

QUALITY PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract: : Regional issues, by their nature and content, vary widely from one country to another, being the result of specific conditions and factors that characterize each state. As a result, their resolution, in addition to common elements, has many features, both in terms of regional policy objectives, organizational means and spatial structure, zoning and / or regionalization of territory, to create the framework necessary to materialize and implement these objectives .

Regional development policy is one of the most important policies of the European Union. At the same time, this socio-economic cohesion policy is one of the most complex in the whole spectrum of Community policies as it interacts with a number of sectoral areas such as agriculture, transport, economic development, environmental protection, employment and vocational training , equal opportunities and gender Thus, regional development policy is indispensable for the achievement of the Union's constitution and activity objectives.

Cohesion policy (Dragan G., 2003) includes both regional policy (geared to reducing territorial disparities, regenerating declining industrial areas, providing rural development assistance), social policy issues (such as combating long-term unemployment and supporting the process education and lifelong learning) as well as a part of the common agricultural policy (rural development assistance).

Article 174 (ex Article 158 TEC) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (consolidated version) refers to the harmonious development of the whole of the Union, which is achieved through its actions designed to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion, in particular, to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of disadvantaged regions, including rural areas.

JEL classification: R11, O18

Key words: Regional development policy; Cohesion policy; territorial disparities; territorial cohesion; economic development

1. INTRODUCTION

The region, viewed from the administrative perspective, also taking into account the functional-pragmatic side, aims to make the administrative activity more efficient, aiming to provide public services to all citizens of a national community, which in some episodes of government is omitted by neglecting the local interest in the face of national interest. At the same time, we consider that the decentralization of the administrative system is not a weakening of the power of the state or the power of the government, but it is an integrating principle harmonizing the national interest with the local one, a phenomenon that has the goal of integrating all the citizens of a state supporting the interests and needs of all groups and individuals that constitute a national society (Bennett, 1990).

Each European state has chosen its regional governance level in relation to its own development needs or relative to the size of the territory and the population. On the part of the European institutions, there is no limitation on the assumption of any regional government level, such as the existing public administration system in a particular state. Governance at regional level exists in the older Member States of the European Union and has been formed in response to the need to increase the efficiency of the administrative act, amid the increasing complexity of administrative burdens and the multiplication of public service demands manifested by the citizens of these countries.

At the same time, we appreciate that the emergence of the regional level of governance within the European States is also justified as a result of the so-called failure of the "welfare state" that provides free public services only on the basis of citizenship, while at regional level the reformulation of certain policies public in relation to local specific interests.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of regional development policy is to help reduce the existing economic and social disparities in the various regions of the European continent. That is why this policy is now called the economic and social cohesion policy. At the same time, the territorial reference framework does not refer only to the Community territorial area, but to the entire European continent. Through various actions and instruments, regional development policy supports cross-border cooperation between Member States and non-EU members, between neighboring regions of Member States and non-EU members. These actions are not just a series of activities that highlight the regions that meet the convergence criteria, but also actions that contribute to the balanced development of all regions. Within this article, we presented the various regional development modalities and quality practices through which some regions in Europe met the convergence criteria.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper is part of a scientific approach that aims to be positivist, but it is not lacking in interpretative and critical approaches to explain the different concepts of Regional development policy, but also the presentation of how international regulations are transposed into national law. Considering the achievement of the research objectives, our scientific approach is generally based on a deductive approach, from general to individual.

4. ANALYSES

Organizing by the implementation of the regionalization carried out in contemporary European states does not aim to dismantle the central government, but only a reorganization of the state institutions, which is based on the adoption of modern principles regarding the administrative organization, such as decentralization and subsidiarity.

The literature suggests that this level of government is the result of the decentralization process that started in Europe after the 1970s, and that the organization of regional governments is a component of local government rather than a component of the central government.

In addition to this decentralization process, four phenomena have also emerged that have boosted the emergence of regions (Mayhew, 1998). The first phenomenon is caused by regional imbalances, which are one of the most important problems that contemporary administrations must build, imbalances present within states as well as between states that constitute the European Union. The second phenomenon consists of ethno-cultural alienations in which a number of local communities appreciate some dependencies from other communities as unjustifiable, or disapprove the fact that they are not allowed to manage their own needs.

