

# LINK BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS IN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The paper describes relationship between sustainable development and regional government efficiency. Author defines first sustainable development, its principles and relationship to the public administration area. With usage of systematic review is later defined efficiency in public administration. Based on this information is analyzed relationship between sustainable development and the effectiveness of the management system of regional government.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development, Public Administration, Regional Government, Effectiveness, Local Agenda 21.

## Introduction

This paper deals with the issue of sustainable development in the field of public administration quality, respectively efficiency of regional government. Sustainable development is an important factor in the process of the gradual penetration of all areas of modern society at all levels (macro, meso and micro level) and all areas (environmental, economic and social) with regard to future generations and the environment.<sup>2</sup> The principle of sustainability is practically applicable to all fields of human activities. It just must be always adapted to the certain field. From definitions of the term is recognizable what is the goal of sustainability. The achievement of this goal must be done through a series of phases, which respect the essence of the field. Public administration is one of the most important institutions that can assist through its process to meet the objectives of sustainable development of the company.

This is the reason this article was written. The author tries to gain insight on the issues of sustainable development of the whole society, which plays an important role in public administrations. Specifically, the process of regional government as a meso-level implementation of the concept of sustainable development. The regional government is so very important to the fulfillment of the aims of sustainable development. At the same time the performance of regional governments is specific. This is an area where its status, functions and principles are often subject to numerous changes and reforms primarily motivated by political influence. It is possible to say that in a society there is an effort to continuously improve the current state of public administration - the effort to achieve maximum efficiency. (Broad) It follows also need for evaluating of quality and efficiency.

However, for evaluating quality of public administration (or regional government itself) it is necessary to develop methodologies and standards that make it possible. Currently there are a number of methods that can be used for quality measurement, respectively effectiveness of public government. However, existing methods generally do not take into account the concept of sustainability. Author of this article attempts to look at the regional government evaluation issue with the view of the concept of sustainability. In this point of view he is using the Local Agenda 21 document, which can be considered as the starting point for evaluating the effectiveness of regional

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Zielina, "Veřejná správa jako jeden z aktérů regionálního trvale udržitelného rozvoje podle konceptu Triple Helix" (paper presented at the Conference Our Common Present: Changing Society?, Prag, March 23rd, 2012).

Governments in view of the objectives of sustainable development. By an analysis of this document it is possible to answer the question of what it needs to be measured in order to regional administration be assessed in the scope of the sustainable development concept.

In the processing of this paper, author used specialized literature concerning the issue of the concept of sustainability and efficiency in the performance of regional governments. This paper is a synthesis of published knowledge on various topics. Its aim is to bring more information to the issue of measuring the effectiveness of regional governments in relation to sustainable development.

### Definition of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a term which has recently been studied in environmental area, where he originally belonged to. It is possible to meet him in almost all possible fields of human activity. At present, it is possible meet this term in many areas such as the social, economic, natural,... Despite, or perhaps because of it, his interpretation is very diverse, and it is very difficult to precisely define.

Original understanding of sustainability as such represents the development of human society, ensuring a consistent economic and social progress, together with full preservation of the environment.

The concept of sustainability, which in Bramwell and Lane<sup>3</sup> was first mentioned in 1973. In the forefront, however, came only after 1980. Important role in formulating sustainable development played a WTO (World Tourism Organisation). The first milestone represented Manila Declaration (1980), which pointed out that the sources cannot remain unchecked and it is important to realize that all resources in the future may be lost or destroyed.

International Commission for the UN Environment issued in 1987 a report entitled *Our Common Future*.<sup>4</sup> This was the result of careful exploration of the environment and pointed to the need to make fundamental changes that are necessary for sustainable development. The continuous development in this report is defined as: "... a method of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".<sup>5</sup> The report presents the most important issues affecting the human civilization and you need to seriously consider them.

