

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and improvements in quality of life in Poland

Jacek Binda¹, Halina Łapińska²

¹ Department of Finance and Information Technologies, Bielsko-Biała School of Finance and Law
ul. Tańskiego 5, 43-382 Bielsko-Biała - Poland

² Department of Finance and Information Technologies, Bielsko-Biała School of Finance and Law
ul. Tańskiego 5, 43-382 Bielsko-Biała - Poland

Abstract — One of the tasks of central and local administration units is standing up for the sustainable development on their respective territories. Public authorities ought to use all available resources and means to satisfy the needs of the present generation in a way which will not disturb the satisfaction of needs of the generations to come. The aim of the paper is to present a selection of ratios for sustainable development in Poland which reflect the living conditions of the Polish citizens in the context of assumptions and objectives adopted in the UN 2030 Agenda.

Index Terms— sustainable development, sustainable development goals

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (also referred to as the Post-2015 Agenda or the 2030 Agenda) is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity which assumes eradicating poverty, provision of prosperous and fulfilling lives for all human beings and fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. The 2030 Agenda replaces and builds upon the Millennium Development Goals whose target date was 2015.

Preparation of the guidelines for the 2030 Agenda proceeded in the form of international negotiations within the United Nations High Level Panel (HLP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The panel announced guidelines for a new plan for global development and called for a new global order. The guidelines were published in the report of 30 May 2013 titled *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development*. The report laid the foundations for the assumptions of the 2030 Agenda which was agreed by all UN member states. The Agenda was adopted during the Sustainable Development Summit on 25-27 September 2015 at the UN headquarters in New York. The Agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development

Goals with their 169 targets which are measurable by appropriate ratios.

The most frequently cited goals of the sustainable development are: increase in social and individual well-being and harmonious co-existence of human beings and the natural environment. Other sustainable development goals include:

- prosperity achievement,
- intra and inter-generational justice and social security,
- satisfaction of physical and psychological human needs while keeping the right balance with the natural environment,
- satisfaction of basic needs necessary for physical and psychological development – achievement of sustainable quality of life.

The term ‘sustainable development’ is often wrongly associated with the term ‘eco-development’, although these two terms are not unequivocal:

Sustainable development ≠ eco – development ≠ protection of natural environment (r1)

Eco-development is only based on ecological criteria while sustainable development has a much wider meaning.

An important feature of the sustainable development idea adopted in the 2030 Agenda is its multi-dimensional character which refers to a number of scientific disciplines most of all to social and natural studies. The most fundamental objective of the Agenda is balancing the most basic elements of the system which shapes the future of humankind on Earth i.e. the natural environment, society and the economy so that development of one element does not threaten the development of the remaining ones. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to undertake a wide spectrum of integrated activities starting from local communities, regions through countries to the entire globe. Poland by accepting the 2030 Agenda became obliged to implement it.



II. THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS GOALS

Sustainable development is particularly important in the contemporary world due to the necessity to maintain balance between three key elements: economy, society and the environment. Economic growth translates into greater social integrity and clean environment only when protection of environment is given a high priority. As the result of proper balancing of the key elements the following added value is obtained:

- greater competitiveness of national economies,
- reduction of poisonous greenhouse gases,
- favourable conditions for innovative, environmentally clean technologies,
- improvement of conditions indispensable for advancement in entrepreneurship and new investments.

All the above help to maintain developmental balance of all aspects of life and to harmonize activities undertaken for the sake of the present and future generations of humankind. Sustainable development is a transition process which guarantees satisfaction of needs of the present generation without diminishing the chances for development of the generations to come; this process requires integrated activities for economic and social development while preserving the natural environment.

