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LOCAL AGENDA 21

**INTRODUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNES OF
KUJAWSKO- POMORSKIE PROVINCE**

Introduction

Undoubtedly, introducing a sustainable or durable development influences politics of the EU to a greater and greater extent. Reflection of this could be seen during the summit in Lisbon in 2000 (and the Lisbon Strategy developed there) as well as one year later during the summit in Gothenburg, where the ecological issues took unchallenged position in considerations about the future of Europe and the world. Threats resulting from globalization and degradation of the natural environment make the problem of sustainable development of the economy, together with protection of environment even more urgent, as it is the sustainability of development that should be the foundation of all actions.

However, empirical research carried out for different European countries, including Poland, show much the countries and regions differ when taking into account the realization of Agenda 21. Worrying is the fact that the advancement in introducing Agenda 21 being at different levels in different countries results very often from a lack of awareness of basic issues connected with the topic. In Poland, there are self-governments which have never heard about Local Agenda 21, and because of that they do not introduce the sustainable development. Controversies connected with this issue make the problems still current and considerations about this topic still necessary. The distance separating Polish regions from the other European Union regions, even when talking about knowledge of discussed issue, is enormous. Additionally, this is why the topic often undertaken, especially in the end of 90's, is still important, while questions asked in the previous century have remained largely without an answer.

Research shows that engaging Agenda 21 in Polish self-governments has been performed on three levels of advancement depending on the way of understanding the issue¹:

some self-governments do not know the aims of Agenda 21 and treat the sustainable development as an environment protection barrier,

some self-governments identify the sustainable development with the environment protection and ecological policy,

some self-governments introduce the sustainable development as an integral part of regional and local development.

Elaboration from 2003 on introducing LA 21 in Silesian province was an inspiration for carrying an empirical research once again². Its main aim is to determine the level of awareness of the sustainable development issues in public administration, and to assess the scale of engagement in introducing LA 21 in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province³. Questionnaire carried out among self-government authorities was the basis for verifying the hypothesis about insufficient understanding of the concept by public administration. Further theses arise out of this initial hypothesis that need to be verified which assume that communes do not develop in a sustained mode, they do not realize Local Agenda 21, nor solve problems in a complex way in keeping with environmental, economical, social, and institutional-and-political order.

Questionnaire has been analyzed in view of:

awareness of problems which have environmental, economic, social, and political-institutional character, and their scale throughout the communes,

awareness of rules and concepts of sustainable development, identification of problems, barriers connected with introducing the sustainable development.

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T. Borys, *Realizacja Lokalnej Agendy 21 w polskich samorządach*, Środowisko 2002 nr 15/231, p. 20.

² Compare E. Lorek, A. Sobol, *Ocena postępów wdrażania Lokalnej Agendy 21 na Świecie*, *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* 2003 nr 2/12 and Z. Bukowski, *Lokalna Agenda 21*, *Samorząd Terytorialny* 2003 nr 3.

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1. The idea of sustainable development

The sustainable development concept can be described as a desire for continuous maintenance of adequate proportions between the need of development and the necessity of retaining natural resources and protecting (balancing) the natural environment, with none of the elements weakening with time (durability) but giving stimulus to further actions (self-sustainability)⁴. The system is prone to evolutionary transformations leading to reinforcement of development foundations. The essence of a region sustainable development comes down to creating a new, durable potential that generates its own, internal mechanism of evolution. The potential, including resources, economical structure, as well as value of regional space should favor creating new values, satisfy needs of regional and local community; and should not cause (or should eliminate) any negative side effects in the surroundings⁵.

According to the *Think globally, act locally* rule the key role in process of launching Agenda 21 should be played by local authorities⁶. The realization of eco-development within LA 21 means accommodating the principles of the Global Acting Programme, ie. Agenda 21, for the local level of a commune or region. Agenda 21 entrusts the local authorities with an important role in the practical launching of recommendations and actions stated in the document. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 defines the desirable way of local authorities actions that is to be based on creativity, initiative, as well as showing the initiative and openness, and not on inactive waiting for directives. Agenda 21 devotes a lot of place to the role of local authorities, because these authorities create, conduct and keep the technical and social infrastructure; they also complete tasks connected with land development, keeping cleanness and order; and additionally, they create their own, and implement the national and regional ecological policy. Local authorities are those whose task is to begin and conduct dialogue with community and promote rules of sustainable development in the local society. In practice, the idea of sustainable development is realized in a form of sustainable development strategy

⁴ Interpretation on the basis of different definitions found in literature.