The third phenomenon is generated by the centralism of European politics, through which many decisions are taken, regardless of the field, only at the central level. The last phenomenon that is manifested more and more strongly is determined by the "socialization" of European politics, which shows the increasing importance of administrative action in most sectors of social and even individual life (Ghiolţan, 2008).

The administrative policy pursued in each EU country is an essential factor in the unitary practice of the European Union administrative process, and the wide diversity of the staged structures is one of the aspects that characterize the European public administration. Each of the Member States is characterized by a single structure, but in the majority we can select common structural elements.

Within the European Union, Member States have one, two or three administrative levels under central government. There are several administrative levels in most Member States, most often in the form of municipalities or communes. Regarding the administrative levels between the central level and the local level, we can divide a regional government level that has some legislative powers in some states, a level of provincial government (as a department, a county) and a level of inter-municipal government.

In the EU we meet federal or quasi-federal states, we meet decentralized unitary states and also unitary states. Within the federal states of the European Union we can include Belgium, Germany and Austria. Belgium and Austria co-exist with the legislation promulgated by regions, communities and provinces, with the legislation promulgated by the federal government, without the former being considered secondary legislation. In Germany, however, there is a hierarchy between the legislation proposed by the land and the federal legislation. Spain, in its turn, can be considered as a quasi-federal state, even if it is a unitary state according to its own constitution. Spain recognizes and assures the right to self-government for the nationalities and regions that make up the kingdom. In reality, autonomous communities benefit from a high degree of independence. In case of inconsistency between the laws of the state and the laws of local communities, however, the former prevail over the local ones.

We can appreciate the Italian state as a difficult one to place in the classification of the static structures. Italy is neither a federal state nor a decentralized state. Being formed of five regions with a defined status, and as a result of the creation of 15 special regions in 1970, regions that benefit from a statute contained in a separate, constitutional law, the Italian state is separate. Thus, the legislative power of the "ordinary" regions is quite limited and subject to rigorous control by the Government.

Within the European Union we also have decentralized unitary states such as France, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. Thus, France presents four administrative levels to the central government, with regions, departments and communes, while the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden have three administrative levels, and Finland only two levels. At the same time, Denmark and Sweden are characterized by the existence of two community systems that represent the interim administrative system and the municipalities. Within these two states, the councils have tasks in the public health sector. On the other hand, in Finland, municipalities are in the second administrative level, but also the most important. Several types of inter-municipal cooperation have in fact achieved an intermediate (but not government) administrative level in the central government and local government.

The unitary European countries are Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal. Within these states, the central government is the highest level of government. In countries like Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal, we have only two levels of government, and in Portugal, attempts to establish administrative regions with executive powers have not met the people's agreement in a referendum on the subject. In Greece, three administrative levels coexist, and since 1994 prefectures have been reorganized as "autonomous prefectural governments" respecting the principle of democracy.

The United Kingdom is different, and for a long time it has been a unitary state where all legislative powers are cantoned at Westminster. The delegation of responsibilities to Wales and Scotland has led to the creation of a Welsh Assembly and a Scottish Parliament with legislative powers. This phenomenon, coupled with the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Executive Committee of Ministers, has changed the unity of the United Kingdom of Great Britain (Lazar I, 2005).

In the past decades and the Central and Eastern European countries have perfected their legislative framework on regional development policy through the establishment of institutions and the use of instruments designed to ensure both the implementation of national policies in the field and the follow-up of the co-financing process through the Structural Funds .

Thus, we can talk about a NUTS II or NUTS III level of decision-making bodies in the field of regional policy, intervention instruments (in the form of regional development agencies - RDA); as well as priority areas for intervention, depending on the existing difficulties or their chances of development. These regional priorities are closely linked to the strategy of focusing interventions under the PHARE program, while also involving the concentration of national resources needed for co-financing (for example, in Poland, between 2001-2002, 207 million euro from national resources were allocated for five priority regions under the Phare Program - Economic and Social Cohesion).

In Poland, in some regions of the Czech Republic, as well as in the Bratislava region of Slovakia, these tasks are exercised directly by the competent regional

authorities, but there are also regional development agencies. In Slovenia and in the three Baltic countries, regional policy is centralized: the NUTS II level corresponds to the entire national territory.

