher education.

Transport: there where identified the following concerns: the lack of affordable and adequate public transport (both bus and train based) in rural areas, not least its availability for young people, the elderly and the disabled, along with the need to recognize its contribution to saving energy and reducing pollution.

The visions for transport in rural areas make reference to the presence of affordable and environmental friendly services with a reduction in road traffic, the acceptance of car free Sundays, greater appreciation for inter-modal movement (for example, in regard to freight) and greater coordination among all modes of transport.

Conservation and Environment: there where identified the following concerns: the need to preserve rural character including the retention of agricultural land, avoiding the build-up of dormitory villages, preventing the expansion of cities into rural areas, having long term commitments to sustainable land planning, limiting the general development of housing and industry in the countryside while making provision for farmers and their families, enforcing environmental regulations and retaining the peace and ambience of rural space. Additionally, citizens asked that politicians should support sustainable energy sources and the greater use of recycling practices.

The visioning work under this theme relates to sustainable forestry policies, sustainable housing development, environmentally clean transport including 'green cars', independent and renewable energy production (for example in schools), a healthy flora and fauna, a healthy agricultural industry and a situation where new roads go around natural areas rather than through them.

Enterprise and Employment: there where identified the following concerns: unacceptable levels of unemployment and the lack of investment in rural areas for enterprise creation, the need to grow small and medium sized businesses including craft based activities, encourage the presence of a diversity of professions in order to maintain rural regions, and have less bureaucracy for businesses to deal with. Tourism was perceived as an economic opportunity, not least job creation, with particular attention being given to eco-tourism.

The visioning process under this heading recognizes that, in the future, funds for Research and Development are more easily accessible by rural entrepreneurs and that there is less bureaucracy and simpler application forms. Moreover, new economic activity respects the environment, logistics that support enterprise offer quality access, and spatial relationships between industry and wildlife, natural areas, leisure areas and housing are well managed by planning controls.

The recommendations are: Small and medium-size business entrepreneurship support at start up. Less taxes and fees and easier access to funding sources for rural entrepreneurs and to abide by an environmental plan with a view to compliance with EU regulations.

Participation: the difficulty of having rural interests listened to and the need to generate opportunities for citizen engagement on priority topics, which could include greater use of citizen surveys and citizen panels.

Agriculture: the uncertain future for agricultural production and the need to return to a human scale agriculture that is environmentally friendly and linked to the production of healthy (possibly organic) foods; the need for more jobs related to the farming sector, perhaps in agri-tourism, and expressed support for a landscape based mode of production that could produce high quality food with a good productivity performance.

The visioning relates to fair prices for farmers and consumers, along with much more information for consumers related to choices being made.

Health: the inadequacy of health services in rural areas regarding accessibility to hospital care, management decisions not being patient-centred, lengthy waiting lists, the need for nearer on-call doctor services and support for hospice and other caring services in rural areas. Additionally, the view was expressed that society must have quality and healthy food and thus support should be offered to farmers and through education channels about the importance of these matters.

Funding: the more investing into its constituent regions and that, more generally, social benefit systems require assessment in regard to which agencies control funding and deliver support.

The visioning activity under this heading sees balance between urban and rural areas, clearer rules on distributional responsibilities and which industries are eligible for support, more transparency on disbursements and more attention being given to the family and family relations by the EU.

Integrated development: the need to preserve the viability of rural areas through a combination of measures related to youth, employment, services, energy, environment and agriculture. The issue of housing was commented on by citizens in relation to it being too expensive for local first time buyers and competition from the second homes market. Citizens were also concerned about the relative lack of services in rural areas, especially healthcare and the need for a greater and sensitive police presence.

The visioning activity related to this heading focuses on the sustainability and identity of rural areas in 2020 which will have rediscovered the value of everyone belonging there, where people live in harmony with their environment, where people are close to services and employment, and where a diversity of agriculture is practiced. Moreover, energy and agriculture will be inter-related, for example through biomass production, and more use will be being made of wind, solar and water resources [5].

6 Small and Middle enterprises

In this global age social, economic and political problems merge into one another – as do the solutions. It is new view of the business; it is Corporate Social Responsibility [6]. CSR is business's response to new conditions, new challenges, and new opportunities.

SMEs are different from MNCs in several important respects [7]:

- Their market is usually much more local and compact than that of MNCs. The much-touted local license to operate weighs heavily in SME decision-making.
- They operate on much smaller margins and have relatively financial room to invest in activities whose payout is some time down the road.
- Accordingly, they have shorter planning horizons. Benefits from CSR related investments have to show up soon in order to work.
- SME operators may find it harder to get together and share information than executives with big forms. SMEs may be a bit more individualistic and isolated.