⁵ *Zarządzanie strategiczne rozwojem lokalnym i regionalnym*, red. A. Klasik and F. Kuźniak, EA Katowice, 2001, p. 24.

⁶ What a sustained commune should look like is illustrated best in the proposal of CERM (Council of European Regions and Communes) expressed in *Poradnik Lokalna Agenda 21*.

that is supposed to show a method of balancing all orders. Unfortunately, although there is a need for the strategy realization, neither communal nor district government guarantees the sustained character⁷.

Detailed criteria to be used for assessing the LA 21 process were formed at the “Earth Summit” in Johannesburg in 2002, and earlier in the Lisbon Strategy, where the EU described the care for durable foundations of development and natural environment (limiting climate changes, keeping natural resources) as one of the main aims.. The aim is to be an indicator of the continent development strategy. One year later in Gothenburg, great attention was drawn to eco-development and one important element was attached to the ecological policy, in which prior areas are:

- climate changes,
- controlling pressure of transport on the environment,
- improvement of public health,
- preserving natural sources.

Poland when declaring its willingness to introduce those rules obliged itself to perform them already in 1992. In reference to this eco-development was theoretically being implemented in Poland. The rule of eco-development is a constitutional policy in Poland⁸. Valid definition of the eco-development rule can be found in Art. 3 Section 50 of the Environ-

⁷ SEA- Strategic Environmental Strategy is an instrument for realization of the sustainable development and for integration of the environment protection with the trade policies. Assessed are the strategic decisions, both general and detailed plans and programmes of actions. It is a systematic process of assessing the environmental results of engaging all plans and strategic programmes. Its aim is to consider fully and clearly the environmental conditions at the pre-decisive stage accounting for the economical, social and political conditions. Frequently, however, trade programmes are not co-related with the developmental strategies or spatial development plans. It is a result of an abundance of not co-coordinated documents at the national, provincial, district and communal level. Prognosis documents have to account for the basic strategic programme and planning documents. Additionally they have to be consistent. The rule applies mainly to: the Strategy of Sustainable Development of Poland till 2025, National Development Plan, the Concept of Country’s Spatial Development, the National Strategy of Regional Development, 2nd Country’s Ecological Policy, the Strategy for Regional Development of Provinces and Plans of Spatial Development of Provinces.

⁸ In the Constitution from 1997 in article 5 we can read for example that “The Republic of Poland shall safeguard the independence and integrity of its territory and ensure the freedoms and rights of persons and citizens, the security of the citizens, safeguard the national heritage and shall ensure the protection of the natural environment pursuant to the principles of sustainable development”. In article 74 we can read that: “Public authorities shall pursue policies ensuring the ecological security of current and future generations”.

ment Protection Law Act⁹- The eco-development rule is accounted for in the strategic and planning documents currently in force in Poland such as the 2nd State's Ecological Policy, Poland 2025 - Long-term strategy of Durable and Sustainable Development or National Development Plan. Moreover, Poland is obliged to ensure high level of environment protection in compliance with all the EU accession obligations¹⁰.

All actions at the local level in Poland are based on the 2nd State's Ecological Policy, a document adopted by the Government in June 2000¹¹. The main aim is to determine the grounds for introducing the country's sustainable development strategy. The strategy was adopted by the Government in 2000 in the document "Poland 2025 - long-term strategy of durable and sustainable development". This is a vision of Poland's advancement based on the rule of sustainable and durable development, and consistency of economical, social and ecological aims. The elementary aim stated in the strategy provides for "ensuring Polish families with prosperity, strengthening their financial independence and the sense of safety". However, declarations in strategic and planning documents all by themselves are not sufficient when they have no reflection in the reality. Even some generally formulated indicators which assess the realization of the main aim fail to have any effects because there are no procedures of monitoring and, later on, of evaluating this system.

2. Sustainable development in the future

The calendar of assignments for the years to follow should undoubtedly elaborate and introduce on all levels of management some detailed, clear-cut sustainable development indicators. It is not easy to do, however without such a holistic system, all actions (starting from the identification

⁹ Journal of Laws 2001.62.627: „ Sustainable development is such a social-and-economical development in which political, economic, and social actions are integrated and account for the natural environment balance and durability of basic natural processes in order to ensure the possibility of satisfying the elementary needs of individual societies or citizens either from contemporary or future generations”.

