

SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING OF SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

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The paper analyses the planning framework for sustainable territorial and regional development. The spatial and environmental planning should play the key role in coordination and integration of different planning grounds in achieving the sustainable regional development. The paper discusses the spatial planning capacity to offer the integral view of the sustainable territorial development. The brief review of tendencies in new spatial planning and regional policy has been given. The focus is on the concept of balanced polycentric development of European Union. The guiding principles of spatial planning in regard of planning system reform in European countries have been pointed out. The changes in paradigm of regional policy, and the tasks of European regional spatial planning have been discussed. In Serbia problems occur in regard with the lack of coordinating sectoral planning with spatial and environmental planning. Partly the problem lies in the legal grounds, namely in non codification of laws and unregulated horizontal and vertical coordination at all levels of governance. The possibilities for the implementation of spatial planning principles and concepts of European Union sustainable territorial and regional development have been analyzed on the case of three regional spatial plans of eastern and southeastern regions in Serbia. The disadvantages in implementing the strategic environmental impact assessment as an instrument for coordination and integration of sectoral planning with spatial and environmental planning have been analyzed. The strategic environmental impact assessment has been implemented only in the spatial planning process. Through spatial planning process its feedback effect on sectoral planning has been indirectly achieved. The priority actions in Serbia for achieving the spatial and environmental planning role in coordination and integration of different planning grounds in sustainable regional development have been given.

Key words: sustainable territorial and regional development, regional spatial planning, sectoral planning, coordination and integration, strategic environmental impact assessment.

THE ROLE OF SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING IN SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The orientation towards establishing unified, integral strategic planning is currently present in all European countries with developed planning systems.

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Integral strategic planning can occur solely as a consequence of an **integral** view of development and future. It can not happen simply by joining social, economic, spatial and environmental components or development aspects. In order to overcome partial planning or establish a comprehensive view and an organised direction of spatial systems and decision-making, one must make many assumptions (economic, political, regulatory etc.) which have been implemented in few countries (the Netherlands, Finland and the Scandinavian countries).

With the development of the sustainable development concept, tendencies to integrate

spatial and environmental planning and detach them into a separate block of institutions - considered able to have a coordinating and integrating role in planning and directing development - are becoming increasingly emphasised. These expectations are based on

The paper is prepared as a part of the scientific projects TP 16013 "Approach and concept for compilation and implementation of Strategy of Spatial Development of Serbia", and TP 16007 "Sustainable Development and Organization of Spas and Other Tourist Settlements in Serbia", financed by the Republic of Serbia Ministry of Science and Technological Development.

the necessity of integral and problem-based approaches to planning and control over general resources, and the necessity of coordination and cooperation aimed at development of the respective sub-systems, co-existing in actual space and the environment.

Along with the aforementioned, it should be kept in mind that there are significant differences between the spatial planning systems of individual European Union countries, due to differences in geographical conditions (size and density of population), historical and cultural conditioning, inherited land use patterns, the extent of urban and economic development, political and ideological aspirations. Similarities emerge in relation to the consistency in recognising the significance of setting the framework for policies and procedures in utilisation of space, environmental protection and sustainable development, and relations towards broader social and economic goals. This means that it is possible to establish common frameworks and principles to develop the system of planning and - within these limits - spatial planning, but also that the systems will develop differently and adapted to the specificities of each state. This position was also confirmed by recent surveys (UNECE 2008), which do not explicitly recommend a universal approach to strategic planning, albeit granted that the integrated strategic approach is present in all reformed systems of spatial planning in European countries.

What is expected of spatial planning today, primarily at the level of the European Union and its regions? What are the basic changes in approach, policies and principles of spatial planning, and the possibilities of their implementation in local practice?

After almost three decades, spatial planning has, starting from local and national, taken on a European dimension. At the level of the European Union and individual member states, spatial planning can still not boast sufficiently strong political and institutional support in relation to sectoral policies, primarily in relation to agrarian and transportation policies. Apart from this, the popularity of spatial planning has increased over the last decade. Why? Advocating the strengthening of the European Union's social, economic and territorial cohesion on the one hand, and various - often adverse effects of sectoral policies to the desired realisation of cohesion and competitiveness of Europe as a continent -

on the other, have both conditioned the search for the most suitable tool to integrate different aspects of general and sectoral policies and realise sustainable territorial development.

