

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

PROJECT GOAL:

The major goal of the research project is to identify the importance of the funds from the EU regional policy in shaping the environmental dimension of sustainable development in Poland by taking into consideration the spatial differences with respect to areas of business activity key to the natural environment. These have been identified as the power sector, transport, water management, waste management and environmental protection. Accomplishment of the major goal will also include an attempt at solving two research problems. The first issue, of key importance to the project subject, is related to the difficulties accompanying an analysis of the impact of the EU regional policy on social and economic development. While it is deemed an important factor of developmental changes (including those related to the protection of the natural environment), it is difficult to indicate a specific degree of this impact, to separate it from the influence of the remaining factors like for example use of other funds for environmental protection purposes, a change in social behaviour or general social and economic transformations. The other research problem, of importance to solving the first problem, is the lack of operationalization of which the concept of sustainable development has been accused. This leads to perceiving this type of development as some sort of an abstract idea. A solution to this problem necessitates, among other things, a methodological approach which will allow to examine and measure the relations between the expenditures incurred as part of business activity and the results reflected in the condition of the natural environment.

For the major goal of the project to be accomplished and the above mentioned research problems to be solved, the following major research hypothesis needs to be verified: *The funds from the EU regional policy as part of its environmental intervention have been employed in Poland in an optimum way i.e. one clearly reinforcing positive changes to the condition of the natural environment.*

THE PROJECT RESEARCH:

As part of the project, a dispute has been sparked off over the lack of utility of sustainable development. We plan to demonstrate that it is a useful developmental concept, a response to one of the biggest challenges to the social and economic development. The challenge is in overcoming the limitations imposed by the natural environment. In the research process, we plan an attempt to devise a tool which allows to measure the impact of ventures undertaken as part of the adopted system of areas of business activity on the resources of the natural environment and its quality. The research will take into account a spatial approach related to the identification of the regional differentiation of the environmental conditioning of development and therefore the regional specificity of the needs referring to an optimal use of the EU funds for shaping the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The results of the analyses will largely fill the gap in the knowledge about measuring and ensuring sustainable development in Poland on the regional and local levels. At present this type of research is non-existent while the biggest research accomplishments in the realm of measuring sustainable development are related to the global and international levels. The basis for inter-regional comparisons of the environmental dimension of development, stimulated by the EU regional policy, will be an analytical model describing the impact of the EU regional policy on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The suggested model will be subjected to empirical verification by means of scientific methods of quantitative nature (like regression models, non-hierarchical data clustering) as well as qualitative (like an in-depth interview).

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE RESEARCH TOPIC:

The selection of the research topic related to the environmental dimension of regional development stems from the existence of a certain gap related to research into sustainable development. Scientific developments based on this concept tend to be selective with respect to the content as well as the space. However, they make a valuable contribution in the form of knowledge of specific developmental problems. On the other hand, their goal is not a holistic or synthetic view of sustainable development as is the goal of this project. This research subject also stems from a conviction that the importance of environmental conditioning is not fully appreciated in the process of stimulating social and economic development both in the realm of scientific research and economic practice. The project research is to contribute to a more aware perception of the protection of the natural environment whose resources in fact lay at the foundation of civilization progress.