

RURAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT - A STRATEGIC APPROACH IN POLISH CONDITIONS

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Abstract

Rural and regional policies towards rural areas have been a subject of evaluation and discussions of results. As a consequence some changes have been taken place, even in fundamental assumptions, which determine strategic decisions in the field of public support for rural development. The aim of the paper is to identify similarities and differences in a strategic approach of rural and regional policies towards rural development in Poland basing on a document analysis of the National Strategy of Regional Development 2010-2020: Regions, Cities, Rural Areas and the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012-2020. Results of investigations display that both documents setting up strategic objectives for rural development in Poland have a lot in common with new paradigms of rural and regional policies described in OECD works. Both strategies tend towards multifunctional approach enhancing competitiveness of rural areas and assuming engagement of stakeholders of different levels. At this point it is not possible to assess to what extent instruments of the two discussed policies will close to the new approach. It results from a situation when construction of implementation mechanisms is highly influenced by solutions introduced by European cohesion and agricultural policies.

Keywords: agricultural policy, regional policy, rural development, strategy, Poland

1. Introduction

After the accession to the European Union rural development in Poland has been addressed especially by two policies: rural development policy (as the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy) and regional policy (which programmed at the European level is conducted as cohesion policy). Both of these policies have been undergoing transformations since the beginning of the Polish participation in their programming and implementation. There have been different sources of changes. Some of them have been results of evaluations performed at different levels, for instance European, national, regional or have been consequences of evaluations from a perspective of particular sectors (conclusions from agricultural policy implementation are one of the most important in this case). Deliberations on a shape of both regional and agricultural policies have been leading even to fundamental changes in strategic approaches of these policies.

The European perspective is not the only one important for development of strategies towards rural areas in Poland. The National Strategy of Regional Development 2010-2020: Regions, Cities, Rural Areas (NSRD) elaborated in the Ministry of Regional Development as well as the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012-2020 elaborated in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are parts of the new national development management system. The foundation of this system is required by the amended law of 6 December 2006 on the principles of development policy (Polish Journal of Laws of 2009 No 84, item 712, as amended) and by the document on Poland's Development Management System, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 27 April 2009. This holistic approach to the national development management system was established in order to organize the Polish development policy. The two

above mentioned strategies with the most territorial significance for rural areas are parts of a group of nine integrated strategies accompanied by the Long-Term National Development Strategy and Medium-Term National Development Strategy.

At least these two dimensions, European and national, have influenced setting up strategic objectives of policy towards rural areas in Poland. When one type of territory, in that case rural areas, are addressed by two policies coordinated by two different institutions it seems to be fundamental to identify similarities and differences at least in a strategic approaches of these policies.

2. Material and methods

The aim of the paper is to identify similarities and differences in a strategic approach of rural and regional policies towards rural development in Poland. There were used the following sources of information in the research:

- publications in the area of rural development by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
- basic strategies for rural development in Poland till 2020: the National Strategy of Regional Development 2010-2020: Regions, Cities, Rural Areas (NSRD) elaborated in the Ministry of Regional Development and the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012-2020 elaborated in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

To investigate similarities and differences in a strategic approach of rural and regional policies towards rural development document analysis was performed.

3. Paradigms of regional and rural policies

Wide discussions on fundamentals of both regional and rural policies have been taking place on a forum of countries gathered in the OECD. The results of analyses accompanying exchange of different points of view were presented in many publications. In the case of rural policy it is stressed that its challenge is to transform policy frameworks for rural regions, which have hitherto emphasized sectoral approaches, into policies and programs adapted to different economic development trajectories (OECD, 2006). It was expressed in so called the new rural paradigm. Evaluations and discussions on foundations of regional policy also have resulted in formulation of its new paradigm. A comparison of these two new approaches is presented in the table 1.

Table 1. The new rural and regional paradigms

Specification	New rural paradigm	New regional paradigm
Objectives	Competitiveness of rural areas, valorisation of local assets, exploitation of unused resources	Tapping under-utilised potential for enhancing regional competitiveness
Key target sector	Various sectors of rural economies (ex. rural tourism, manufacturing, ICT industry, etc.)	Integrated development projects
Main tool	Investments	Mix of soft and hard capital investment
Key actors	All levels of government (supranational, national, regional and local), various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs)	Different levels of government; private sector and civil society

Source: own elaboration on: The new rural paradigm: policies and governance. OECD Rural policy reviews. OECD Publishing, 2006, p. 15; OECD Territorial Reviews. Sweden. OECD Publishing 2010, p. 90.

