



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING IN THE BASE OF BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose set in this report is to clarify the connections and the interdependences between the regional development and the spatial planning and on this basis to point out the opportunities for business development, by providing a balanced regional and territorial development of the national territory.

Results: The basic principles of the regional development and the spatial planning are determined, the opportunities for business development on the base of a balanced socioeconomic and spatial development of the country are pointed out.

Key words: socio-economic development, spatial planning, business

The socio-economic conditions of population depend on the territory they inhabit, as well as on a complex of natural-and-geographical, demographic and social factors that are active on this territory. The socio-economic development is preconditioned also by the correct planning and regulation of human activities, as well as by the effectively created living environment together with its subsystems – inhabitation, labor and relaxation and technical infrastructure.

The concept and goal of the author of this paper is to study the interdependence between regional development and spatial planning in view of revealing their potential as a favorable spatial and resource background for business.

Regional development is defined as “...a process in which the natural and physical environment, the economic, social and cultural resources of a region are “harnessed” to develop society in ways that reveal the competitive advantage offered by the innate and specific geographic characteristics of the region” (1).

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Some authors understand regional development as “a process of providing the necessary conditions and resources for positive changes in the economic and social reality on a limited territory, as a consequence of new technological decisions and more employment, aimed at increasing the consumption of goods and services, social insurance and civil security” (2).

In other authors’ view regional development is: “a complex process, based on the use of local potential and oriented at overcoming regional disproportions in the national economy and EU, with the objective to enhance economic growth and achieve balanced, integrated and sustainable development aimed at increasing the standard of living (the quality of life).” (3)

There are several main reasons for the increasing importance of regional development (4):

Globalization – the most important reason which causes not only stronger competition between municipalities, it encompasses regional level as well. The economic participants need specific conditions for the development of their business that can work out mainly on this level.

Decentralization – the idea of decentralization comes from the natural possibility for some tasks to be solved better and closer to

citizens on regional or local level, rather than on central one.

Inability of a particular municipality to solve its tasks – the growing responsibilities of municipalities coincide with downsizing budgetary means, as well as with the growing complexity of tasks. The growing inability of a particular municipality to perform its tasks leads to the necessity of cooperation between municipalities.

Interrelations between municipalities – they deepen all the time and become even more complicated. The way of life tends to get regionalised because of the growing expansion of cities as a consequence of mobility (caused by the lack of jobs on local level) or because of the changed preferences and professional status.

Sustainability through regional coordination – achieving sustainable development strengthens the necessity of regional and intermunicipal approach since it has major essential importance for sustainable economic and communal development.

The relation between regional development and spatial planning has been regulated by the changes in the Act for regional development (ARD) from 2012 where the strategic documents concerning regional development have been tied with those of spatial planning. Thus, there is a clear emphasis on the relation between the plans for socio-economic development and the concepts and schemes for spatial development. Before the change in the Act for regional development this relation was not that specifically emphasised and regulated. In the Act for planning spaces (APS) there are regulated the planning schemes and drafts which, however, reflect only the planning and drafting of spaces.

Spatial planning is defined as: „a complex study-and-design and managerial activity which aims at providing functional-and-organisational unity of all elements and systems in the living environment by sensible and effective use of spatial resources. It is oriented at satisfying the growing demands and needs of man and society for socially fair and economically justified, functioning living environment that is structured to be ecologically friendly” (5).

Spatial planning is assessed not only as a consequence of a certain alternative of socio-economic development, but rather as a reason that determines the actions of a state, its organs

and citizens in locating, planning, structuring and functioning of the whole complex of anthropogenic outlets in the living environment (6).

Planning a space is a complex activity aimed at organizing the space where a man's living cycle occurs – it involves the functions of inhabitation: labor – relaxation – servicing. Spatial planning is affected by a number of factors that can be classified into several groups: (7)

- economic – they determine the socio-economic processes that run on a particular territory and their reflection on the way land is used;
- political – they are commensurate with policy on national, regional and local level that concerns the way of using the land on the respective territory;
- demographic – those that refer to the changes in population as a consequence of its natural and mechanical growth and the need for various types of plots for implementing the functions of inhabitation-labour-relaxation-servicing-technical infrastructure.
- lawful – in accordance with the active rules and regulations that are stipulated in various legal documents regarding spatial planning (laws, regulations, plans, drafts and so on), in compliance with the forms of ownership and other property laws;
- social – those related to achieving balance between social and individual needs;
- ecological.

In planning and regulating the processes as part of the socio-economic and spatial-planning development one needs to have in mind the following objectives of spatial planning that underpin the “Leading principles for spatial planning on the European continent”, prepared for the Conference of Ministers (held in Hannover (8) in 2000) who are responsible for planning spaces:

- encouraging the convergence of territories through balanced socio-economic development;
- evaluating cultural heritage as a factor for enhancing regional and local attractiveness;
- encouraging quality development of territories.

