

# LEGISLATIVE AND TECHNICAL BASIS FOR THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE LOCAL PUBLIC AUTHORITIES INTO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL SPACE

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**Abstract.** *The Summit Conferences of Rio (1992) and Johannesburg (2002) emphasized the primordial role of the local collectivities played in boosting the projects of sustainable development. The local collectivities manage, protect and landscape their territory. Being closer to the citizens, they do have the capacity to mobilize the social and economical forces. Aware 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.*

**Keywords:** public authorities, rural space, rural development

## INTRODUCTION

**The local public administration, determinant factor for the sustainable rural development.** The public administration cannot be defined very accurate due to the complexity and the vastness of the issues constituting its object of activity. In fact, this term is perceived as a sub-domain of two disciplines: the political science and the administrative science (4). The local public administration represents the totality of state bodies designated to cover the non-general interests concerning, in the first place, the human groups of a locality and being characterized by the fact that the titular holders trusted with the management of these interests are not empowered by the central authority, but by the local electoral body, about to be elected. The titular holders are, on their turn, subordinated to the central authority, represented by the government, exercising the right of coordination and state unity under the form of tutelage and control (6).

The public management at the level of the administrative-territorial units is achieved and works on the basis of the local autonomy principles, decentralization of public services, the eligibility of local public administration, the legality and citizens consultation in order to find solutions to the most important local issues and to cover local collective interests. As a sub-domain of the administrative science, the public administration is part of the overall administrative process, divided in public administration, business administration, educational administration, tourism administration, as well as other forms of administration. At the same time, the public administration is considered an interdisciplinary domain, covering issues from politics, economy, sociology and other specialties (4).

The local autonomy's principle of is manifested by the right and the capacity of the local public administration authorities to find solutions and to manage the public businesses, according to the law, on behalf and interest of the local collectivities they are representing. This right is exercised by the local councils and the mayors, as well as by the county councils, as authorities of local public administration elected by universal, equal, direct, secret and freely expressed vote (12).

The local autonomy is exclusively administrative and financial, being exercised according and in the limits of the law. The local autonomy concerns the setting, functioning, competences and attributions, as the management of the resources which, according to the law, belong to the commune, the city or the county, where applicable. The public administration at the level of administrative-territorial units is based on the principles of local autonomy, decentralization and deconcentration of public services. The public administration authorities, representing the tool achieving the local autonomy in communes and cities, are the local councils and the mayors elected, according to the law, which act as autonomous administrative authorities, finding solutions for the communal and city public issues (13).

The social-economical development of the local community is achieved by assigning the following attributions:

- Approval of studies, prognoses and programs of economical-social development, territorial arrangement and landscaping, urban and territorial landscaping documentations, including the participation to programs for zonal, regional, county development and cross-border cooperation, according to the law;
- Analysis and approval of localities' urban and landscaping documentations, setting the necessary financial and material means in this respect; approval of the funds from the local budget, necessary for undertaking the due actions to prevent floods, fires, calamities and dangerous meteorological phenomena;
- Activities specific to protect and rehabilitate the environment, in order to increase the life quality; contribute to the protection, preservation, restoration and valuation of the historical and architectural monuments, of the parks and natural reservations, according to the law (12).

The local public administration does not represent a state administration, but an autonomous administrative structure, allowing to the local collectivities to find solutions for the local public issues by their own administrative authorities, under the control of the central authorities, and developing their activities following the principles of decentralization, local autonomy and public services deconcentration.

The reports between the commune and city public administration and the county administration are based upon the principles of autonomy, legality and collaboration in solving the commune issues; there is no subordination relationship between them (12). The relationship between the specialty local and central public administrations, respective its public services deconcentrated, are specific relations of cooperation, constituted in a regime of co-administration (13).

### **The local social-economical development, basis for the sustainable evolution of the rural space**

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 (7).

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 (7).

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.

The local development is a planned evolution of community's welfare issues from economical, social, cultural and environmental points of views, a process by which community's members bring their forces together, in order to carry out a collective action generating solutions for the common problems. The aim of community's development might vary from small initiatives undertaken, in the frame of a small group, to major initiatives, involving the whole community (3).

Irrespective of activity's aim, an efficient development of the community is featured as it follows: it does imply a long term effort, having tangible results in time, has to be comprehensive and equitable, holistic and integrated in an overall view, to be initiated and supported by the community's members, on community's benefit, based on the experiences which led to the best practices.

The main result of community's development is the improvement of life quality (1). 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 (8).

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 (11).

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 (8).

The elaboration of Agenda 21 is undertaken on successive, indisociable stages, according to the available material and financial resources (9):

- the current situation evaluation of collectivity's potential toward the natural, ecological, cultural, industrial, economical, social, patrimony and financial capital, emphasizing both the strong and the weak issues. This analysis is found on the basis of setting the progress's axes.

- a strategic development project concept, accepted by population, which takes into consideration the social, economical and environmental needs and goals;
- setting the means needed to carry out these goals, by successive stages and the mobilization of collectivity's "vital forces" in order to guarantee the success of each and every stage;
- periodical evaluation of the results obtained, on the basis of an indicators' grid allowing possible guidance for the following stages.

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

I- the knowledge of the overall frame specific to local collectivities; project's launching; II - setting the diagnosis; III - identification of the problems and the causes occurring them, setting the objectives; IV - project's adoption; V - 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. The diagnosis consists of assessing territory's overall status – history, resources, strong issues, a.s.o. and an evaluation of the sustainable development policies. This way there are gotten the necessary data for deploying the due debate with the local actors, as well with the population.

### **Strategies for sustainable development included in Local Agenda 21**

The Aalborg Charter – Denmark, concerning the sustainable urban development (1994) proves that the local authorities dispose of a fundamental strategic document, by which could be achieved the sustainable development goals, focused on the human being, as specified in Local Agenda 21. The Charter alleged that the most viable solutions concerning the development are those generated by the knowledge of all available data, as by the commune action of the interested parties. Thus is emphasized the fundamental strategic goal of Agenda 21: the society's capacity to provide a quality life for every inhabitant, starting from the renewable and non-renewable resources. The economical boost is very often seen as a priority, being in service of the social needs. In a broader sense, all the current activities are not possible unless there is maintained the biological equilibrium (10). The European Guide for LA21 proves that LA21' Chapter 28 launches an appeal to the local collectivities for assessing their own LA 21, aiming to focus on the Agenda 21' goals, in the scope of shaping Agenda 21's aims through programs and actions meant for a certain space (14).

In Romania, the general issues which have to be customized for each local collectivity, are included into the National Plan of Rural Development (15) 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 (7).

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 prospective. 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;

The essential issues which cannot be outside the local development programs are underlined by the Strategic National Program (5):

- facilitating the transformation and the modernization of agricultural and forestry dual structure, as in the due processing industries, in order to make them more competitive and to contribute to the economical growth and to venues convergence into the rural space (where is possible), at the same time with the provision of the necessary living conditions and the environmental protection in these areas.

- maintaining and improvement on the environmental quality into the Romanian rural areas, by promoting a sustainable management, both onto the agricultural surfaces and the forestry ones;

- management and facilitation of work force transition from the agricultural sector to other sectors, providing a proper standard of living from the social and economical points of view.

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