

CONTRIBUTIONS REGARDING RURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN URLAȚI AREA THROUGH ELABORATION LOCAL AGENDA 21

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Abstract

The subject of this paper is presentation of the role played, some of the local collectivities involved themselves into the elaboration and application of a participative measure, aiming at elaborating an ample program of sustainable development, compared to the Local Agenda 21.

Key words: sustainable rural development, local agenda 21, environmental protection, environmental and rural space, local stakeholders group.

INTRODUCTION

A sustainable community uses its own resources to provide for the needs of the current generation, while at the same time securing the necessary resources for future generations. It pulls together its capacities to ensure healthcare services of high standards, a high standard of life for all residents through good waste management, preventing pollution, maximising environmental protection and through developing local resources and using them efficiently for the revitalisation of the local economy [6].

Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development [7].

In this context, through the implementation of the Local Agenda 21 Program, we express our intention to transform the Urlați area into a

sustainable community, one that pulls together all its resources for the improved standard of living of its population.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The local economical development represents the process by which different actors of the public sector, the business environment and non-governmental sector collaborate in order to create better work conditions for the economical growth and to generate new work places, finally aiming to improve the life quality of the entire local community [1].

The concept of local development might be defined as an economical intervention strategy by which the local representatives of the private, public or social sector cooperate to value the human, technical and financial resources, of a collectivity, being associates in the frame of sectoral or intersectoral structures of activity, private or public, having as main objective to create new work places [1].

The local economical development represents a participative process, where the community's members of all sectors cooperate stimulate the local activity, therefore getting the economical sustainable development of the locality. At the same time, it does represent a mean of assistance in order to create new work places

and to increase the standard of living for all the community's members [3].

The chapter 28 of Agenda 21 – local collectivities initiatives – proves that, for elaborating Local Agenda 21, is necessary that all the local collectivities to perform a constant dialogue with the citizens, the local bodies, private business medium, before carrying a program included in Agenda 21 at community's level. Therefore, the local authorities, by the permanent contact with citizens and local, civic, community, trade and industrial associations, get the necessary data to set the most appropriate strategies for a sustainable development [2].

Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a UN initiative first adopted at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as a vehicle for promoting sustainable development at local levels. Ten years later, in Johannesburg in 2002, the second global summit promoted LA21 as the principal instrument to use in achieving the well-being of the world's population. Aimed at local administration, LA21 promotes, through public participation, a real balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection.

The concept of sustainable development calls for a constant re-evaluation of the relationship between man and nature, and solidarity between generations, as the only viable option for long-term development.

The most useful tool to achieve an efficient local economical development is represented by the elaboration of a Local Agenda 21. This document with multi-sectoral and participative feature follows the practical achievement of Agenda 21's goals, customized for each local authority, as a training mean to apply a long term strategic plan of action, approaching sustainable development necessities and priorities [2].

The Local Agenda 21 concept was formulated and launched by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 1991 as a framework for local governments worldwide to engage in implementing the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)1. ICLEI, along with partner national and international local government associations and

organizations (LGOs), championed the Local Agenda 21 concept during the 1991-1992 UNCED preparatory process.

These efforts led to the integration of the Local Agenda 21 concept in the main outcome of UNCED, Agenda 21.

Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt "a local Agenda 21". Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues. Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted. Strategies could also be used in supporting proposals for local, national, regional and international funding [7].

One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making. Furthermore, in the more specific context of environment and development, the need for new forms of participation has emerged. This includes the need of individuals, groups and organizations to participate in environmental impact assessment procedures and to know about and participate in decisions, particularly those which potentially affect the communities in which they live and work. Individuals, groups and organizations should have access to information relevant to environment and development held by national authorities, including information on products and activities that have or are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, and information on environmental protection measures [8].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Romania, the general issues which have to be customized for each local collectivity, are included into the National Plan of Rural Development (4) materialized on four axes: Axis 1 – the increase of competitive feature of

the agricultural and forestry sectors; Axis 2 – the environmental and rural space improvement;

Axis 3 – life quality in rural areas and diversification of rural economy;

Axis 4 – LEADER, supporting the achievement of the Strategic National Program in the rural space [1].

The main issues comprised by those national documents which have to be approached on the sustainable development programs are:

- **the approach and the abatement of the structural drawbacks** of the agricultural and forestry sector, in scope of modernizing, strengthening and restructuring, allowing the reaching of a high level of competitiveness and sustainability from the environmental perspective. This would offer a powerful life conservation mechanism in the rural space, enlarging the area of viable work places both for farms and for other structures outside of it, contributing to reaching the venues convergence objective, at the same time keeping the social texture;

- **the improvement of the equilibrium between the rural areas development and sustainable use of the natural resources**, by maintaining and increasing the activities in the rural areas – as basic elements into the diversification of exploitations and identification of some alternative economical activities;

- **paying a special attention to the issues of two large categories of population from the rural areas:** the population over the age of pensioning and the active population, partly employed or unemployed [3].

The practical expertise proves that could be identified an universal set of five elements and factors, which provides the success in elaborating the Local Agenda 21:

- Multi-sectoral engagement in the planning process through a local stakeholders group which serves as the coordination and policy body for preparing a long-term sustainable development action plan.
- Consultation with community groups, NGOs, business, churches, government agencies, professional groups and unions in order to create a shared vision

and to identify proposals and priorities for actions.

- Participatory assessment of local social, economic and environmental conditions and needs.
- Participatory target-setting through negotiations among key stakeholders in order to achieve the vision and goals set forth in the action plan.
- Monitoring and reporting procedures, including local indicators, to track progress and to allow participants to hold each other accountable to the action plan [5].

More practical, the assessment process of Agenda 21 contains six stages:

- I- the knowledge of the overall frame specific to local collectivities;
- II- project's launching;
- III- setting the diagnosis;
- IV- identification of the problems and the causes occurring them, setting the objectives;
- V- project's adoption;
- VI- follow-up and appraisal of the achievements.

The elaboration of Local Agenda 21 represents a long term process, developed on 3-4 years, having as main stages the diagnosis, the setting and the elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Most important directions for the implementation of sustainable development in area of study: city infrastructure and public services, education and culture infrastructure and information technology, environmental and natural resource protection, inter-community cooperation, partnerships with civil society and with economic entities.

2. General objectives for Local Agenda 21: environmental protection, economic development, urban regeneration, social protection.

3. Trend towards agriculture which has profitable and highly performing private mechanisms;

4. Establishment of family farms, formed through the acquisition of agricultural areas;

5. Development of small and medium enterprises which process agricultural products;
6. Development of the business environment for agricultural agents.

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