¹⁰ It has to be noticed that although NDP for 2004-2006 is a document programming the usage of structural funds and Consistency Fund, then NDP for 2007-2013 is to be a strategy involving all the developmental actions irrespective of financial means origin.

¹¹ The first version of Ecological National Policy was adopted by Sejm of the Republic of Poland in 1991- a year before the "Environment and Development" Conference, during which the UN countries adopted Agenda 21.

of problems up to evaluation on the basis of monitoring) to be undertaken in communes will be chaotic and scattered.

United Nations Development Commission prepared a list of 58 indicators reflecting Agenda 21 chapters that are connected with the environment, economy, social and institutional matters. As they do not work for examining the sustainable development on local levels of the EU countries, the European Commission uses only the so called environmental general indicators to assess the LA 21 implementation. However, the British experience shows that it is beneficiary to create the indicators accounting for the region's specifics and problems occurring there in the course of social consultations and partnership in the broad sense. Tadeusz Borys presents a few ways of creating a set of environmental indicators: according to international arrangements, according to national system of indicators, according to an expert method together with the bottom-up description of indicators, specialized institutions, spontaneous creation¹². Actions aiming at regulating the issue of introducing and measuring the eco-development are necessary because they would create the basis for: inspecting the progress, comparing regions as well as strategic planning and at the same time they would facilitate managing the whole region in compliance with the LA 21 recommendations.

Despite satisfactory theoretical preparation for solving such problems, the actions undertaken seem to be still insufficient. Regulated need to be still the matters of establishing superior aims, so that strategies from Lisbon and Gothenburg are consistent and so that in the Lisbon Strategy the same attention is paid to sustainable development as to competition and in the Europe Sustainable Development Strategy to limiting poverty. Additionally, trials to change the social model and to improve the quality of economic increase can be a starting point for balance the development, as this type of development is a chance and not a restriction for the economy.

3. Implementation of the sustainable development in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province. Analysis and interpretation

¹² T Borys, *Mierniki ekorozwoju na poziomie lokalnym*, in: *Statystyka regionalna, metody i źródła zasilania informacyjnego*, EA Poznań, 2000, p. 266.

The aim of the research was to determine the awareness of the sustainable development issues in public administration, as well as to assess the scale of advancement in introducing LA 21 in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province. Taking into consideration the fact that Poland committed itself to introduce Local Agenda 21 till the end of 2000 in the whole country, it is well justified to ask if the commitment has been satisfied. In 2003, it was assessed that the initiative was undertaken by 60 self- governments according to UNDP¹³, while 70 according to ICLEI (Bukowski 2003), and in the kujawsko-pomorskie province there were 4 such initiatives confirmed¹⁴. Therefore we can keep asking the questions what is the awareness of self-government administration concerning the sustainable development and how much it rose as well as how governments perform LA 21.

Main information that is supposed to give answers to the questions given above has been obtained from research. Questionnaires were sent to all communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province. Filled questionnaires were sent back by 42 communes which is 32% of all communes. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts.

The first one concerned identification of problems of environmental, economic, social and institutional-and-political character. It gave the answer about the scale of problems occurring throughout the communes. The second part examined the public administration's awareness of rules and concepts of sustainable development. The third part identified problems and barriers that were involved in engaging the sustainable development.

The analysis enabled verification of theses assuming that communes do not develop in a sustained way, do not realize Local Agenda 21 and do not solve problems in a comprehensive way with the environmental, economical, social and institutional-and-political orders preserved.

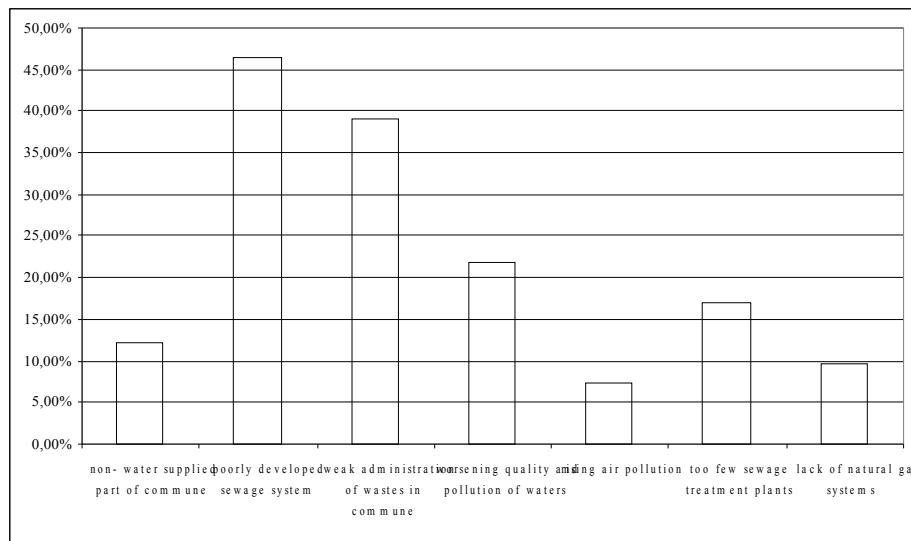
Identification of environmental, economical, social and institutional-and-political problems