Spatial planning is being promoted as one of the instruments of sustainable development that can offer an integral view of future development of territories. The assumed capacity of spatial planning is based on its spatial dimension and capacity to coordinate and integrate various policies, from economic development, transport and environmental protection to cultural policies. The basic task of spatial planning is to plan sustainable territorial development as a general strategic framework for general and sectoral policies. Therefore, spatial planning realises a control role as well, because it enables decision makers to view the results and effectiveness of different policies in specific space, as well as to foresee their efficiency and necessary future adjustments (Adams, Alden, Harris, 2006)

A succession of the European Union developmental documents were adopted, as well as several Pan-European initiatives, representing a new generation of strategic documents. The largest contribution to promoting the role of spatial planning in the European Union was provided by the document on European Spatial Development Perspective - Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union (ESDP, 1999). Starting from the fundamental goal of EU integration processes to achieve sustainable and balanced development of the European territory, the most important contribution of ESDP was to establish the concept of balanced polycentric development, i.e. polycentric system of urban cores, starting with the positive experiences of Holland and Germany, where this concept has been applied for more than half a century. It is essentially an effort to restrain uncontrolled metropolisation and find a counterbalance to the market-initiated process of concentrating economic activities and population in central European regions. The concept of balanced polycentric urban and regional development has become one of the determinants of spatial planning and it exerts a large influence on strategies and policies at national and regional levels of planning and administration (Alden, 2006).

The Territorial Agenda of the European Union - Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions (2007), represents a continuation and correction of ESDP in its

own right. The agenda retains all crucial elements of ESDP and introduces several newer tasks. Orientation towards improving polycentric development has been confirmed and the tasks have been defined in order to contribute towards a more balanced development, balancing quality of life across the population, sustainable use of resources and territorial capital of the region and entire EU. Strengthening regional identity and better utilisation of potentials of the regionally differentiated EU territory was stressed as one of the crucial challenges.

What is significant is that the Territorial Agenda introduced mandatory implementation of an **integrated strategic territorial approach**, i.e. implementation of integral planning and management for all actors in EU, especially local and regional actors, within limits set out at Pan-European and national levels. The establishment of the integral approach to guiding and managing development of the European Union was also supported by the revised European Union strategy for sustainable development (EU SDS, 2006).

The following were categorised as **territorial priorities** in scope of the EU development process: (i) strengthening polycentric development and innovation through networking urban regions and cities; (ii) establishing new forms of partnership and territorial management in developing urban and rural areas, predominantly at the level of functional urban areas; (iii) promoting regional competition and innovation clusters with the aim of stimulating development and specialisation of peripheral and underdeveloped European regions; (iv) strengthening and spreading trans-European transport corridors, improving technical (especially energy) infrastructure, and decentralising services of public interest; (v) promoting Trans-European risk management, including climate change impacts and new forms of managing protection of areas etc.; (vi) strengthening environmental structures and cultural resources as development potential, especially in regions which lag behind in development and in environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.

In the analysis of crucial provisions of the European documents, M. Vujošević (2008) rightfully claims that all of them are relevant for sustainable territorial development in Serbia. He particularly stressed the significance and problems in: implementing polycentric development; achieving equality in the

availability of infrastructure, knowledge and innovation; strengthening the economic base, quality of the environment and infrastructure of urban services; wise management in using natural and cultural heritage, promoting cooperation at regional, cross-border and transnational levels etc. Some of the problems and possibilities concerning implementation of provisions and concepts of European documents shall be indicated in this paper.

The implementation of strategic documents and establishment of sustainable territorial development is facing difficulties, partly because spatial planning is not among the Union's original jurisdictions, but rather falls under the jurisdiction of member states. Chief EU policies are the basic problem, primarily the Lisbon strategy/treaty, prioritizing macroeconomic competitiveness over social and environmental objectives. According to some estimates, most basic European sectoral policies are aimed at achieving economic competitiveness (from transport to urban policies) and therefore indirectly give advantage and contribute to the concentration of economic and innovative activities in a limited number of metropolitan regions (Kunzmann, 2006).

Although the implementation of documents on the Union's territorial development is not obligatory, but they rather represent a guiding, strategic framework to coordinate various policies, experiences in their implementation to date have been positive, primarily in implementing new approaches and concepts. The implementation of these documents in the EU countries is based on the principle of subsidiarity and developing horizontal (intersectoral at the same level of administration) and vertical (between the levels of administration - Union, transnational, national, regional and local levels) coordination. From the EU standpoint, most important are coordination and cooperation at transnational and regional levels, because they enable the resolution of the most important issues of developing European territory - Trans-European transport systems, environmental protection, functional and economic connections between regions, cross-border areas etc.

