

THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OF EU AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

From the beginning the EU shows emphasized attention to environmental protection. A number of different programs were prepared to improve the quality of the environment.

The three fundamental environmental policy principles of EU:

- ethical principle (people's direct interest isn't the only value)
- welfare principle (the state of the environment essentially influences people's welfare)
- economic principle (the interests of the economic are stronger than the interests of the policy and environmental policy)

According to the sustainable development every principle is important, so we have to develop these three equally. Unfortunately the economy practically refuses this idea.

Effective intervention of the state needs the appropriate environmental conditions. The first step was to establish the environmental ministry, which initiated so called reactive environmental policy.

This ministry checked rigorously the enterprises and gived serious penalties to them. In our region nowadays we use this policy, but the future is the preventive environmental policy. This is based on the self-adjusting, the collaboration of the interested parties and clean production and clean consumption. The change is very difficult.

KEY WORDS: European Union, environmental protection, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Doubt was cast on the possibility that eco-efficiency would on its own create the conditions for sustainability. Some change in the dominant modes of economic development appears necessary, although the outline of this future is hazy. What is clear is that the journey is long and hard and before we start we need to accept that sustainability is not interchangeable with terms like 'environmental' or 'green'. A core insight about 'sustainability' is that environmental problems cannot be

considered in isolation from their social and economic themes if we are to find thoroughly sustainable solutions (**Fig.1**). Accepting the environment or more properly the 'ecosphere' as the context within economic and social action takes place is a useful shift in perception as it creates the notion of limits to the availability of 'natural capital'; including renewable and non-renewable resources and that which maintains the satisfactory functioning of the ecosphere including the absorption of wastes.

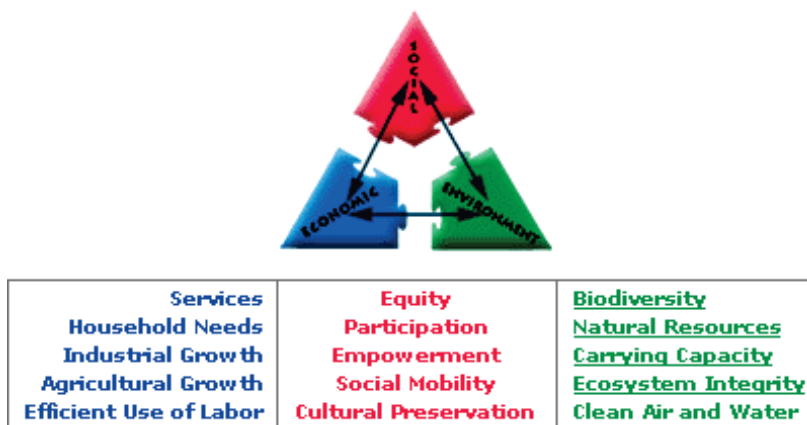


Fig.1. „People concerned about sustainable development suggest that meeting the needs of the future depends on how well we balance social, economic, and environmental objectives -- or needs -- when making decisions today. Some of these needs are itemized around the puzzle diagram”

Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/sd.html>



How to realize then sustainable development? How do we sustain an improved quality life without degrading our local, national and global environments, and at the expense of someone else's quality of life in ways, which recognize and respect that we are part of a much larger and complex global community?

There needs to be a sense of where we are going - what we see as a sustainable society. This is problematic, if different notions of the end point are present. It is then normal to use indicators to realize a set of targets and develop indicators that measure progress towards those targets. The real power of indicators is not just charting progress but in helping crystallize the vision and to decide resource allocation and prioritization during the process of realization (F. Kiss, 2000.).

INDICATORS

The GDP as an indicator of welfare has been and still is used to give a league table of nations and its percentage change from year to year is used as a measure of economic growth (or when in the negative-depression) in the popular media and in financial circles. But people may not know that all the following are included in GDP:

- spending on arms
- cleaning up pollution
- the cost of road accidents etc.
- health costs – including stress and industrial illnesses
- crime and policing
- paid home helps if parents go out to work

It can be argued that GDP is a very misleading figure as it adds up everything including „goods” as well as „bads” and declares that if a positive percentage change is recorded then this is progress. Note that even the words used: growth is an „up” word with positive connotations and depression a „down” word with negative connotations. Who would want a depression? – and, conversely everyone seems pleased with „growth”. And of course progress. To achieve goals, more complex indicators should be used to measure real progress.

