

RASTISLAV IGLIAR¹

THE TERRITORIAL CAPITAL OF THE NEW MEMBER STATES IN THE CONTEXT OF EU INTEGRATION

Abstract

The article deals with regional / spatial development strategies, i.e. with the risks and extraordinary events that can significantly affect the development of the territory. Its aim is to draw attention, on the basis of an analysis of existing theoretical concepts and of the approach to strategic development planning, to the increased need to use the concept of an integrated approach to spatial development strategies, while taking into account all significant factors that have an impact on the development of the territory.

KEY WORDS: strategy, strategic planning, development strategies

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the important areas that will require legislative changes in the future is urban planning. A new Building Act is currently under preparation, which will have to reflect in a relevant manner climate change issues directly in the basic urban planning instruments: the urban planning study and the urban technical documentation. The primary documents to be used for the preparation of the Territorial Development Concept of the Slovak Republic should include, in addition to the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic, the Strategic Adaptation of the Slovak Republic to Adverse Climate Change Impacts.

Along with the demographic, social and economic prerequisites of municipal development, the concept as such and the draft urban management plan (“UMP”) should also identify the preconditions from the point of view of negative climate change impacts. These should be specifically reflected, for example, in the proposal for a functional use of the municipality area with a special focus on flood protection, the landscape structure, on the concept of interlinking green areas in the form of “green infrastructure”, etc. The negative impacts of climate change (increased temperature, summer heatwaves, the need to retain water within the landscape, etc.) must also be taken into account in designating stabilised areas, i.e. areas which must keep the current spatial and functional composition or the

¹ Mgr. Rastislav Igliar, Institute of Management, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Vazovova 2757/5, 812 43 Bratislava, SR, e-mail: rastislav.igliar@gmail.com

current landscape structure, but also in proposing functional regulation (permitted and forbidden structure) and spatial regulation.

2 EUROPEAN POLICIES

2.1 Territorial cohesion

The importance of territorial cohesion was emphasised in the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion, adopted by the Council in 2006, according to which “promoting territorial cohesion should be part of the effort to ensure that all of Europe’s territory has the opportunity to contribute to the growth and jobs agenda” (Official Journal of the EU L 291, p. 29).

Further to the conclusions of the informal gathering of EU ministers responsible for urban planning and regional development in Leipzig on 24 and 25 May 2007, in which they called the Commission to “prepare a report on territorial cohesion by 2008”, this Green Paper opens a discussion on territorial cohesion in view of deepening the understanding of this term and its impacts on policy and cooperation (http://www.bmub.bund.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Download_PDF/Nationale_Stadtentwicklung/nachhaltige_stadtentw_ministertreffen_eu_schlussfolgerungen_en_bf.pdf).

In its World Development Report 2009, the World Bank describes how density, distance and distribution can influence the pace of economic and social development. The EU deals with similar problems. The political responses to these problems can rest in measures in three areas: concentration, connection and cooperation (COM(2008) 616 final, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL).

“Cohesion policy is the primary EU instrument for mobilising territorial assets and potentials and addressing the territorial impacts generated by European integration. The strong territorial dimension of the policy has been recognised in the Lisbon Treaty with the introduction of the concept of territorial cohesion” (Samecki, 2009)

“In order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall promote and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion. In particular, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions” (Article 174 (originally Article 158 of TEC).

At the same time, the Treaty stipulates the following: “Among the regions concerned, particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural and demographic handicaps, such as the northernmost regions with very low

population density and islands, cross-border and mountain regions.” (Ibid.)

2.2 Legislation at the EU level

The European Commission presented the first legislative proposals related to the multi-annual financial framework for the period 2014–2020 on 29 June 2011. The legislative proposals are summarised in Table 1, including the originally planned dates of submission by the Commission general directorates.