The UN report *Our Common Future* prepared by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published in 1987 under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland contains the definition of the concept of sustainable development and stresses the necessity to create a fully sustainable model of life free from rapacious exploitation of natural resources. The new model of life can be assured through:

1. Economic growth and even distribution of benefits; arriving at responsible, long-term growth which will be evenly distributed among all nations and communities, this calls for a fully integrated approach to present-day interrelated global economic systems.
2. Protection of natural resources and the environment. In order to preserve our natural heritage and resources for future generations it is necessary to work out rational economic solutions which will reduce the exploitation of resources, stop the contamination of the environment and assure the survival of natural ecosystems.
3. Social development. All over the world people need work, food, education, energy, health care, water and sanitation systems. In order to respond to these needs, the international community must make every effort not to affect cultural enrichment and social diversity and assure that all members of societies dispose of instruments which allow to shape their own future.

The idea of sustainable development was further developed during the Earth Summit in 1992. The final product of the Summit was a document called *Agenda 21*. The next stage towards sustainable development was the United Nations

Millennium Declaration which contained the *Millennium Development Goals whose implementation was to help in facing the challenges* of the 21st century within the timeframe of 2015. The resolutions of the 1992 Summit were renewed in 2002 in Johannesburg, and then during the summit in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, in a document called Rio+20 (*The Future We Want Declaration*). The Millennium Development Goals were replaced in 2015 by the *Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs* formulated in the 2030 Agenda.

The process of formulating SDGs was a part of works on the Post-2015 Development Agenda which is supposed to oversee the completion of the Millennium Goals and guarantee further global development. The basic constituents of the 2030 Agenda embrace:

- political declaration,
- sustainable development goals (SDGs),
- means of implementation – MoI,
- global partnership,
- the Agenda review and supervision process.

The sustainable development goals developed by a specially appointed Open Working Group referred not only to the reduction of poverty, hunger and ensuring public health but also to issues such as: sustainable exploitation of the natural environment, reduction of social inequalities and enabling the access to energy to everyone.

On 25-27 September 2015 in the UN headquarters in New York the UN Sustainable Development Summit 2030 was held. The Summit hosted more than 100 heads of states as well as representatives of religious groups, business world and civic societies. Poland was represented by the president Andrzej Duda. During the Summit the world leaders adopted a document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which includes 17 sustainable development goals.

The idea and goals of sustainable development are well expressed in a fragment of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development from 1987: *sustainable development is development in which the needs of the present generation may be satisfied without diminishing the chances of future generations to satisfy their needs*. Sustainable development is a cross-generation solidarity which relies on the dedication to finding solutions which would assure further growth, actively include all social groups in the developmental processes and offer them opportunity to reap the benefits of the economic growth.

Initially, the discussions concerning sustainable development were only limited to the reduction of negative impact of economies and industries on the natural environment. With time, the concept has taken more significance and extended its meaning regarding the three key developmental factors: respect for the environment, social progress and economic growth. Nowadays, the concept of sustainable development is included in the wave of discussions over social and economic development and has become a horizontal principle reflected in developmental policies of all countries.

The 2030 Agenda is based on 17 goals (SDGs) and 169 tasks which should be implemented by 2030 by all UN member

states. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are:

1. GOAL 1 No poverty,
2. GOAL 2 Zero hunger,
3. GOAL 3 Good health and well-being,
4. GOAL 4 Quality education,
5. GOAL 5 Gender equality,
6. GOAL 6 Clean water and sanitation,
7. GOAL 7 Affordable and clean energy,
8. GOAL 8 Decent work and economic growth,
9. GOAL 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure,
10. GOAL 10 Reduced inequality,
11. GOAL 11 Sustainable cities and communities,
12. GOAL 12 Responsible consumption and production,
13. GOAL 13 Climate action,
14. GOAL 14 Life below water,
15. GOAL 15 Life on land,
16. GOAL 16 Peace and justice strong institutions,
17. GOAL 17 Partnerships to achieve the goal,

To be able to implement the Goals it was necessary to determine sources of financing. On 13-16 July 2015 Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, held the Third International Conference on Financing for Development: Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which was aimed at working out financial and non-financial instruments for implementation of the new developmental agenda going beyond the year 2015. The final document of the conference called *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* contains more than 100 specific means of implementation for increasing the income sources e.g. facilitating tax collection, counteracting tax avoidance and illegal financial flows. The European Union renewed its declaration to award 0,7% of gross national income (GNI) for official development assistance (ODA) within the timeframe of 2030 (the new EU members including Poland will advocate 0,33% of GNI for official development assistance).