As one of the most serious problems stated in the report is the population growth. According to the report is the need for action, the result should be to stabilize the population. A related problem is the population growth in large cities and especially their suburbs. Another report mentions the need to improve health care, social security, population, and improving access to education. It also mentioned the need to ensure food security for a broad population groups, provided stability of natural resources.<sup>6</sup>

Already at the time of the report inform about the very actual problem that represent increasing requirements for energy and increasing consumption. The report stresses the need to increase the production of renewable energy sources and thereby reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the use of fossil fuels. It takes into account also industrial production and poisons, which are spreaded in the environment. This type of waste has to be eliminated as much as possible. It is closely related to environmental pollution and production of chemical substances, which according to the proposals of the UN should not be placed on the market before they have

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<sup>3</sup> David Weaver, *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> World Commission On Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> World Commission On Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 47.

<sup>6</sup> World Commission On Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

been tested. It has to be assessed their potential impact on human health and the impact on the environment.<sup>7</sup>

The original definition was later identified as inadequate as it does not take into account all the factors affecting the development of the company and it's mostly very anthropocentric.

Therefore, later was formed another definition that attempted to describe sustainability with several factors. For example, Eber<sup>8</sup> states that sustainable development advocates widespread use and maintain resources to obtain their durability. Sustainable development represents the possibility of continuous economic development, which seeks to maintain the environmental, socio-cultural and economic resources of the country for future generations.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most accurate definition is a synthesis of the previous definitions. This definition is currently being used in the training process of environmental education at universities. The definition says: "*Sustainable development is a complex set of strategies that allows usage of economic tools and technologies to meet the social, material and spiritual needs of people while fully respecting environmental limits*"<sup>10</sup>

This definition can include a wide range of factors, which are also important for understanding and application of sustainable development. As Ivan Rynda<sup>11</sup> stated, the individual components of sustainability are in the intersection. For the concept to work it is necessary that these elements together helped to create a single common area of the world.

### Principles of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainability is based on the integration of the three areas - social, environmental and economic. Sustainability in one of these areas should not negatively affect other areas. The main principle of sustainability is to achieve balance between these three dimensions in order to achieve long-term effect.

Other principles of sustainability are based on the definitions of the term. By using systematic review of definitions and documents relating to sustainable development, can be determined other principles of sustainable development. These principles are focus on the future and future generations, the responsible use of resources and equity. All these categories are present in all of the three areas of sustainable development.

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Besides the general principles of sustainable development, based on the very essence of the concept, it is possible to define the basic principles of sustainable development in specific areas. In this case, the general principles are applied to the specific conditions of the existing sector.

### Relationship to the Public Administration Area

In terms of the specific application of the sustainability concept into the field of public administration, it is very important to mention a conference which was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. At the conference the representatives of the participating countries adopted several important

<sup>7</sup> dtto.

<sup>8</sup> Shirley Eber, *Beyond the green horizon: principles for sustainable tourism* (Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey [U.K.]: WWF UK, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> David Weaver, *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Ivan Rynda, "Trvale udržitelný rozvoj," *Geografické rozhledy* (10)1 (2000): 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ivan Rynda, "Trvale udržitelný rozvoj," *Geografické rozhledy* (10)1 (2000).

<sup>12</sup> Shirley Eber, *Beyond the green horizon: principles for sustainable tourism* (Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey [U.K.]: WWF UK, 1992).

documents to guide the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in the countries, at all levels of government and in all sectors. They are the following documents:

- Rio Declaration On Environment and Development: the most comprehensive set of principles of sustainability
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- The Convention on Biological Diversity: The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force in September 2003
- Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests
- Agenda 21: a comprehensive guide of global actions which may affect or observe the transition to the sustainable development concept

New document called Local Agenda 21 is based on Agenda 21 requirements. Local Agenda 21 is a tool for applying the principles of sustainable development at local and regional level. It is a process which through improvements in governance, strategic planning (management), public participation and the use of all acquired knowledge of sustainable development in individual areas, improves the quality of life in all its aspects and points to the responsibility of citizens for their lives and the lives of other beings in space and time.

Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a program for towns, cities and regions, that introduces the principles of sustainable development into practice taking into account the local problems. It is formed in the presence of and in cooperation with citizens and organizations. Its objective is to provide long-term high quality of life and environment in a specific place.