¹³ *United Nations Development Programme.*

¹⁴ E. Lorek, A. Sobol, *Ocena postępów wdrażania Lokalnej Agendy 21 na Świecie*, Studia Regionalne i Lokalne 2003 nr 2/12.

The main environmental problems listed in the surveys included: poorly developed sewage systems and weak wastes management in the communes. These are strictly internal problems. The other problems included: lack of the water supply system in parts of individual communes, deterioration of water quality and increasing water pollution, too few sewage treatment plants as well as a lack of natural gas system have been identified in almost 20% of communes. The scale of problems is presented in Figure 1.

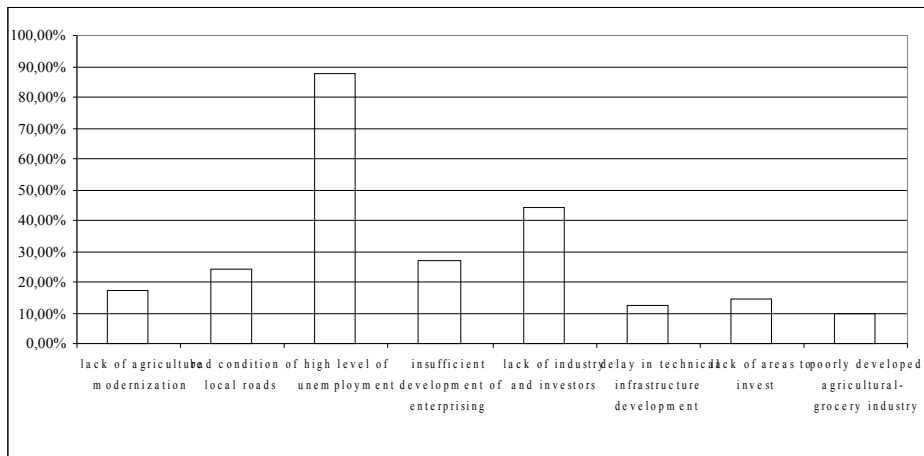
Figure 1. Types and range of environmental problems in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province



Source: own calculations on the grounds of research results.

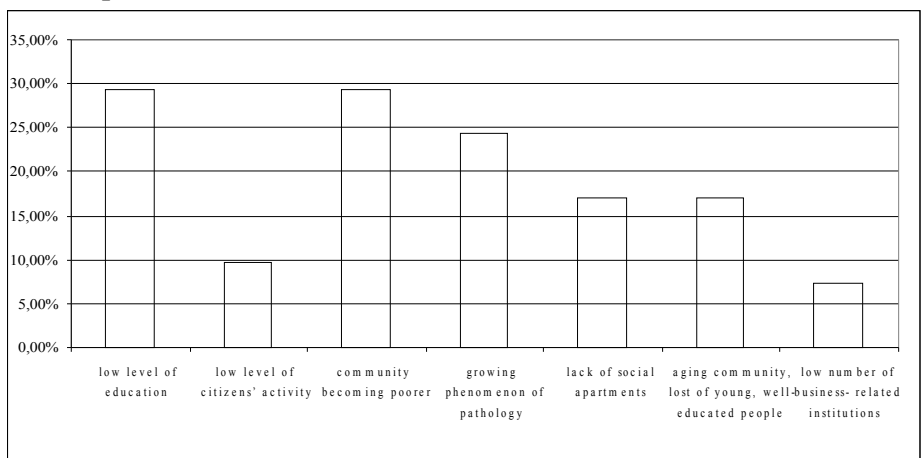
The economic problems – unemployment, low enterprising, lack of industry and investors – are present in a big part of communes (fig. 2). The situation can be justified by such social problems as those resulting from poor education, impoverishment of the society and growing number of pathologies (fig. 3). Such social conditioning does not contribute to the economic development, and on the other hand lack of perspectives of improving the financial position results in the society's resigning from undertaking their own initiatives.