For example 13 of indicators developed by local government groups in the EU:

1. Resources are used efficiently and waste is minimized by closing cycles.
Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle are the priorities in order of importance.
2. Pollution is limited to levels which do not damage natural systems, including human health. There is a move towards zero emissions in some industries and a concept known as Extended Producer Responsibility which puts ever more emphasis on firms to act from cradle to cradle in respect of materials and the products they use. Spread of EU or global standards of operation.

3. People's good health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments and health services which emphasize prevention of illness as well as proper care for the sick. Policies can include better environmental monitoring, right down to improved education and self help. Regulation of industry includes ever better health and safety codes.
4. The diversity of nature is valued and protected. Policies which specify how farmland, marshland and mountain land is to be managed. Adequate reserves and respect for scientific opinion on wildlife. Education for individuals on respect for Nature. Discouragement of exotic pets or „wild animal” medicines e.g. tiger bone.
5. Where possible, local needs are met locally. Promotion of local products at an European trade fair. This action would lead to more local products being used. Action that would increase people's local products being used. Action that would increase people's local determination to make things themselves. Local government brings in „buy local” policy for schools.
6. Everyone has access to good quality food, water shelter and fuel at reasonable cost. The local government is giving/selling little parts of land to everybody – at a low cost – if they want to grow their own vegetables and the same time starts tax on energy to discourage long distance food movements. This encourages people to buy locally, perhaps organically grown food.
7. These action help the local society and economy and the same time reduce air and land contamination, thus could be classed as potentially more „environmentally friendly”.
8. Everyone has the opportunity to undertake satisfying work in a diverse economy. The value of unpaid work is recognized, whilst payments for work are fair and fairly distributed. Retired people give assistance in schools. Training of local unemployed people targeted at those skills that required for developing environmental friendly technologies. These action support local society and help economy to redirecting technologies and finally improving environmental quality.
9. Access to facilities, services, goods and other people is not achieved at the expense of the environment or limited to those with cars. Good quality local facilities like new Internet learning centre, made available. Move information not people. Reorientation towards local structures. Tax policies reflecting the true cost of car transport while not preventing trade. Use market policies encourage people to walk, to cycle or to use public transport – tax

- breaks for cyclists? Charge for car parking a workplaces?
10. People live without fear of personal violence from crime or persecution because of their personal beliefs, race, gender or sexuality. Residents work with council staff and police to identify unsafe areas and come up with ways of redesigning them, like planting of thorny plants outside low-level windows, or better lighting. Community policing and education.
 11. Everyone has access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable them to play a full part in society. A Learning Centre provides a forum for residents to discuss sustainability issues (among other) and serves as a catalyst for economic redevelopment through increase in autonomous learning – includes Internet access. Stimulate the interest of citizens in sustainable development and self help action.
 12. All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making processes. More power is been giving to lowest level of decision making – subsidiary Public discussions and local decision-making about environment and development made commonplace. Discussions lead to a public-private partnership to protect environment.
 13. Opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation which are not achieved at the expense of the environment are readily available to all. Open more local areas to public access. Celebration of the local culture, local products by recall or develop local carnivals. Encourage citizens to live and work in the local area: this means less travel and less pollution and this activity helps local small business.
 14. Places, spaces and objects combine meaning and beauty with utility. Settlements are „human” in scale and form. Diversity and local distinctiveness are valued and protected. Awareness raising, local research and local participation in the conservation of the historical environment. Encourage groups involved in environmental issues to become aware of the historic environment.

WILL THE EUROPEAN UNION BE CLEANER?

„Or will we continue to suffer from worsening pollution of our air, water and soil, from the continuing loss of forests and meadows, and from more and more diseases which may derive from our increasingly urban, industrial lifestyles?” (The European Union and the Environment, 1997, p. 5)

„Considering ways of improving work, while also upgrading periods of non-employment, creating

opportunities for conviviality in a society reconciled with itself, preserving our way of life while allowing the emergence of new needs which will improve the quality of life and social and interpersonal relations xx new needs which, moreover, will require the creation of many new jobs: these are some of the lines along which a new model of development for our European society could be evolved.” (Jacques Delors, European Labour Forum, 18, 1996-7, p. 15.)