The UN Summit held on 25-27 September 2015 was the culmination of talks carried out under the auspices of the UN between governments of developing and developed countries, public interest organizations, representatives of world academic circles and private sector. The Summit culminated with official adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The concept of sustainable development is of macro-economic nature, however its implementation should proceed across all administrative layers. (Janoś-Kresło, 2008).

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA IN POLAND

In Poland the concept of sustainable development was first heard of in 1991. In 1992 the Polish government signed the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The document consists of 27 principles intended to guide countries in future sustainable development. The next document signed by the Polish authorities was the Agenda 21, a non-binding action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development with special emphasis on the role of humans in shaping the natural environment. The document contains also information on economic and social conditioning and protection of natural

resources and their thoughtful exploitation in order to ensure stable and sustainable development. Another document signed by the Polish government was the Declaration of principles of sustainable development of forests which highlighted that the guiding objective of these principles is to contribute to the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and to provide for their multiple and complementary functions and uses. Poland is also the signatory of the following acts:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity,
- the Convention on Climate Change.

By signing the above mentioned declarations and conventions Poland has made a commitment towards creation of strategic action plans aimed at complex protection of the natural environment which takes into account the principles of sustainable development.

The oldest Polish legal act where the principle of sustainable development can be found, is the Act of 1994 on the land use which was replaced by the Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and development. Originally the act referred to 'eco-development' instead of sustainable development. This was changed after passing of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in 1997. After adoption of the new Constitution the Act of 31 January 1980 on protecting and shaping the environment was amended. This document is no longer binding as it was replaced by the Act of 27 April 2001 on environment protection. The Act contains the following definition of sustainable development: *sustainable development is development which integrates economic, social and political factors while at the same time sustains the balance of natural eco-systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services in order to satisfy the most important needs of communities of the present generation and the generations to come* (Article 3, point 50).

An example of the sustainable development idea put into practice is the concept of development of Poland contained in the Act of 6 December 2006 on the principles of conducting the development policy [Journal of laws of 2006 no 227 item 1658]. The primary aim of the development policy is undertaking such actions which comply with the guidelines of sustainable development. The policy is enforced by central and local bodies of public administration.

The activity of Poland in the field of sustainable development was formulated in the Strategy for Responsible Development, which is an instrument of flexible management of main developmental processes in the country. The Strategy was adopted on 14 February 2017 and in 2018 the Polish Ministry of Development identified detailed priorities for the 2030 Agenda implementation.

The Strategy for Responsible Development offers a new model of development – one which builds competitive advantage using new growth factors and guarantees benefits to all social groups living in different corners of the country. At the same time, in the new model the needs of the preset generations will be satisfied without diminishing chances of the next generations. GDP is not the most important factor, it is the quality and perception of developmental processes in the

context of their validity for citizens that matter the most. The main goal of all activities and undertakings foreseen in the Strategy is to create conditions for raising income of Polish citizens and for increasing integrity in social, economic, environmental and territorial spheres. The expected outcome once the Strategy is implemented will be growth of wealth and reduction in the number of people threatened with poverty and social exclusion. The new model of development for Poland outlined in the Strategy is convergent with the ideals adopted in the 2030 Agenda. The concept of stable and responsible development upon which the Strategy was built, is consistent with the vision presented in the 2030 Agenda: the idea of the world free from poverty where each and every individual can benefit from the development. Consistency of the Polish Strategy and the 2030 Agenda is noticeable on the level of aims, areas, priority actions, and ratios. The body coordinating the implementation processes of the Strategy for Responsible Development and the 2030 Agenda in Poland is the Ministry of Development. Poland is dedicated to the implementation of the idea adopted in the 2030 Agenda but there is still a lot to be done.