The size of the state, as well as the demographic concentration that characterizes the Baltic states, justifies this option. In contrast, in Slovenia, where the distribution of population in the territory is more balanced, regionalization of regional policy is a topical measure.

In recent years, the role played by regional and local development has demonstrated the importance of an adequate institutional and decision-making framework to ensure effective governance at the level of the European Union and the Member States, reflecting the interests of the various players involved in the development management process regional and local levels.

Also, the economic and social differentiation recorded in recent decades reveals serious deficiencies in the capacity of the central state administration to solve the problems that have arisen. In this context, the question arises about the need for more decentralized decision-making, based on direct negotiations. Will they get better results?

In this transition from the traditional approach of territorial governance to decentralized government, three major elements are to be retained:

- expanding the scope of actors and organizational forms involved in formulating and implementing new policies;
- Increasing complexity of systems of relations between regional and local development policies;
- Restrict or change the role of governmental actors as the opportunities and spaces of informal involvement are multiplied (Ştefan M.C., 2009).

In the European sense, the regional level is "an administrative level that has its place in the administrative hierarchy of the Member States at a position immediately below the central level."

When talking about regional governance initiatives, we can refer to concepts such as "institutional capacity" (Healy, 1998) or "organizing capacity" (L. Van den Berg, 1997). These initiatives seek to create new links, reconfigure the policies underlying sectoral programs, and / or redefine relations between the state, local authorities, the economic sphere, and civil society.

According to Van den Berg, a region's "organizational capacity" can be defined as involving actors in the collective development of new ideas and policies that support the sustainable development of regions.

The organization capacity of a region involves seven "layers":

1. The structure of the formal institutional framework and the role of the various public actors;
2. Existing strategic relationships between public actors, between public and private actors, or between private actors as a means of addressing the region's problems;
3. Leadership of key people and / or organizations to use potential resources and coordinate efforts by stakeholders;
4. The spatial and economic context that facilitates links between actors can therefore be an important source of motivation for collaboration (however, the opposite may be the case);

5. The source of the strategies and the concrete objectives is represented by the vision of the actors involved in regional development;

6. Political and financial support, provided for the achievement of local cooperation, producing positive results;

7. Support by civil society, in particular to those directly involved or interested, of the population living in the region and the economic markets.

It remains to be seen how all these elements will be combined, but it is obvious that there is no single model applicable to any situation.

Most coordination or cooperation systems depend on the specific context. Thus, there are:

- political and administrative structures operating at national level (in centralized states such as France, Great Britain, Ireland or in federal states such as Germany, where there is strong local autonomy);

- distinct territorial structures (monocentric or polycentric metropolitan regions, such as the Rhin-Ruhr region);

- Specific networks of their actors and powers, the interests involved and the potential for compromise in given circumstances.

As we shall see below, the institutional framework is not equally developed in all countries; there are differences in respecting the obligation to engage in partnerships, and the definition of powers exercised is not always well-defined. The comparison of institutional arrangements of regional policies reveals a good correlation with the application of regional development forms in these former communist bloc states. Countries with a centralized policy are those characterized by regional administrative development, being the most numerous, even if they are small states. Countries characterized by development through local communities are those whose regional policy focuses on local communities. In the states that have opted for regional decentralization, the new regions exercise well-defined competences in regional policy.

5. CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that each EU Member State has implemented regional development policy in line with its historical evolution, in relation to the quality of political and responsible politicians, etc., as well as the way they used the planning and programming tools, to raise the standard of living in that region or across the country. In this context, we have selected some examples that show us that through work and involvement the requirements of the financiers can be fulfilled and the necessary resources can be obtained so that each applicant can implement his idea.

In conclusion, the regional development policy contributes to the harmonious evolution of the European Union. Instead, in order to benefit from the benefits of sustainable development at Community level, each region, from over 274 regions in the EU, must implement all available tools at its level of competence and facilitate the exchange of experience. Therefore, regional development policy is an indispensable tool in the process of European political, economic and social unification.

In connection with this last aspect, the structure of the land either by regionalization of the whole territory or by the determination of so-called "intervention areas", as well as the highlighting of the interdependencies that exist between this action and the objectives of the regional policy, we realized a brief incursion into the

experience of several European countries. It should be noted that some examples from these countries can also be used in Romania.

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