Figure 2. Types and scale of economical problems in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Figure 3. Types and scale of social problems in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province

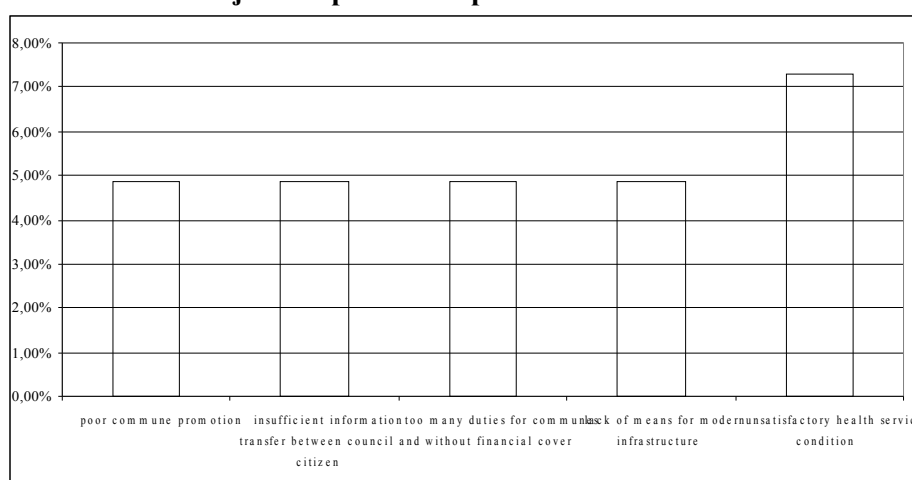


Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

From all categories of problems, the institutional-and-political ones occur the least frequently (fig. 4). In majority of cases respondents think that there are no problems of this type in their communes. Only 5% of communes can see problems related to poor promotion of their commune, insufficient exchange of information between citizens and offices,

as well as lack of means for modern infrastructure. The health care system condition was evaluated as unsatisfactory in 7% of communes, however, this is a factor which does not depend on the communes and the communes do not have an effect on it. This shows that according to self-government authorities there are no problems in the institutional-and-political field, which is the very same field they are responsible for.

Figure 4. Types and scale of institutional-and-political problems in communes of kujawsko-pomorskie province



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

All problems which communes have to cope with can be divided into external and internal ones (however, they cannot be treated as dependent or not dependent upon the communes). This classification has great meaning while looking for ways of solving them because relations between certain categories of problems are complex, interlinked and it is not enough to focus on one of them. Therefore a comprehensive approach is necessary that should be taken into account in strategic plans - unfortunately this is not so evident when we analyze the given aims of development. Lack of consistency is expressed in separating some actions undertaken from developmental priorities.

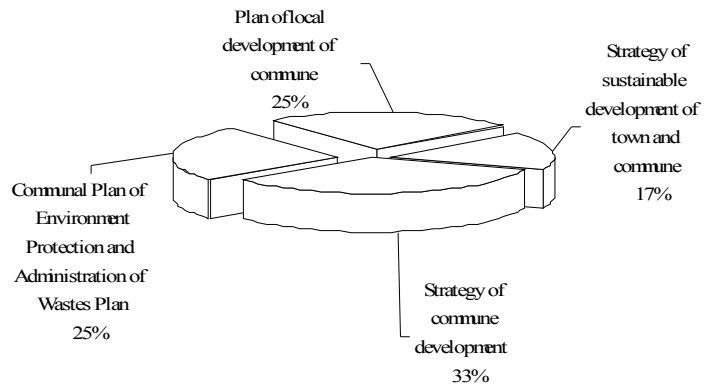
Public administration's awareness of rules and concepts of sustainable development

Further part of the research results show that self-government authorities do not necessarily understand how important it is to assess all the factors having impact on the commune situation. Although they declare to have a strategic document on the basis of which they realize the development implementation, however 25% of communes claim that it is the Communal Plan of Environment Protection and Management (fig. 5). 29% of communes declared to be introducing the sustainable development (pic. 6), (17% of them had a supporting document), and only 7% of communes considered Local Agenda 21 the sustained development indicator (fig. 7). The remaining results of research concern communes which declared introducing LA 21 and only those are the basis for further analysis. The aims of 7% of communes introducing balanced development consist in:

- coordination of social, economical and ecological actions,
- support for entrepreneurs,
- activation of residents,
- ensuring high quality of living by creating new jobs, multi-functional development, proper realization of commune's assignments and keeping the high-quality level of the natural environment,
- social-and-economical development compatible with the environment and maintaining all orders: social, environmental, economic and spatial,
- improving the level of education,
- long-term actions with the current actions accommodated for them.