On 5 June 2018 the Council of Ministers adopted a report made for the purpose of reviewing the advances in implementation of sustainable development goals in Poland. Special attention here should be paid to the advances in implementation of SDG 1, 2 and 3. One of the basic indicators for evaluation of implementation of SDG 1 is the percentage of citizens at risk of poverty, Table 1.

In 2006 40% of Polish citizens faced poverty or social exclusion, in 2010 the indicator fell by 12,2% to the level of 27,8% (the average in the UE for that period was 23,8%), and in 2016 it was 21,9%. In the following year the at-risk-of-poverty factor in Poland was 19,5%, when the average indicator for the EU member states stood at 22,5%.

Every so often the term 'social exclusion' is equated with the term 'poverty'. Both concepts are interrelated but social exclusion has a wider meaning because apart from low income it also includes other factors of isolating individuals from functioning in the prevailing social system. The interdependence between poverty and social exclusion may be of a feedback loop nature i.e. poverty may lead to social exclusion or can be the result of it. The outcome of social exclusion is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live. Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon and in reality means inability to participate in economic, political and cultural life due to lack of access to resources, goods and institutions, limitation of social rights and deprivation of needs (Nogowski J. M., 2015).

The elimination of poverty would not be possible without elimination of hunger, assuring food security and better nutrition as well as propagating sustainable agriculture (Goal 2). Poland belongs to the group of countries with lowest malnutrition rate but on the other hand, issues related to overnutrition seem to intensify in Poland.

The obesity rate among adults (54,7%) is higher than the EU average and has considerably increased since 2008, Table 2.

Within priority activities towards sustainable development an important place is occupied by campaigns disseminating healthy lifestyle among adults and children. The campaigns are expected to bring reduction in the percentage of overweight or obese people, which in turn will have a positive impact on the state of health, quality of life and life expectancy of the Polish population, Table 3.

TABLE 1
CITIZENS AT RISK OF POVERTY [%]

	2006	2010	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU (28 countries)	:	23,8	24,4	23,8	23,5	22,5
Austria	17,8	18,9	19,2	18,3	18,0	18,1
Belgium	21,5	20,8	21,2	21,1	20,7	20,3
Bulgaria	61,3	49,2	40,1	41,3	40,4	38,9
Croatia	:	31,1	29,3	29,1	27,9	26,4
Cyprus	25,4	24,6	27,4	28,9	27,7	25,2
Czechia	18,0	14,4	14,8	14,0	13,3	12,2
Denmark	16,7	18,3	17,9	17,7	16,8	17,2
Estonia	22,0	21,7	26	24,2	24,4	23,4
Finland	17,1	16,9	17,3	16,8	16,6	15,7
France	18,8	19,2	18,5	17,7	18,2	17,1
Germany	20,2	19,7	20,6	20,0	19,7	19,0
Greece	29,3	27,7	36	35,7	35,6	34,8
Hungary	31,4	29,9	31,8	28,2	26,3	25,6
Ireland	23,3	27,3	27,7	26,0	24,2	:
Italy	25,9	25	28,3	28,7	30,0	28,9
Latvia	42,2	38,2	32,7	30,9	28,5	28,2
Lithuania	35,9	34	27,3	29,3	30,1	29,6
Luxembourg	16,5	17,1	19	18,5	19,8	21,5
Malta	19,5	21,2	23,8	22,4	20,1	19,2
Netherlands	16	15,1	16,5	16,4	16,7	17,0
Norway	16,8	14,9	13,5	15	15,3	16,1
Poland	39,5	27,8	24,7	23,4	21,9	19,5
Portugal	25,0	25,3	27,5	26,6	25,1	23,3
Romania	:	41,5	40,3	37,4	38,8	35,7
Slovakia	26,7	20,6	18,4	18,4	18,1	16,3
Slovenia	17,1	18,3	20,4	19,2	18,4	17,1
Spain	24,0	26,1	29,2	28,6	27,9	26,6
Sweden	16,3	17,7	18,2	18,6	18,3	17,7
United Kingdom	23,7	23,2	24,1	23,5	22,2	:

Source: (Ec.europa.eu, 2018)

TABLE 2
THE OBESITY RATIO ACCORDING TO BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)
% OF POPULATION AGED 18 AND MORE

Country	2008	2014
EU (28 countries)	:	51,6
Austria	49,3	48,0
Belgium	47,5	49,3
Bulgaria	50,8	54,0
Croatia	:	57,4
Cyprus	51,3	48,3
Czechia	56,6	56,8

Country	2008	2014
Denmark	:	47,7
Estonia	51,0	53,9
Finland	:	54,7
France	43,6	47,2
Germany	52,1	52,1
Greece	56,3	56,7
Hungary	54,9	55,2
Ireland	:	55,7
Italy	:	44,9
Latvia	54,9	56,5
Lithuania	:	55,6
Luxembourg	:	48,0
Malta	59,7	61,0
Netherlands	:	49,4
Poland	54,0	54,7
Portugal	:	53,6
Romania	50,3	55,8
Slovakia	50,7	54,2
Slovenia	56,6	56,6
Spain	53,0	52,4
Sweden	:	49,9
United Kingdom	:	55,7

Source: (Ec.europa.eu, 2018)

TABLE 3
AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH- YEARS

Country	2004	2016
EU (28 countries)	78,4	81,0
Austria	79,3	81,8
Belgium	79,0	81,5
Bulgaria	72,5	74,9
Croatia	75,4	78,2
Cyprus	79,1	82,7
Czechia	75,9	79,1
Denmark	77,8	80,9
Estonia	72,4	78,0
Finland	79,0	81,5
France	80,3	82,7
Germany	79,3	81,0
Greece	79,4	81,5
Hungary	73,0	76,2
Ireland	78,6	81,8
Italy	80,9	83,4
Latvia	70,9	74,9
Liechtenstein	82,0	82,3
Lithuania	72,0	74,9
Luxembourg	79,2	82,7
Malta	79,4	82,6
Netherlands	79,3	81,7
Norway	80,1	82,5
Poland	74,9	78,0
Portugal	78,4	81,3
Romania	71,4	75,3
Slovakia	74,2	77,3

Country	2004	2016
Slovenia	77,2	81,2
Spain	80,4	83,5
Sweden	80,7	82,4
United Kingdom	79,0	81,2

Source: (Ec.europa.eu, 2018)

Average life expectancy at birth for the population of Poland in 2016 was 78 years (for the UE 81 years). It is an increase of about 3 years when compared to 2004. The main causes of death, however, are still cardiovascular diseases which were responsible for 43,3% of deaths in 2016, next was malignant neoplasia – more than 25,8% of deaths (*Realizacja Celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce*, Report 2018).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In recent years Poland has made considerable advances in the quality of life of citizens. Economic developments were accompanied by vital social achievements. General poverty rate in the population of Poland is similar to the European Union average. Also the results achieved by Poland regarding respective SDGs are comparable to the EU average.

In the social sphere the priority for Poland is the reduction of social exclusion, poverty and all kinds of social inequalities. The ultimate goal of all actions is improving the quality of life of citizens. Another vital issue is the development of human and social capital through wide access to knowledge and education, as well as raising competences and social cohesion. In economic sphere the Polish priority is building modern industry and supporting entrepreneurship. Of key importance are investments in innovation, new technologies and full utilisation of digital revolution.

It is impossible to achieve the above mentioned goals without sustainable economic growth which is coherent with protection of the environment and balanced management of resources.

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