Table 1 Legislative proposals for the multi-annual financial framework for the period 2014–2020

Ref. no.	Legislative proposal	Foreseen date of submission	Responsible (GD/service)
Cohesion policy			
1	Draft general regulation laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund	05/10/2011	REGIO
2	Draft regulation on the European Regional Development Fund	05/10/2011	REGIO
3	Draft regulation on the Cohesion Fund	05/10/2011	REGIO
4	Draft regulation on the European Social Fund	05/10/2011	EMPL
5	Draft regulation on the EU Solidarity Fund	05/10/2011	EMPL
6	Draft regulation on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund	05/10/2011	EMPL
Agriculture, rural development, maritime and fisheries			
7	Legislative package for agriculture and rural development (including a reserve for crises in agriculture)	12/10/2011	AGRI
8	Draft regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund	12/10/2011	MARE
Connecting Europe Facility			
9	Connecting Europe Facility	12/10/2011	
Environment			

10	Draft regulation on LIFE+	19/10/2011	ENV/DG CLIMA
Consumer health and protection			
11	Draft regulation on food safety	09/11/2011	SANCO
12	Draft regulation on the Health for Growth programme	09/11/2011	SANCO
13	Draft regulation on the programme for consumer protection	09/11/2011	SANCO
Customs union and taxes, fight against fraud			
14	Draft regulation on the Customs 2020 programme	09/11/2011	TAXUD
15	Draft regulation on the Fiscalis 2020 programme	09/11/2011	TAXUD
16	Draft regulation on the Hercule II programme	09/11/2011	OLAF
17	Draft regulation on the AFRIS programme	09/11/2011	OLAF
Justice and internal affairs			
18	Draft regulation on the Asylum and Migration Fund	15/11/2011	HOME
19	Draft regulation on the Internal Security Fund	15/11/2011	HOME
20	Draft regulation on IT systems	15/11/2011	HOME
21	Draft regulation on the Justice programme	15/11/2011	JUST
22	Draft regulation on the Law and Citizenship programme	15/11/2011	JUST
Energy			
23	Draft regulation on the shut-down of nuclear facilities	15/11/2011	ENER
Education and culture			
24	Draft regulation on the Education Europe programme	23/11/2011	EAC
25	Draft regulation on the Creative Europe programme	23/11/2011	EAC
Other			
26	Draft regulation on the Europe for Citizens programme	30/11/2011	COMM

27	Draft regulation on the Civil Protection Instrument	30/11/2011	ECHO
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Ref. no.	Legislative proposal	Foreseen date of submission	Responsible
(GD/service)			
28	Draft regulation on the Statistics Programme	23/11/2011	ESTET
External relations			
29	Draft regulation on DCI	07/12/2011	DEVCO
30	Draft regulation on the Stability Instrument	07/12/2011	DEVCO
31	Draft regulation on the Instrument for Democracy and Human rights	07/12/2011	DEVCO
32	Draft regulation on co-operation with Greenland	07/12/2011	DEVCO
33	Draft regulation on the Pre-Accession Aid Instrument	07/12/2011	ELARG
34	Draft regulation on the Neighbourhood Policy Instrument	07/12/2011	EEAS
35	Draft regulation on the Partnership Instrument	07/12/2011	EEAS/ DEVCO
36	Draft regulation on the Common Foreign and Security Policy	07/12/2011	FPI/EEAS
37	Draft regulation on the Humanitarian Aid Instrument	07/12/2011	ECHO
38	Draft regulation on the Nuclear Safety Instrument	07/12/2011	ENER/ DEVCO
39	Draft regulation on Macro-Financial Assistance	07/12/2011	ECFIN
40	Draft regulation on the Guarantee Fund for External Activities	07/12/2011	ECFIN
41	Draft regulation on the European Globalisation Fund	07/12/2011	EMPL
Research and innovation			
42	Draft regulation on the Common Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation	13/12/2011	RTD