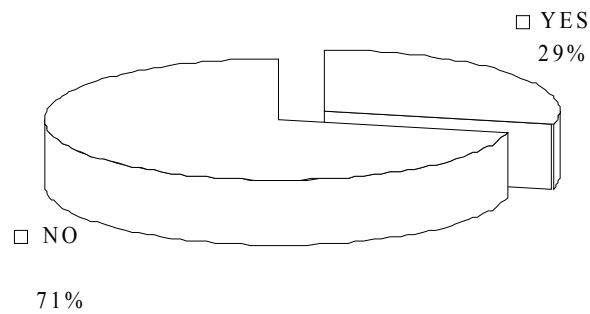
Strategic documents of the other communes do not have the sustained character and account only for the environment protection problems or current problems which communes need to deal with.

Figure 5. Communes' strategic documents



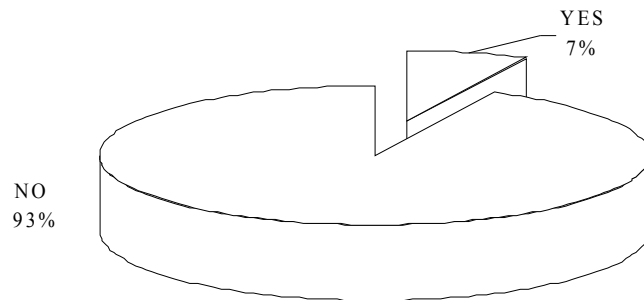
Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Figure 6. Communes declaring to be introducing the sustained development



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Figure 7. Communes introducing the sustained development



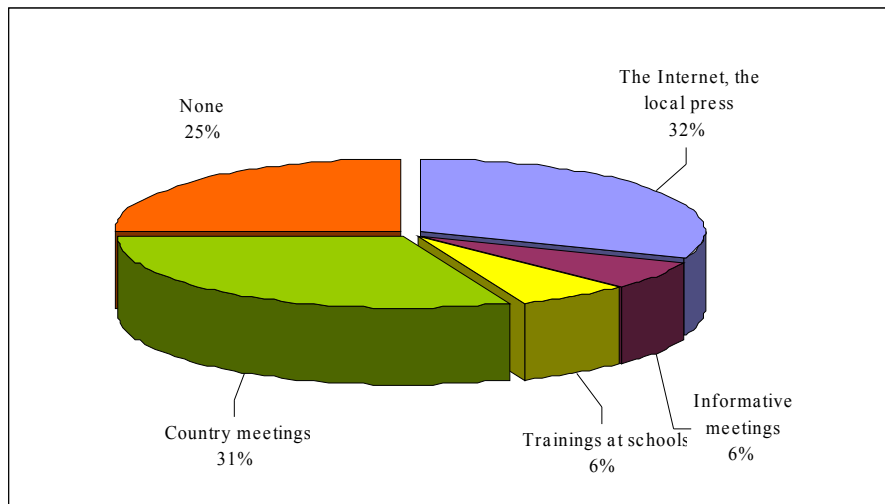
Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

The lack of the problem awareness can be also confirmed by the fact that 66% of communes declaring not to be introducing LA 21 has at the same time the aims of sustainable development in their planning and strategic documents. Those aims concentrate mainly on building, extension or modernization of the infrastructure in the commune.