The objectives pointed out above emphasize the relation and interdependence between spatial

planning and the level of socio-economic development in general.

Spatial planning is a combination of regulatory, institutional and economic measures aimed at achieving balance in using national space for implementing the functions: inhabitation – labor – relaxation – servicing – technical infrastructure. Besides a combination of the groups of measures mentioned, which have the objective to achieve a balance in using the land, spatial planning needs to be accepted also as a process that runs in the whole territory and is related to planning this land usage.

Planning a space is a permanent process that involves planning the territory of a whole country. This process is underpinned by a system of plans and schemes that provide the regulatory and planning basis of territories' future development.

Through planning the structure and building up of a particular space, municipalities respectively need to have a policy aimed at several main objectives:

- organisation of space;
- balancing individual and social interests;
- solving particular economic and social priorities.

In compliance with APS spatial planning is done through concepts and schemes for spatial development and spatial drafts. The concepts and schemes are of general character and give an idea of the future principle perspectives for the development of a particular territory. These concepts and schemes lie in the basis of the Act for spatial planning, while the spatial plans are much more specified and it is exactly the concepts and schemes that need to be the basis for working them out. The spatial plans are regulated in APS.

The concepts and schemes for spatial development determine the goals of state policy in regard to planning a territory for a certain period of time. Strategic spatial planning is actually a system of documents for spatial development on national, regional, district and municipal level according to the Act for regional development (they give an idea for the specific use of particular plots of land – in the Act for planning a territory).

In turn, the National strategy for regional development, the district and municipal plans for development are other program tools for evaluating the existing socio-economic development and defining the main goals and priorities in view of achieving balanced development of the country and the various regions.

Substantially, they are tools for planning the socio-economic development of the country and in this sense their relation with the concepts and schemes for spatial development reflect the link between spatial (structural) and economic planning – nation- and region-wide.

On the highest hierarchical level in the system of strategic documents for spatial planning, there happens to be the National Concept for spatial development (NCSD). It is done in accordance with and is linked to the particular operative programs and sector plans – Operational Program on competitiveness, OP Transport, OP Environment, National strategic plan for developing rural areas and National program for fishing and aquaculture, sector strategies, programs and plans for developing education, healthcare, social care and others. Therefore, NCSD needs to be done in compliance with the requirements of the common European spatial planning and planning in general, together with outlining the general framework for using the territory of Bulgaria. At the same time it has to serve as a basis in working out the concepts and schemes on lower levels (regional, district and municipal). It needs to regulate the future development of specific types of territories (urbanized and non-urbanized, urban and rural, protected and non-protected, easily accessible and not, intensively developing and under-developed) in the long term in compliance with socio-economic development.

In the Methodological directives for making the National concept for spatial planning it is pointed out that there can be used the two types of territories typical for European countries (9):

- strongly urbanised, central zones with intensive socio-economic development (territories close to big cities);
- inadequately urbanised, peripheral zones with troubled socio-economic development (territories that are remote from big city centers).

It is necessary for NCSP to reflect only the main principles and requirements in using a territory, since on national level it is difficult to define the particular directives for developing the specific types of territories. The reason for this is the specifics of its particular parts, caused by the differences in the natural potential and the socio-economic development. Thus, in the concept there is a need to define the main principles for developing the national territory (in compliance with the European ones) which are going to serve as a basis for making the concepts and schemes in the regions, districts and municipalities.

In writing the National concept for spatial development one has to have in mind the main principles for carrying out the national spatial planning that are part of the methodological directives for writing the National concept for spatial development of the Republic of Bulgaria for the time until 2025 (10).

Uniform (integrated) approach of planning. Through NCSD there has to be applied the approach of strategic planning with uniform informational provision, systematic analysis with clarifying the issues and opportunities, prognoses, creating a vision – a spatial model, setting goals and using indicators for monitoring and evaluation. In this sense, spatial planning is an organic part of integrated planning – it is interconnected and coordinated with economic, social and ecological planning. In this way NCSD is a reliable tool for planning sustainable development with its role to reflect thoroughly all issues of the territory and serve as a territorial basis for regional and branch (sector) planning.

Publicity, transparency and civil involvement. Involving citizens in the whole process of planning, discussing, ratifying, approving and applying NCSD from a methodological point of view is a condition for sustainability of the planning process and has to be provided on each stage and phase of this process.

Publicity and transparency of all actions in the planning process on the level of planning in NCSD have to be provided through a reliable information system and open procedure.