Competitiveness and SMEs			
43	Draft regulation on the Competitiveness and SMEs Programme	13/12/2011	ENTR
44	Draft regulation on the GNSS programme	13/12/2011	ENTR
Other planned legislative proposals			
45	Innovative financial instruments	-	ECFIN
46	Draft regulation on the PRINCE programme	-	ECFIN/ HOME/ JUST
47	Interoperable solutions for European public administration	-	DIGIT/ INFSO

Source: author's own compilation

The European Commission published its first legislative proposals in line with its plan, on 6 October 2011, as a legislative Cohesion Policy Package (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm). This package contained the following draft regulations:

1. Draft regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries Fund within the Common Strategic Framework and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006
2. Draft regulation on the European Regional Development Fund
3. Draft regulation on the Cohesion Fund
4. Draft regulation on the European Social Fund
5. Draft regulation on the EU Solidarity Fund
6. Draft regulation on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund
7. Draft regulation on the EU programme on social change and innovation
8. Draft regulation on modifying Regulation No. 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation with the aim to clarify, simplify and improve the establishment and functioning of such groupings
9. Communication from the European Commission on the future of the Cohesion Fund

Most of these regulations were adopted on 17 December 2013 and this legislative package was published on the same date (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/regulations/).

In the framework of the preparation of the legislation for the period 2014–

2020, the European Commission dealt for the first time with territory vulnerability indexes. It set up and monitored the following four indexes:

- a) Globalisation vulnerability index
- b) Demography vulnerability index
- c) Climate change vulnerability index
- d) Energy vulnerability index.

2.3 Thematic objectives

With a view to the concentration of funds designed for the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MAFF) for the years 2014–2020 with an allocation of €956 billion, the following 11 thematic areas were defined for financing:

1. Enhancing research, technological development and innovations;
2. Access to, use and quality of information and communication technologies;
3. Increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and fisheries (for the EMFF);
4. Supporting the transition towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors;
5. Supporting the adjustment to climate changes, risk prevention and management;
6. Environment protection and promotion of energy effectiveness;
7. Supporting sustainable transport and elimination of bottlenecks within the key infrastructure network;
8. Supporting employment and labour mobility;
9. Supporting social inclusion and fight against poverty;
10. Investments in education, skills and lifelong learning;
11. Building institutional capacities and an effective public administration.

Thematic objective 5 sets the priorities for the financing of climate change and risk prevention and management. It was up to the decision of the Member States whether they choose this thematic objective from the given list for the financing of activities in the programming period 2014–2020 and to what extent or in what financial amount. Within the negotiation process with the Commission, Slovakia managed to reach an agreement on funds that can be used under the Operational Programme Quality of the Environment for:

- INVESTMENT PRIORITY 1 of Priority Axis 2: 2.1 Supporting investments in climate change adaptation, including ecosystem approaches
- INVESTMENT PRIORITY 1 of Priority Axis 3: 3.1 Supporting investments in addressing special risks, preventing natural disasters and developing natural disaster management systems (<http://www.op-kzp.sk/rizika/>).

3 National legislation

3.1 Act on supporting regional development

The basic law that allowed for a full application of the regional policy principles in the Slovak Republic within the harmonisation of the national legislation with the *acquis communautaire* and to participate in the European Union's cohesion policy was Act No. 503/2001 Coll. on the Promotion of Regional Development. It was also necessary to produce a document on the basis of which Slovakia would receive finance from the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. For the reduced period of 2004–2006, it was the National Development Plan and the Community Support Framework, which represented an agreement between the European Commission and the Slovak Government on the priorities in the use of funding from the EU Structural Funds.

The National Strategic Reference Framework represented the underlying document for the use of finance from the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the programming period 2007–2013.

However, the finance from the EU funds should only be considered as complementary funds, as also suggested by European Community regulations. It is very important to support regional development at the national level by activating own internal sources of development.

Clearly absent in the Slovak Republic was a document at national level addressing regional development beyond complementary funds (EU Funds). In 2008, the Slovak Government adopted a new Act No. 539/2008 Coll. on the Promotion of Regional Development, which creates space and the conditions for a more effective regional policy guidance and implementation and enables the self-governing regions and municipalities to exercise their competences for their own development to a greater extent than under the previous legislation. This act defined the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic (“National Strategy”) as the fundamental document on the promotion of regional development at the national level.