The ESDP document exerted a powerful influence on Europeanisation of spatial planning and planning methodology, which adapted both to realising sustainable development and territorial cohesion and competitiveness. Different from traditional

land-use planning, spatial planning was more oriented towards unifying the spatial dimension of development with economic, social, environmental and sectoral policies. In a post-industrial information society, spatial planning is expected to represent a foundation for sustainable development policies and policies that contribute to or influence sustainable territorial development. The basic reasons are as follows:

- Cultural and landscape diversity of European space shall be of crucial interest for the future economic development of the EU. The role of spatial planning and spatially relevant policies is to determine regionally differentiated values and resources and protect them from uncontrolled economic development and uncontrolled and unsustainable development of infrastructure systems.
- Spatial planning gathers solutions for problems of regional development and preserving regional identity, culture, tradition and quality of life of inhabitants. No other policy can comprehensively view and guide all dimensions of sustainable territorial development.
- High-level discussions on spatial planning in the EU shall influence the adaptation of European sectoral policies to the Pan-European spatial framework and the implementation of estimates of territorial influence, so as to enable guiding spatial implications of sectoral measures and activities on regions, urban and rural settlements (Kunzmann, 2006).

The cohesion policy of the European Union is particularly targeted at regions, regional policies and the role of regional development in reducing economic and social disparities, primarily in production, productivity and employment, which were deepened by its territorial spread. At NUTS II level in 2005, the proportion of gross national product was 8:1 between the most developed London metropolitan and the least developed European region, Lithuania (Growing Regions, Growing Europe, 2007).

Regional policy of the European Union is focused on implementing Lisbon strategy and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy & tasks to increase productivity, employment and sustainable development of European regions. The second largest support from European funds for the period 2007 - 2013 is secured for regional development policies, with a priority

for impoverished regions and overcoming regional disparities (Alden, 2007). European regional policy was designed so that its specific results in improving social and economic cohesion contribute to reducing the gap between developed and undeveloped states and regions. Special attention was paid to the scientific approach in regional policies.

Experiences from various European regions indicate that the contexts of regional planning and regional development are changing rapidly. Within the GRIDS project (Best practice guidelines for instruments of regional development and spatial planning in enlarged EU) and INTERREG IIIC program, it was perceived in several examples that traditional regional policies did not provide expected results in view of more balanced development and competitiveness of regions.

Discussions were held over the previous years about new paradigms of regional development and new approaches to resolving problems of regional disparity and competitiveness. An entire spectrum of topics arose within theoretical contemplations of regional development - on regional competitiveness, social capital, knowledge-based economy, flexible regional specialisation etc. Various theories, concepts and models are being questioned, such as the central place theory (Christaller), growth poles (Perroux), core-periphery spatial and economic development model (Myrdal and Hirschman) etc. The concepts of balanced polycentric regional development, nodal regions - functional-urban regions - daily urban systems etc. were developed on the basis of combining modified classical theories and models. New concepts and models are being researched, such as learning regions (Cooke), intelligent urban regions, regional innovation clusters etc. (ibid).

The nodal region concept came into prominence in **regional and spatial planning**. Selecting nodal regions and planned guidance of their development is one of the most important premises in the process of rational organisation of space. European functional-integration areas and multimodal corridors that shall link big city centres more intensively and contribute to the creation of an integral polystructural urban system of balanced hierarchy and powerful horizontal (spatial) and vertical (functional) connections have been determined. One of the intended models is also the model of European metropolitan regions - EMR, highly urbanized

regions the role of which in demographic, economic (production, consumption, transport), cultural and social sense is transnational in character, and simultaneously represents a factor of spatial cohesion and regional development on the continent. One form of EMRs are metropolitan development areas (Metropolitan European Growth Areas - MEGAs). The future organisation EU27+2 provides for the development of 1595 functional areas, i.e. functional urban regions, 74 of which are MEGAs. In each of the Union's states, the territorial reach of functional regions coincides with daily population migration zones, outlined on the basis of national criteria (Tošić, Maksin-Mičić, 2009).

Spatial planning is indeed one of the more recent and innovative activities of the public sectoral in the domain of regional development. This was also contributed to by the increase in spatial strategies of different scope - from European, transnational, national to regional (Adams, Alden, Harris, 2006). Among them, most attention was drawn to the regional level. The main task at regional level of planning is to prepare and coordinate the regional spatial strategy for a planning horizon of 15 to 20 years. Although European regions vary significantly in respect of spatial reach, it is customary that regional planning strategies and plans are developed for administrative or functional regions, such as functional urban areas (or daily urban systems), axes of development (or corridors), catchment areas, national park areas etc. It is recommended in spatial planning to prioritize functional areas over administrative borders.

UNECE research (2008) identified six fundamental **principles of spatial planning**:

- democraticness,
- subsidiarity,
- participation,
- integration,
- proportionality
- prevention.