Problems and barriers accompanying the introduction of Local Agenda 21

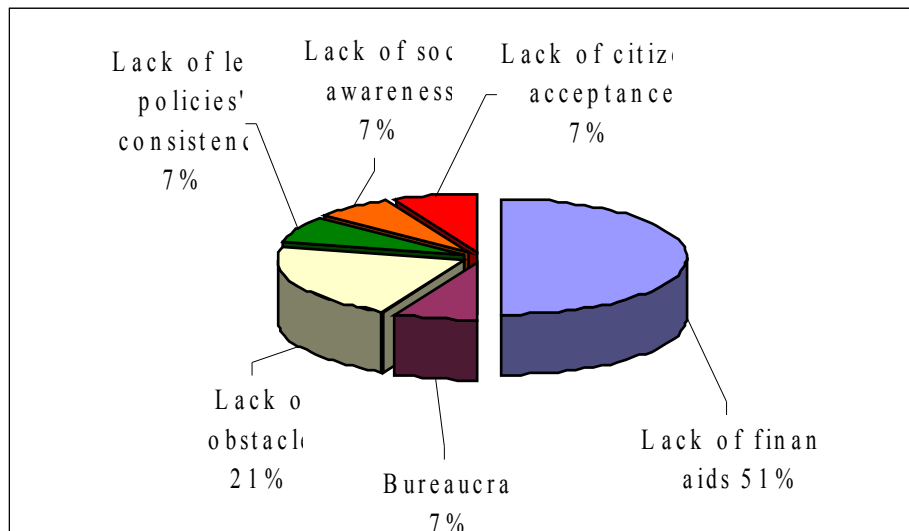
Insufficient knowledge about the issue of LA 21 by public administration and self-government authorities is then reflected in the unawareness of the community. The Public Information Bulletin (BIP) published in the Internet and village meetings are main sources of information about the commune's development and actions undertaken. 25% of communes do not take up any informative actions about LA 21 for community (fig. 8). On the other hand introduction of the balanced development is impeded by such factors as a low social awareness and lack of citizens' acceptance for the developmental actions. As much as 51% of communes introducing the Agenda declares a lack of financial means for this purpose (fig. 9).

Figure 8. Actions undertaken by commune authorities informing about the concept of Local Agenda 21



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

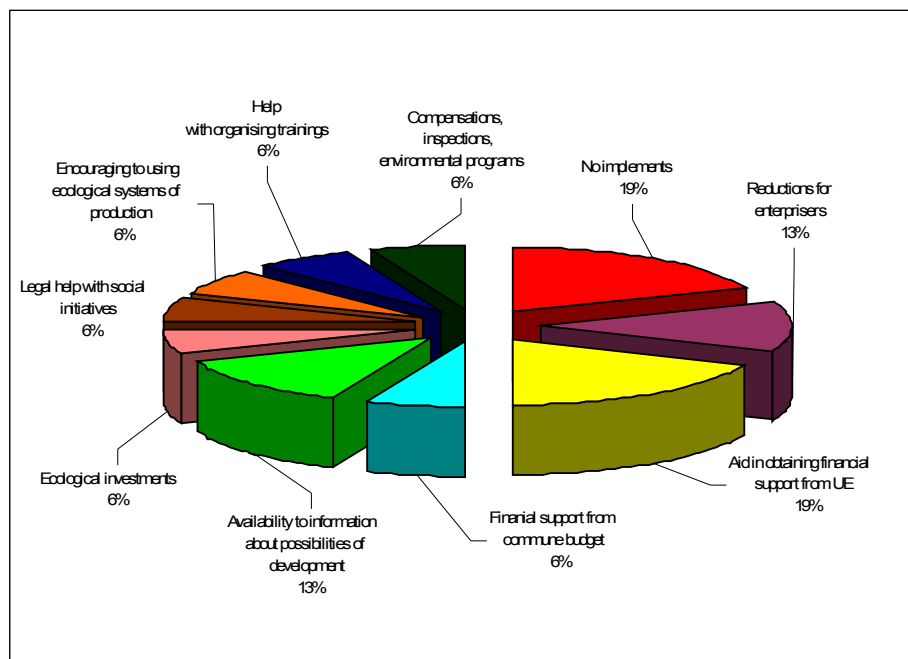
Figure 9. Obstacles encountered when introducing the sustainable development



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Instruments used by the communes which are to stimulate the sustainable development do not have a strategic, long-term character (although 7% of communes understand such a need and name it as an aim of development, none of them declares to be using such instruments). As many as 19% of communes do not undertake any actions and do not use any instruments to achieve the aims. The remaining instruments help only in solving some current problems (fig. 10).

