

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH, THROUGH EUROPEAN PROJECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

In Romania, inclusive growth can be supported by the private sector, but it can not only stand on the shoulders of this sector, especially since the Romanian business environment is affected by factors such as: access to finance, inefficiency of government bureaucracy, tax rates, labor inadequately educated, exaggerated tax regulations, inadequate infrastructure etc.

In order to be able to have inclusive economic growth, based on technological investments, which will ensure long-term sustainability, government support is needed in particular. The government is one of the major social agents of change. However, there must be cooperation with international organizations, the business community and NGOs and, last but not least, the consistent support that European projects can provide. Only corroborated and coordinated action by these entities can support inclusive growth.

Keywords: *Inclusive Economic Growth; European Projects; Sustainable Development.*

JEL classification: *O: Economic Development, Innovation, Technological Change and Growth; E: Macroeconomics and Monetary Economics.*

Introduction

Reconfiguring a key variable of our theme, essential for the smooth running of any society, *the problem of limited resources in the context of sustainable development* or, in short, the rapid increase in demand for resources compared to diminishing their ability to obtain them, and the use of resources in an efficient way, it naturally directed our scientific analysis towards the study of community funding sources, which, accessed, can contribute and support, along with traditional funding sources, the increase of the quality of life.

In this sense, based on an extensive documentation, as well as on the professional experience, in specific activities, accumulated in the field, we considered necessary and opportune to explore the topic of our scientific approach. As such, the assumed objectives of our research are the following: *identification and operational definition of the concepts specific to our topic; presentation of the key concepts and theories applicable to the areas of interest of our research; integration of the thematic concepts exposed in a unitary and substantiated approach of the concept of sustainable development; identification and presentation of realities and trends of European project management in Romania, in terms of their relationship with the economic, social and ecological variables, information to be made available to stakeholders in public and private institutions.*

In short, by integrating, in our analysis, the phrase *project-oriented thinking*, we will capture and highlight the new style of thinking, action and communication, whose actors we are all involved: *we plan activities that, carried out according to applicable rules, will produces quantifiable results.*

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In this regard, in order to be able to explain the importance given, lately, to the *project management concept*, we will start from the idea, according to which any modern activity can be seen as a project.

These fundamental concepts of our theme are joined by the variable regarding the implementation, in a real, responsible and assumed way, of the concept of *sustainable development*, in our country, on the list of indisputable national priorities with a role in sustainable economic recovery, in optimizing living standards of the entire population and in increasing the importance given to the environmental component.

Briefly, the expected results take into account the innovative presentation of the existing interdependencies between the key concepts of our theme: European projects - sustainable development (seen through the sphere of *the trinomial economy - equity (social) - ecology (environment)* - methodological of the concepts specific to our theme, of the European and national strategic legislative framework in order to identify additional areas of action and solutions to solve problems specific to economic and social life.

Description of the Problem:

European projects - strategic resource for the sustainable development of Romania

If in English, by the term project is designated *a plan of something to be undertaken*, without mentioning the *act of fulfilling this plan*, in Romanian, according to DEX, the concept is given several meanings, of which, of interest for our topic, we consider them to be the following: *plan or intention to achieve something, to unfold, to undertake a thing; the first version of a plan (financial, economic, social, etc.) to be analyzed and approved in order to acquire official character and to be applied; technical work carried out starting from a given theme and containing the technical framework, drawings, location and justification of the need for the projected object.*

Also, illustrative for our theme, we consider to be the meanings of the project concept found in the *Oxford Dictionary* - *individual or collective action, very well planned, made to achieve a particular goal or objective - a project to build, a research project*; in the French Dictionary "*Le Petit Robert*" - *intention, drawing, sketch; preparatory writing; the plan of a construction; the image of a desirable situation at a given time or well determined; something "thrown," as a guide to action, before the self*; as well as those rendered by the *Webster Dictionary* - *plan or scheme; planned or conceived work; major enterprise (task), involving personnel, equipment, considerable expenses; specific task for investigation; additional task, drawn by teachers, long-term, students.*

A first simple definition of the project concept, formulated according to two elements characteristic of it - limited resources and the uniqueness of the result -, which we will present below, is the following: temporary effort to create, with limited resources, a product or a unique service (2000, Project Management Institute, p. 4).

Approximate in this sense are the following two definitions of the concept: a series of interdependent activities, based on a plan, in a well-defined period, to achieve a goal and achieve certain results, activities that cease when the goal is achieved assumed; a temporary work started to achieve a certain goal, involving people, performing interdependent activities, a financier and / or a beneficiary interested in capitalizing on resources, to complete, in a certain time and in an efficient manner, the project (Radu V. PASCU, 2011, p. 4).