Local Agenda 21 is a time consuming process which, through improvements in governance, strategic planning (management), involving the public and the use of all acquired knowledge of sustainable development, enhances the quality of life in all its directions and leads to the citizens responsibility for their lives and the lives of others.<sup>13</sup>

LA21 is a progressive method of improving the quality of public administration, leading to the practical application of the principles of sustainable development at local and regional level. Unlike other methods LA21 offers, in addition to quality and efficient work of the public administration, a number of added values, such as satisfaction of the population, their active participation in public life and in decisions on public matters.

LA21 is part of a broader effort to good governance, which is included in the term "good governance". From the perspective of the UN and the EU the good governance must be open, transparent and accountable to the public, effective for public participation in decision-making and planning based on partnership with other social sectors, and respecting the professional point of view. Only such governance can lead to long-term sustainable development of the municipality or region. LA21 is a process that is fundamental to sustainable development. An essential part of a working MA21 are undoubtedly: strategic planning and quality management system including funding system, ongoing and active communication with the public - building partnerships, systematic and measurable approach to sustainable development.<sup>14</sup>

### **Efficiency in Public Administration**

Public administration in democratic economies should work in accordance with applicable legislation. Not only transparently, ethically and professionally, but also economically, efficiently and effectively. Within the meaning of the concept of Good Governance it means, that public administration is actively associated with citizens and meet the public interest.

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<sup>13</sup> "O místní Agendě 21," CENIA, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www1.cenia.cz/www/node/304>.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, *Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development* (New York: United Nations, 1993).

From the analysis of available documents ensues that the definition of quality regional government is not clear. Professional literature does not offer an adequate and universal answer to this question. Mostly is the problem of quality of regional government associated with the administration processes, resources, staff, partnerships and performance of the government.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to this notion is efficiency which is usually expressed as the difference between inputs and outputs.<sup>16</sup> The efficiency can be viewed from two perspectives - from an internal and external perspective.

Currently the evaluation process of regional government is based on key requirements that are required by the performance of public administration. This is called the principle of "3E", which consists of three components - Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. Sometimes it is supplemented by a fourth "E" which is in this case an Equality.<sup>17</sup>

### **Relationship between Sustainable Development and the Effectiveness**

In fact objective indicators for measuring the quality and effectiveness of public administration do not exist. It is mainly about the essence. Particular solution may be to achieve the concept of sustainable development. Thanks to its essence - combination of three areas - economic, environmental and social - can be achieved by its applying the effective functioning of the regional government. Therefore more important is the need to constantly look for opportunities fulfillment of the concept of sustainable development, the search for indicators and evaluate the implementation of the concept.

Instructions for implementing the principles of sustainable development in the Local Agenda 21 can also be a starting point for the development of indicators for measuring the effectiveness of regional government.

LA 21 monitors and describes the setting of key governance processes that are necessary for the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local or regional level. Also anticipates a further essential aspect - by using indicators of sustainable development monitors the real impact of various aspects on the locality development. Indicators of sustainable development are a practical tool to measure the progression of the Local Agenda 21. It is a set of information that shows whether the goals set are closer or they are moving away. They make it possible to see whether the used activities have a positive impact on the area.

Indicators are chosen not only for the overall process, but also for partial projects. Always they must have three aspects - quantity, quality and time. For each level of targets are selected appropriate indicators - strategic (regional governments by them can monitor the achievement of strategic targets - such as citizens' satisfaction), managerial (as we will check that the system works well) and implementation. Indicators at each level must be linked.

Commonly used indicators of society development (such as gross domestic product) do not provide adequate and comprehensive data that are needed to assess the sustainability of development. Therefore there is need for look for new indicators. Nowadays there are a set of recommended indicators at the international level. At the same time there is already developed a system of indicators for sustainable development at the national level.

In relation to public, indicators are being used as a tool by which can easily inform about the changes that take place based on the LA21 process. In this respect, the well presented indicator can lead to the involvement of other people in the process of LA21. It depends on the creative approach of those who are presenting the indicators.