Prioritatively protected public interests. NCSD has to play an important role in balancing public and individual interests so that it puts into practice the priorities of the national planning

policy. The protection of the public interest, therefore, has to be regulated for such important, nationally significant components of territorial structure as the natural-and-ecological, public-and-cultural and communication-and-technical systems of spatial development, in view of the state regulating planning processes that are part of the NCSD.

Scientific approach – in all activities and levels of spatial planning. In the process of working out the NCSD it is expected to solve a number of complicated issues – devising planning decisions, prognosticating processes, comparing and assessing variants.

Continuity of the planning process. NCSD, as a set of tools, deals with the contents, management and monitoring of two types of entities – material (territories, places of residence, infrastructure, people) and processes (urbanisation, deurbanisation, change of the function of territories, spatial impacts and interferences, migration, market media, degradation, development, growth and so on). The complicated interactions between those are marked with dynamic changes that cause continuous monitoring and respective updating of the information base, as well as periodical correction of the planning documents themselves. The continuity of the planning process is a condition for its sustainability in time and a guarantee for its efficiency.

In writing the NCSD, therefore, one needs to comply with the principle of horizontal cooperation with the sector policies (transport, agricultural, keeping the environment), as well as with the principle of vertical cooperation between the various administrative levels. In this way the regional/local authorities need to adjust territorial planning to the measures taken on higher levels, and those on national level have to adjust the decisions they make to the plans and programs suggested on regional/local level.

Ranked highest in the system of strategic documents regulating regional development is the National strategy for regional development (NSRD). Through it there are defined the long-term goals and priorities of the state policy for regional development, as well as its compliance with the other structure-setting policies. In general, it consists of: socio-economic analysis of regions; objectives and priorities of regional

development; strategic directives for working out and updating regional plans for development.

The National concept for spatial development needs to be accepted as a spatial organization of the socio-economic development of the country that underpins the National strategy for regional development. From this point of view, both documents, therefore, have to be accepted as related and interdependent, yet, they have to be made independently, even though in parallel, since their subject matter concerns different processes.

It is necessary to work out the regional scheme for spatial development of a level-2 region for each of the six regions considered for planning. Making and applying these schemes will provide balance in using the territory of the particular closely located municipalities, united in districts, hence the whole region. One must work them out in accordance with the results from the analysis of using the territories in the region, the prognoses for possible future changes and the measures that need to be taken for the balanced use of the territory in the region. In this sense, regional schemes for spatial development of level-2 regions will outline better the directives for spatial development of particular regions and will serve as a basis for working out the regional schemes for spatial development of particular districts and the concepts of particular municipalities that need to be related to the general spatial configuration of the region.

From the point of view of the socio-economic development of level-2 regions, regional plans for development are made. This is done in compliance with the provisions of the National strategy for regional development, as well as in accordance with the regional schemes for spatial development of level-2 regions. Generally, they contain an analysis of the social, economic and ecological condition of the respective region, the objectives and priorities for developing the region for a particular period of time. They have in mind the provisions and investment intentions of the sector strategies for developing the territory in the region.

The regional scheme for spatial development of a level-3 region (district) is made in compliance with the scheme for spatial development of a level-2 region and the provisions of the sector strategies on district level. It is related to the

district strategy for development. The latter is made in compliance with the regional plan for development. Through it the strategic directives for working out the municipal plan for development are defined.

On the lowest level in the system of strategic documents of spatial development is the concept for spatial development of a municipality. It has to be complied with the regional scheme for spatial development of a level-3 region (district) and defines the medium-term goals for developing the territory in the municipality in regard to the places of residence in it, the relations with the neighboring municipalities and the district center. Besides, it is related to the municipal plan for development which, in turn, is made in compliance with the district strategy for development.

To summarize, a couple of conclusions have been made:

1. Achieving a balanced socio-economic and territorial-and-spatial development presupposes to seek and find a balance between two groups of contradictory interests: on the one hand, those of individual investors, on the other – the interests of the public as a whole, together with its need for outlets of social and technical infrastructure whose purpose and functions vary. Therefore, in order to achieve balance between these two groups of interests one needs to meet the following principles: “complexity, long-term perspective, regulative perspective, continuity, priorities, informativeness, succession and sustainable development” (11).

2. The concepts and schemes for spatial development do not have direct investment importance, yet, they have to serve as a basis for making the general spatial plans, hence the detailed spatial plans as well, in compliance with the national strategy for regional development, the district and municipal plans for development. In this way they will help the balanced development of the territory of the country and the stimulation of the investment interest in less developed territories.

3. From studying the documents related to the socio-economic development and spatial planning, one can make the conclusion that there exists a considerable set of documents and making, applying and observing them hierarchically will enable to achieve a balanced

use of the national territory and create favorable prerequisites for developing business.

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