Europe is at a crossroads. Persistent problems of economic stagnation, social exclusion, and environmental degradation suggest that European society is not developing sustainably. At the same time, changes associated with monetary union, enlargement, and the election of social democratic governments in the majority of member states, may offer opportunities for it to follow a more sustainable path (J. Huckle, 2000).

Europe is at a crossroads and as we come uncertainly towards the 21st century and reflect on the impact of modernity and its decline a number of trends become evident. At the same time, representative democracy has spread and the enlargement of the EU, monetary union and European standards in work, social policy and environmental protection promise to create a more integrated Europe than ever before. In environmental terms the experiments in modernity have inflated the waste producing economies of Europe to within a fraction and perhaps beyond the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems and, in many cases increased, year on year the inequalities within and between peoples (K. Webster, 2000).

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY PRINCIPLES OF THE EU

The EU always followed with attention the environmental questions and worked up many programmes to solve the environmental situation. The three fundamental environmental policy principles of the EU:

1. Ethical principle: the people’s direct interest the only value. Earlier the rules refused to recognize, the nature is an independent subject. They protected that only from people’s interest, but now all the natural environment are protected by independent rules.
2. Welfare principle: the state of the environment essentially influences people’s welfare and health now and in the future as well.
3. Economic principle: the interest of the economy usually stronger than the interest of the policy and environmental policy. Unfortunately this causes serious conflicts.

Because of these conflicts the EU had to revise the Sustainable Development Strategy. The newly entered countries begin to deal with such questions only now.



Unfortunately the economy and so the policy as well use the or/or principle. The sustainable development uses the and/also idea, in this way everything can develop together and this is the real future.

REACTIVE AND PREVENTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Earlier the EU established environmental ministry as the tool of the state intervention. The attention of people and the enterprises was directed to the protection of the environment and in this way the ministry became accepted. At the same time more problems and contradictions occurred. The independent ministry was separated from their natural medium. We should have to have it in the economic section, not separated. The environmental ministry in this first form is unable to solve all the problems. This, so called, reactive environmental policy checks rigorously the enterprises and gives serious penalties to them. The enterprises uses

'end of pipe' techniques to decrease the emission, and at the same time the environmental industry was well developed. In our region now we use this policy.

Nowadays in the EU, in the developed countries, spreads the preventive environmental policy. In this case the ministry coordinates and integrates. There are more and more self-adjusting techniques (EMAS, ISO 14001) and the collaboration of the interested parties. Instead of the 'end of pipe' technique, the preventive environmental policy aids the clean production and consumption. Of course in this way the penalties and taxes will decrease, so we have to transform the present system to this form. It will be very difficult and the results will come later, but it will be long-lasting. No doubt the future is the preventive environmental policy, so in our region we have to try to introduce this system (M. Csutora, 2007).

The table shows the most important characteristics of the mentioned two methods above:

Characteristic	Reactive environmental policy	Preventive environmental policy
Environmental direction	Environmental ministry with department character	Environmental ministry with integrating and coordinating character
Resources of the regulation	Instruct, control, penalty, product fee	Environment friendly tax system, spontaneous, agreements, knowledge forming programs
Typical activity of the environmental bureaucracy	Control, penalty, avert of damage	Planning, collaboration in solving of problems, advising
Technical solutions	End of pipe technologies	Clean production and consumption
Sponsor	Budget, separated funds	Business sphere, self-governments, foundations
Period	Results in a short time, apparent results	Results in a long time, lasting results
Participants	Exclusive, green organizations	Spreading, civil organizations
Environmental sector	Well developed environmental industry and advisory network	Clean production advisers, information systems, educational programs

CONCLUSIONS

- In the EU the preventive environmental policy expansions step by step,
- In the future we have to follow this,
- It will be very difficult, because we need to transform the present institute system,
- We need to transform our environmental consciousness as well.

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