Both policies seem to head in the same directions. They stress competitiveness of whole territories in spite of equalisation and farm income (rural policy) and compensating temporarily for locational disadvantages (regional policy). They have switched from the sectoral to comprehensive approach with use of integrated instruments. Also both new rural and agricultural paradigm assume engagement of different actors (stakeholders) in programming and implementation in spite of the old centralised approach. This theoretical analysis of similarities would suggest that in fact these two policies should have much in common. However, a question always stays about a real process of programming and realization.

4. Strategies for rural development in Poland till 2020

The National Strategy of Regional Development 2010-2020: Regions, Cities, Rural Areas directly refers to the paradigm of regional policy described primarily by the OECD. It assumes support for rural areas especially within the following objectives:

- 1) Support for the growth of competitiveness of regions (“competitiveness”) for instance through increasing employment opportunities through increased professional and spatial mobility:
 - ensuring effective transport infrastructure and improving public transport,
 - support for the development of powiat towns and other towns,
 - creating institutional conditions for increasing non-agricultural investments,
 - stimulating the local development.
- 2) Building territorial cohesion and preventing the marginalization of problem areas (“cohesion”):
 - support to rural areas with the lowest level of inhabitants access to the goods and services following from the development possibilities (education and training services, medical services, communication services, municipal and environmental protection services, cultural services),
 - overcoming the difficulties related to the situation of the border areas, especially along the external EU borders,
 - increasing transport accessibility to voivodeship centres situated within the areas with the lowest accessibility.

Five objectives of the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012-2020 cover a wide range of topics:

- 1) Increase of the quality of human and social potential, employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas;
- 2) Improvement of life standard on rural areas and improvement of their spatial accessibility;
- 3) Food security;
- 4) Increase of productivity and competitiveness of agri-food sector;
- 5) Environmental protection and adaptation to climatic changes in rural areas.

It proves that policy makers thought here not only about agriculture as a traditional sector of operations on rural areas but they could see also non-agricultural role of these territories. However, taking into account the field of activities of the institution responsible for this Strategy it could appear that the sectoral agricultural dimension is strong there. A process of programming in the case of this strategy involved external experts as well as actors of different levels (regional and local authorities, representatives of Local Action Groups, etc.). Mechanisms of the Strategy’s coordination assume a close cooperation with entities responsible for realization of regional and local development strategies. Taking into consideration the above mentioned facts referring to the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012-2020, it could be concluded that it is also close to the new rural paradigm described by OECD.

5. European dimensions of the Polish strategic approach to rural areas

Taking into account that a considerable part of financial resources supporting rural areas comes from the European Union, it is reasonable to construct such strategies which are consistent with the EU approach to development policy in case of rural areas. Two analysed documents refer to this fact directly.

The NSRD is binding until 2020. This time horizon assumes gradual implementation of many proposed instruments of institutional and legal character and it should simultaneously ensure their application in the programming of activities co-financed within the framework of the next European Union financial perspective covering the 2014–2020 period.

Five objectives of the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012–2020 were defined with reference to the European Strategy “Europe 2020”. It is clearly stated that the Strategy’s budget is going to be financed in nearly 48% from the EU funds, and thus the accessibility and allocation of measures from cohesion policy and Common Agricultural Policy shall have a big impact on the level of achievement of the Strategy’s objectives.

The relations between rural and regional policies are also strengthened at the EU level, for example by proposal of the regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. Without detailed knowledge about specific solutions proposed there and in proposals concerning particular funds it is difficult to assess their impact on strategic planning of rural development in Poland. However, it seems that for example specially designed tools, like community-led local development or integrated territorial investments, will influence on implementation of objectives of both considered strategies.

6. Conclusions

Results of document analysis performed for the National Strategy of Regional Development 2010–2020: Regions, Cities, Rural Areas (NSRD) and the Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas, agriculture and fisheries 2012–2020 indicate that there is a general common strategic approach for rural development. Objectives set in both strategies, processes of their elaboration as well as coordination mechanisms seem to be coherent with new approaches to rural and regional development postulated in OECD works. However, it is not obvious if the implementation of the strategies allow to lead this way in reality. It is not possible to assess to what extent instruments of the two discussed policies will close to the new approach because they are still a subject of works for detailed solutions at the European level in agricultural and cohesion policy.

7. References

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