3.2 National Regional Development Strategy

According to the National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic, the country's regional development is considerably influenced by EU's regional policy. Slovakia's entry in the EU in 2004 brought to the forefront the regional dimension of social and economic processes more than ever before.

“In accordance with the Lisbon Strategy setting the aim of creating a competitive, job-creating and knowledge-oriented economy which is characterised by growth, social cohesion and respect of environment, the Slovak Republic will

have to further pay attention to the development of:

- Human resources,
- Business environment,
- Science, research and innovation,
- Environment” (National Regional Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic, p. 4)

The situation has been constantly deteriorating in the field of the environment. “Since the mid-1990s, the trend of improvement of certain indicators, such as growth of emissions from individual motor transport, reduction of green public areas, production of non-returnable packages etc., has slowed down or stopped in many countries, including Slovakia.” (p. 34, *ibid.*)

This situation is detailed in the National Regional Development Strategy, which identifies the following problems/problem areas that require priority solutions:

- Insufficient integration of environmental aspects into economic and sectoral decisions;
- Insufficient integration between social aspects and the environment (p. 36, *ibid.*).

The National Strategy represents the underlying strategic document, the aim of which is to comprehensively define the country’s strategic approach to the promotion of regional development in Slovakia. For NUTS 3 regions, its task is as follows:

- identify their internal potential and specify their potential competitiveness within Slovakia;
- characterise their specific aspects and related main competitive advantages within the Slovak Republic and in the European context;
- determine their strategic development objectives and priorities (NUTS – introduced by Decree of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SO SR) No. 438/2004 Coll. issuing the classification of statistical territorial units in connection with the needs of the EU regional policy. The following levels are defined for Slovakia: NUTS 1 – Slovak Republic, NUTS 2 – Bratislava Region, Western Slovakia, Central Slovakia, Eastern Slovakia, NUTS 3 – higher territorial units (self-governing regions), LAU 1 – districts, LAU 2 – municipalities.).

The National Strategy was based primarily on the EU Lisbon Strategy and its detailing specifically for Slovakia through documents such as Slovakia’s Competitiveness Development Strategy until 2010, the National Reform Programme or the Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21.

The main part of the document is the chapter The Vision and Strategy of Regional Development and the chapter Priorities and Objectives of the Development Strategy for Slovak Regions. The chapter The Vision and Strategy of Regional Development presents a long-term vision of promoting Slovakia's regional development, the basic points of the regional development strategy and its strategic objective, and defines the most important development priorities by priority areas. The chapter Priorities and Objectives of the Development Strategy for Slovak Regions contains a brief socio-economic analysis of the regions at the NUTS 3 level and an evaluation of their internal potential, a description of the specific aspects of each region, the main development factors and competitive advantage of the regions. The document defines the strategic development objectives for each region and proposes their development within the set priority areas.

The National Strategy formulates the objectives, priorities and development activities that will have to be implemented in order to ensure the sustainable regional development policy in Slovakia based mainly on the growth of economic performance and social cohesion. For a more effective and efficient implementation of the regional policy helping the elimination of unjustified intra-regional discrepancies, it will be necessary to detail the national strategy objectives and priorities down to the LAU 1 level.

However, the National Regional Development Strategy does not deal at all with the negative possibilities of restricting the planned growth of regions/regional development. In all its variants, it counts with a positive economic development. From the point of view of sustainable regional cohesion, the most appropriate seems to be the scenario which shifts the focus from the centre to supporting the development of regional centres along with a comprehensive quality policy of regional self-governments. The pre-condition, on one hand, is the leaving of enough space to regional self-governments in the national part of the regional strategy and, on the other hand, the use of this space by targeted quality strategies of regional self-governments, reflecting their regional specificities in a creative manner.