In summary, the project can be presented as an action with limited resources (human, material, time, information and financial resources), which also involves risks, a single task, systemically planned, considered possible, achievable, a instrument of change, with precise, clear objectives and observable and measurable final results.

From the anatomy of the image of the project concept, we can detach and highlight the main characteristic elements of it, such as: the rigorous plan; specific objectives (SMART objectives)

and purpose (solving an identified, well-defined and formulated problem); limited allocated resources; unique, innovative, interdependent and planned activities in a logical succession; clear, determined, quantifiable results; dedicated team; the existence of a sponsor or financier and a beneficiary; determined, limited duration; realism, complexity, limitation, uniqueness, unrepeatability, risk and uncertainty, evaluability (Ovidiu TIȚA, Constantin OPREAN, coord., 2015, p. 7).

The second concept necessary to be operationally defined for the theme of this study is the concept of sustainable development, an approach on which we will continue our action.

As a consequence, the sustainable development of mankind, one of the current fundamental paradigms in which the future is predicted and planned as a balance between economic growth and environmental protection, is increasingly in vogue today and in Romania as a result, mainly, of the background of European and international regulations. In other words, Romanian contemporaneity, despite the difficulties encountered, must cross, in an increasingly rapid and complex dynamics, to achieve a state of balance and normalcy, but also to align with European and international trends, and equally measure, to overcome the stage of slogan or concept that "sounds very good", but which is devoid of substance, and to turn the theme of sustainable development into a real priority, really important, for the whole society. Also, the challenge of our millennium is imposed on the national and international agenda for managing an interdependence: limiting development and the idea of progress to the level strictly allowed by the recovery capacities of the environment and, implicitly, of natural resources.

Following the analysis of the etymology of the concept of sustainable development, we want to emphasize the existence, in Romanian, of two relatively similar concepts: sustainable development, respectively sustainability.

Regarding the origin of the second concept, sustainability, we specify the following aspects: derived from the Latin sub and tender which means to support or preserve, at least a few hundred years ago, the terms sustainability, sustainable and sustainable development have entered the lexicon of the English language, from where the synonymous phrases were taken over, then, after 1989, in the vocabulary of the Romanian language. Moreover, according to DEX, sustainability is the attribute of carrying out an anthropic activity without exhausting its available resources and without devastating its environment, thus without compromising the possibilities of satisfying the needs or needs of future generations.

When the concept is used in the sense of economic development of a country, a region is preferred the notion synonymous with sustainable development. We also consider another necessary clarification to the one referring to the initial use of both concepts, especially in official, technical documents and less in the common language.

Another element according to which the concept of sustainable development can be operationally defined is the evolutionary process of human attitudes towards the environment in Western cultures, which we will briefly present below.

Without exaggerating, we can say that environmental issues, in general, and the way in which man endangers the ecosystem, in particular, have been among the concerns of human society since prehistoric societies, when the first rules and taboos to use, protection and rational exploitation of certain common resources. Equally, the natural resources that sustained daily life were found in the representations, paintings, traditions and rituals of communities that lived in close communion with nature. We must not forget that the decline or even the disappearance of some crops have been attributed to natural disasters.

The classic development concept was completed with the contribution of another term, sustainable, which finalizes its content. Thus, sustainable development can be defined as "a process of maintaining well-being projected for an indefinite period in the future", a development that meets and ensures the needs of the present, without, however, jeopardizing the potential for insurance by future generations of their own needs. Moreover, in an integrated approach, sustainable development involves economic, social, ecological, political, human, spiritual and cultural development. This concept can be considered only with the obligatory observance of two conditions: firstly, for the well-being of citizens to increase progressively and safely over a long

reference period and secondly, to ensure that today's development does not endanger development opportunities for future generations. Equally, the need to identify a general term that responds to the pressure to identify a balance between economic and social progress, on the one hand, and concern for the environment and natural resources, on the other, and which can also The correspondence of two realities - the need of the economy to develop, respectively its actual possibilities for development - determined the association of the concepts of development and sustainability.