SMEs cannot remain out of the social responsibility loop for several reasons:

- They are increasingly subject to social responsibility-related supply chain pressures. These will intensify as more countries in CEE accede to the EU or at least deepen trade links with EU countries.
- SMEs are subject to changing consumer attitudes to ethical purchasing. Consumer markets increasingly fragment into niches defined by various factors, including social and environmental performance.
- SMEs are the backbone of any economy. They employ over 90 % of workers and are critical determinants of any economy's overall health.

SMEs even enjoy some advantages over MNCs on CSR matters [8]:

- SME culture already incorporates CSR principles such as non-discrimination on the basis of age.
- Many SMEs already function well as members of local communities. They have to survive. Anyone who lives in a small town or city knows that a small business that ill-serves its stakeholders will have news of this spread throughout the community with ruthless efficiency. Many SME's already undertake activities consistent with CSR principles. One study suggests that half all European SMEs "are involved to some degree in external socially responsible causes." Involvement varies with size of enterprise. They merely need to be told this in order to be convinced of CSR's value and resonance
- SMEs are not highly bureaucratized and can implement changes quickly and cheaply.
- While they are somewhat isolated from one another, SMEs are more willing to share best practice. Brand advantage is less of a priority for them.

7 Craft and micro-enterprises

There are 25,3 million non-primary private enterprises in Europe (28 countries of the European Economic Area plus candidate countries to the European Union). 99,8 % of these are craft and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Within the group of SMEs, the vast majority of over 90 % are micro businesses with less than 10 employees. In fact, the typical European enterprise is a micro business employing 3 persons. Crafts and small businesses employ more than 53 % of Europe's workforce (around 95 million people) and are responsible for half of Europe's total turnover.

The average company size in Europe is 5 occupied persons. Small businesses and craft enterprises are therefore the rule in Europe and not the exception. Small enterprises and craft businesses are a key source of jobs and a breeding ground for business ideas. Small businesses are the main driver for innovation and employment as well as social and local integration in Europe. The European Union and policy makers have largely recognized this role [8].

Crafts provide a wide range of vital products and services at local level. Many are very small firms – indeed often only the owner is involved. Micro-enterprises, of which many are craft firms, face particular challenges due to their small scale. They are nonetheless an important segment of the European economy and specific efforts to help them are essential for European growth.

Whilst over 99 % of all enterprises in Europe are SMEs, 90 % of SMEs are actually micro-enterprises – with fewer than 10 employees – and the average company has just five workers. However, these micro-enterprises account for 53 % of all jobs in Europe, so their importance to the European economy is enormous [8].

Their small size and limited resources mean micro-enterprises face particular problems. Finding the finance to get a new business going, or to grow an existing one is a difficult challenge. The administrative tasks, or red tape, which all firms have to carry out weigh

particularly heavily on Europe's micro-enterprises. And finding staff with the right skills, willing to work for a small firm can be a problem, as is ensuring they have the time to update their skills and keep up with developments in the field [8]. Family farms are spine and driving force of the European economics [9].

8 Conclusion

Support of Regional and rural sustainable development

In process of time our research we have monitoring and analyzing of the social and economic situation at the regional and rural area and of the demographic structure of the South Bohemia rural villages. Research appeared there are no problem with deinhabitant.

Regional and structural policy, usage of funds and financial support from EU and Czech Republic give possibilities to brace up an all - round social and economic development in regional regions and rural territory.

The problem of population decrease in rural regions is accompanying phenomenon of transforming land. Czech Republic records absolute population fall since 1994. From research results further follow that globally happens in rural municipality (municipality to the 2000 inhabitant) to growth of the number of inhabitant.

Our research results bear to that it happens to depopulation in South Bohemia, on the contrary the lasting trend is migration to the region so also the natural population growth. On this trend especially participate inhabitant immigration to the municipality in proximity bigger cities [10]. It acknowledges also Majerova [11]. South Bohemia is seen like region in which are good how ecological conditions so also conditions economically favourable to regional development [12].

In the period between 2007-2013 the Czech Republic can make use of about € 26.7 billion, which is about CZK 752.7 billion from EU funds to improve the living standard of its population[13].

For next development not only in rural of South Bohemia it is important to be able to get financial resources from European Union funds and by sufficient amount of quality projects and effectively used them. Various projects or programs financed of these funds would have had contribute by not only to economic prosperity of region but also to social.

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