3.3 National Reform Programme

The requirement to create a National Reform Programme is set within the European Semester. The governments of the Member States are required to present to the European Commission a National Reform Programme together with the Stability Programme by April of the given year (non-euro countries are required to present Convergence Programmes).

“The National Reform Programme is one of the tools aimed at achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. It concerns macroeconomic coordination,

long-term outlook, obstacles and support for growth, national objectives, measures and consequences” (<http://www.europskaunia.sk/narodny-program-reforiem>). The European Commission evaluates both documents/programmes and, in June of the given year, presents to the Member States specific recommendations or warnings in the case of major deviations.

The National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic 2017 describes the structural measures that the Slovak Government plans to implement in the next two years. The comprehensive approach to priority setting which, apart from GDP, takes into account other aspects of the quality of life as well, identified the labour market, healthcare and the elementary school system as the remaining major challenges of the Slovak economy.

Before 2014, the National Reform Programme was prepared for a longer period of time (four years –2011–2014, or two years – 2008–2010, 2006–2008) (<http://www.finance.gov.sk/Default.aspx?CatID=5197>). The NRP describes “structural measures that the Government of the Slovak Republic plans to implement with an emphasis on the next two years” (NRP 2017, p. 4). A separate chapter deals with the reduction of regional disparities.

3.4 Action Plans

The NRP is implemented through action plans approved by the SK Government (http://www.finance.gov.sk/Components/CategoryDocuments/s_LoadDocument.aspx?categoryId=8046&documentId=15552). “In the course of 2016, action plans for the twelve least developed districts were approved (NRP 2017, p. 4). They contain a list of concrete project intents in the field of support of entrepreneurship and investors, human resources development and improvement of the local infrastructure with the total financial allocation of EUR 50.3 mil.”

Under Article 3(1)(b) of the act, the Central Labour Office shall “include in the list of the least developed districts the district in which the registered unemployment rate calculated on the basis of the available number of job seekers registered by the Central Labour Office during at least nine calendar quarter-year in the course of the previous twelve consecutive calendar quarter-years was 1.6-times higher than the average registered unemployment rate in the Slovak Republic in the same period”(Act No. 336/2015 Coll. on the Support of the Least Developed Districts and on changes and amendments to some acts).

At its 26th meeting on 30 January 2018, the National Council of the Slovak Republic approved an amendment to the Act on the Support of the Least Developed Districts (<http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=schodze/schodza&ID=359#current>). The list of the least developed districts will be extended due to the changed limit of the unemployment rate used for including a district in the list. With the entry into effect of the amendment, this indicator will

change from 1.6-times the average registered unemployment rate in Slovakia to 1.5-times this rate.

Another novelty is the provision on Annual Priorities in the form of a binding document approved by the Government, which represents the basis for the granting of a regional contribution to eligible beneficiaries and the conditions under which the regional contribution can be granted. The amendment is expected to enter into effect on 1 April 2018.

Under current Article 4(2) of the act, the Action Plan shall contain “an analysis of the adverse economic, social and environmental condition of the least developed region, an assessment of its development potential, a proposal for measures and tasks for ensuring the implementation and fulfilment of the Action Plan, the timetable, the methods and sources of financing, and the monitoring and evaluation of the progress made. Furthermore, the Action Plan shall integrate the existing sectoral programmes and cross-sectional programmes and propose the elimination of barriers in implementing them”.

4 CONCLUSION

The non-existent systematic preparation of an area and its components (people, ecosystem, infrastructure, entrepreneurs, critical infrastructures, real properties, etc.) will place increased demands on reactions and restoration after extraordinary events. Nevertheless, a functional system of prevention and preparation for threats and risks would considerably reduce the consequences of damage to property, lives and ecosystems. It is, however, impossible to set up a uniform system for all types of threats all over the Slovak Republic’s territory. It is therefore necessary to carry out regional/local risk analyses, propose methods for their mitigation and prepare tools and means for their management.

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