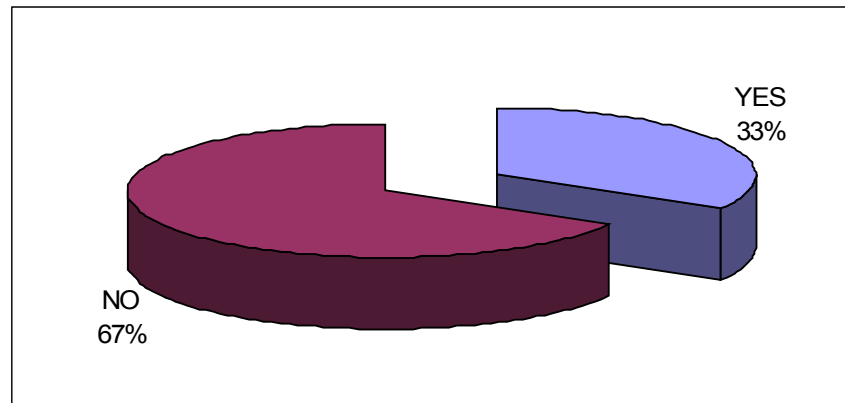
Figure 10. Instruments used by the commune to stimulate the sustainable development



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Operations are monitored by every third commune, the other communes are not interested in the progress and results (fig. 11).

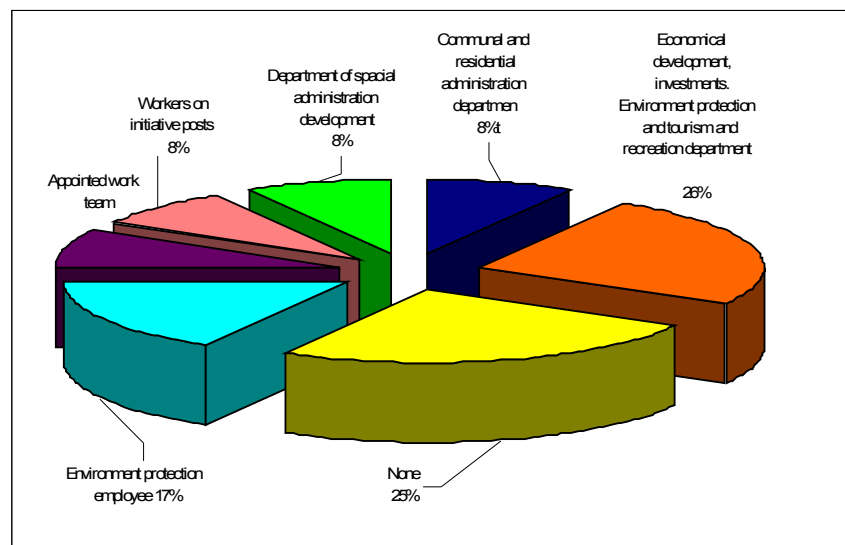
Figure 11. Communes carrying out the monitoring of results and progress in introducing Local Agenda 21



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Moreover in 25% of communes there are no people who are responsible for those actions, and in the remaining one the introduction of the sustainable development is an additional task imposed on staff responsible for realization of different actions (fig. 12).

Figure 12. Department responsible for introducing Local Agenda 21 in the commune



Source: own calculations on the basis of research results.

Still it is the community's and self-government authorities' unawareness of threats coming from the passive attitude towards this issue that is the main problem. Not to understand and not to know the idea of sustainable development is the basic barrier having further consequences such as lack of interest in the issue, lack of initiative in searching the most favorable solutions. The communes that do perform their development in a sustained way do not, however, possess the system of tools or instruments to stimulate the development.

Conclusions

In consideration of the above data it is difficult to talk about the stage of advancement of the sustainable development because the problem lies already in understanding the issue. Majority of communes associates the sustainable development only with the environment protection and its realization is connected to additional costs which they cannot afford at the moment.

In 2003 in kujawsko-pomorskie province the initiative was taken up by four communes. After 3 years the number increased to twelve, however it was only a declared participation. In reality, when taking into account the developmental aims stated in documents, no increase of those initiatives was observed because they were not consistent with rules of the sustainable development. Moreover, there are no people who would be responsible for the issue or the developmental issues are dealt by departments which are not directly connected to the commune development.

Results of the research show that actions in the field of eco-development are still insufficient. Communes still do not develop in a sustained way, they do not implement Local Agenda 21 nor solve problems in a comprehensive way in keeping with the environmental, economic, social and institutional-and-political orders. Actions aiming at developing communes come down to solving current problems and they do not account for the multidimensional aspect of this development.

Therefore making the community aware of the issue and then obtaining their acceptance would be a good foundation for actions in the area of creating Local Agendas in the province. Furthermore, clear regulations would undoubtedly help in solving matters of introducing and monitoring progress of the sustainable development in regions of the entire European Union.

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