The starting point for setting the LA21 bases for measuring the effectiveness can be the document: European Common Indicators of sustainable development at the local level. It is an

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<sup>15</sup> Iveta Vrábková, "Vyjádření efektivita a kvality ve veřejné správě," *Acta Academia Karviniensia* 1 (2010).

<sup>16</sup> Dušan Hendrych, *Správní věda: Teorie veřejné správy* (Praha: ASPI, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Norman Flynn, *Public sector management* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007).

initiative that aims to encourage European local communities in the establishment of common indicators that allow to monitoring and measure the progress recorded to local sustainability and efficiency simultaneously.

The document includes the following areas, from which it is possible to create specific benchmarks:

1. Citizen's satisfaction with life in the community (general satisfaction with various aspects of life in the community).
2. Local contribution to global climate change (CO<sub>2</sub> emissions expressed as ecological footprint).
3. Local transportation and passenger transportation (daily travel distances and modes of transportation).
4. Availability of public green spaces and local services (availability of the nearest public green area for local residents and affordability of basic services).
5. Ambient air quality (number of days with good and wholesome air quality).
6. Children's traveling to and from school (means of transport that children use to travel between home and school)
7. Sustainable management of the municipality and local businesses (the proportion of public and private organizations that have adopted and use of environmental and social management methods)
8. Noise pollution (the proportion of the population exposed to harmful levels of noise)
9. Sustainable land-use (sustainable development, restoration and protection of areas and lands within the municipality/city)
10. Sustainable Products (share of environmentally friendly certified)

Based on these areas, for the future there is necessary to set common standards which can be used by regional governments to measure the level of implementation of the sustainable development concept in the region. At the same time they will also talk about the effectiveness of regional governments from the perspective of sustainable development.

### Conclusions

This paper provides the basic insight into the problems of sustainable development in the field of public administration and the effect on its efficiency. Using analysis of available documents author defines the concept of sustainable development and the effectiveness of regional government. Thereafter author dealt with the issue of measuring the implementation of the concept in public administration sphere.

The concept of sustainable development has become one of the solutions of contemporary postmodern era.<sup>18</sup> Institutions across the social spectrum are aware of the importance of this concept. The basic principles of the implementation of the concept include: the focus on long-term goals, the voluntary implementation of the objectives, the need for partnerships between different implementers and many possible targets in the implementation of the concept.<sup>19</sup> Under these conditions is the public administration area which can be suitable for controlled introduction of the concept in to the society.

At the same time there is need for measuring of the outputs and efficiency in public government. Paper tried to answer the question whether it is possible to use information about the implementation of sustainable development concept as a means of measuring the regional government effectiveness.

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Zielina, "Veřejná správa jako jeden z aktérů regionálního trvale udržitelného rozvoje podle konceptu Triple Helix" (paper presented at the Conference Our Common Present: Changing Society?, Prag, March 23rd, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Slavoj Czesaný, *Koncepty a měření udržitelného rozvoje* (Praha: Český statistický úřad, 2007).

In this case author chose for this purpose a document named Local Agenda 21. It is the practical application of the principles of the Agenda 21 document at the local (municipal, community) practice. Local Agenda 21 is a practical implementation of local projects in collaboration widest interest groups that leads to sustainable development and maintain the quality of life at local level. Based on the analysis of this document, the author determined the method of creating standards, which are intended for measuring the sustainability and efficiency of regional government.

This paper primarily aims to be information platform for the introduction of the concept of sustainable development in the regional government. It may be usable for regional government's decision makers as well as the basis for further research in the area.

This paper is part of a much larger project, which deals with the issue of measuring the effectiveness of the regions. Therefore in the future research will continue in the searching possibilities of measuring the effectiveness of public governments and the entire regions. The project is focused on research of the functioning of regional self-government and of regional authorities (thereinafter the regions) in the Czech Republic. As a primary research in the field of public administration, the project should contribute to gain knowledge on the activities of the regions, the research of which has still been neglected.

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