Among other definitions offered to the concept of sustainable development, which we consider relevant for completing the synoptic table of our topic, are the following:

- emphasizing some fundamental principles: sustainable development meets the five major requirements: (1) acclimatization of development and nature conservation; (2) meeting basic human needs; (3) social justice and equity; (4) opportunities for cultural diversity and social self-determination; (5) maintaining ecological integrity. (1986, International Union for the Conservation of Nature);
- maintaining and optimizing systems: Sustainability involves maintaining or optimizing the overall level of variety and productivity of the components as well as the relationships within the systems. (1988, Noorgard);
- the ability to support ecosystems - sustainable development involves optimizing the quality of human life, but taking into account the ability to support the ecosystems that support this life. (1991, World Conservation Union).

Similar to the notoriety of the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report - being the first definition found in almost all specialized works in the field - the theory of the three E specific to sustainable development was imposed. According to it, the three E's of sustainable development - economy, ecology (environment) and equity (social) - represent a set of values around which the process of change should be planned. Its author, Stephen M. Wheeler, argues that, at present, the importance and attention given in the past to the economic dimension has shifted to the ecological dimension. In the first perspective, the economic majority, the social and ecological dimensions are contained as subsets of values, and in the second perspective, ecological, sustainable development involves economic values as a subset of ecological and social values, with a wider range.

Contemporary critics of the concept of sustainable development, Susan S. Fainstein and Scott Campbell, in Readings in Planning Theory, demonstrate that the way the concept is defined today does not propose solutions for practitioners, in real conditions, because all three values are in a conflicted relationship and, very often, it is almost impossible to be pursued at the same time. That is why the authors emphasize that sustainable development, characterized as the balancing element of the three values - economy, social equity and ecology (environmental protection), is a utopia.

Conclusions:

Sustainable development in Romania - result of the implementation of European projects

First of all, a first clarification that we consider clarifying is that European funds are the main financial instrument of the European Union, meant to support the implementation of the three dimensions of sustainable development in Romania.

Secondly, another aspect that we must also highlight, in this context, is the emphasis that falls, within the projects co-financed by European funds, on the integration of sustainable development oriented mainly to the dimension of environment if we take into account that two of the three specific perspectives of sustainable development, the economic dimension, respectively the social dimension are already included, managed and implemented through the projects financed from the community budget. But, as mentioned above, the dimensions of sustainable development -

environmental issues, social and economic development - must be treated in an integrated way, as a single theme composed of mutually supportive elements for development to become sustainable.

Therefore, in order to be able to materialize the specific objectives of sustainable development, projects can include the realization of transversal actions, whose permanent purpose is the organization of the resources of a project, so that the negative effects on the environment are diminished or even eliminated.

For this, the potential beneficiary of a project, from the first stage, the definition and elaboration of the project, can identify the answers to a series of questions such as: project activities and results can create, during implementation or later, negative effects on the environment, biodiversity or on the efficient use of resources ?; can the activities and results of the project contribute to the protection of the natural environment (terrestrial, aquatic), to the protection and conservation of the habitats in the protected areas ?; can the activities and results of the project increase the responsibility and respect for the environment?

Equally, in the case of affirmative or partially affirmative responses, possible measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, measures to enhance disaster resilience and to prevent and manage risks can be identified and described.

At the same time, if the schedule of a project has activities that are intended to take place in protected natural areas, or that may have an impact on either air, water or soil quality, or that involve the production of waste or the use of hazardous substances, etc., the beneficiary must prove in advance that he has obtained and holds all the necessary legal advice and also that he complies with the applicable legislation in force. Certain projects with potential significant effects on the environment - the construction of a motorway or an airport, thus become the subject of an environmental impact assessment. In this case, in order to ensure a higher level of environmental protection, the environmental aspects are included in the application for funding and the possible consequences are taken into account before the approval of a project.

With regard to the second stage of the project, implementation, the beneficiary must ensure that, throughout it, the planned resources are used in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner, mainly through rules or guidelines behaviors of rational consumption of resources - either as a result of promoting the efficient use of resources, or as a result of increasing the use of renewable resources. It must also ensure that it minimizes the level of air, water and soil pollution in the area of the activities carried out - for example, by selective waste collection or by reducing the volume of waste, by reusing, recovering and recycling waste.

In order to conclude, we consider it opportune to present a series of techniques specific to the environmentally friendly approach, used in the project management activity: organizing for the team a training session on sustainable development and practical ways to save resources involved in implementing the project; if the financier and the project budget allow, the involvement in the team of an expert in the issue of sustainable development; elaboration and publication of materials for the presentation of the transversal activities planned for the dimension of sustainable development; implementation of resource efficiency activities (promoting the printing of double-sided documents; printing only documents strictly necessary to be printed; mitigating the negative impact of transport by using electronic means of communication - videoconferencing).

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