The implementation of the subsidiarity principle is harmonized with the significance and spatial influence of the problems being solved, so that only some of the decisions shall be based on local community requests and initiatives. Decisions on main transport corridors, protection and regulation of environmentally or culturally sensitive areas (e.g. catchment areas, areas of natural and cultural heritage) and other matters of public

interest or significance to equate development conditions within and between regions, shall be passed at regional or national levels of planning or administration

Participation and coordination of the widest possible spectrum of regional and local stakeholders in the spatial planning process is of crucial value for the determination and verification of regional space protection priorities, improvements in infrastructure systems, projects of regional and subregional importance and assessments of their environmental impact etc. Participation in the process of formulating and adopting spatial policies and plans enables a relativization of conflicted interests, activities and actions of sectors at same or different levels of administration, local communities and the private sector

The implementation of the integration principle is significant - harmonisation, coordination and integration of sectoral policies for the planned area and integration of local policies, plans and projects of significance for several local communities in the region.

The proportionality principle relates to striking a balance between obligation/directiveness (legal protection) and flexibility (discretionary decision making) in formulating spatial policies and planning statements. Obligation, i.e. directiveness, is necessary when dealing with policies and planning statements in protection of resources, heritage and environment, and in some cases is welcomed as support for development, because of the investor's legal protection. At the same time, the spatial policy must be flexible in order to adapt to the eventualities of economic, social and technological development and stimulating innovation. Flexibility can be achieved by way of determining criteria to realise planned development, in stead of defining final solutions and strict zoning of space. It is recommended to implement a lesser degree of flexibility i.e. discretionary decision-making in conditions of insufficiently developed local levels of planning and administration.

The prevention principle relates to implementing estimates of environmental impacts and risks when defining and evaluating planning policies and options. It also includes the determination to limit development in sensitive areas with an aim to minimise expected climate change impacts and preserve biodiversity, values and resources.

The regional level of spatial planning is used to interpret national policies and priorities and adapt them to regional conditions, to define interregional and intraregional functional bonds and directions of development, set apart and protect areas with critical natural capital (strategically significant and limited sources of water, minerals, natural and recreational values etc.), plan the development of regional and subregional infrastructure systems and public services, conduct environmental impact assessments of planning options and statements, provide guidance for the development of local spatial and other plans etc.

Regional spatial planning is simultaneously a verification and coordination tool for spatial/territorial impacts of all spatially relevant national and regional policies (economic development, natural resources, sustainable development, rural development, heritage protection, development of tourism and culture etc.). Support of national and regional administration levels is necessary to realise expected coordinating role of spatial planning, primarily by way of connecting funding development of sectors and local communities with regional spatial strategies and plans.

The crucial and most difficult task for the planning process is to realise sustainable development of regions by guiding general/framework spatial distribution of development and investments, coordinating the development of infrastructure, housing and public services, and preserving the environment and resources. Apart from general/framework guidelines on the designation and organisation of space, a regional spatial plan can contain boundaries of areas/zones intended for development, revitalisation and/or protection, once they have been sufficiently researched and known.

Cooperation between local levels of administration is necessary in the planning process so as to provide an overview of possible options for the problems and issues of common interest for several local communities. Spatial development options should be the subject of public consultations and strategic impact assessment.

Strategic environmental assessment presents an important tool of integration between various policies and support for the realisation of sustainable territorial development. By implementing a strategic

environmental assessment it can be determined whether plans and policies have been harmonised between themselves and with territorial sustainable development goals, provided it was integrated in the process of spatial and sectoral planning. Individual European countries have also established an environmental compensation to compensate for the impact of new development on the environment with investments into environmental protection in the same or other space (UNECE, 2008).

For the development of new, or the reform of existing spatial planning systems in European countries, and especially countries in transition, it is of significance to reform the following:

- legal basis,
- spatial planning,
- planning instruments, primarily spatial strategies and plans,
- support to implement planning decisions.

The first precondition to reform the spatial planning system is to reform the legal basis, which should secure the following: the implementation of an integrated strategic territorial approach in the process of planning and managing sustainable development, primarily mechanisms for horizontal and vertical cooperation and coordination between sectors and administration levels, and the participation from stakeholders in the decision-making process: accountability for the verification of environmental and territorial impacts of planned development; and higher flexibility of the planning process and planning instruments etc.

The second part of the paper considers the contribution by previous reforms of legal and planning basis to establishing a system of planning and managing sustainable territorial and regional development in Serbia, and primarily mechanisms of coordination between spatial, environmental and sectoral planning.

The third part of the paper analyses the implementation of basic principles of spatial planning, concepts of territorial development of the European Union and individual recommendations made by UNECE for the regional level of spatial planning on the example of new regional and spatial plans for special designation areas with a macroregional dimension in Serbia.

The fourth part of the paper analyses the role and possibilities for the implementation of strategic environmental assessments with the aim of coordinating spatial and sectoral planning and realising sustainable territorial and regional development.

PROBLEMS IN REALISING THE ROLE OF SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING IN SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SERBIA

A hierarchy (both formal and informal) in the planning systems of the European countries was established for the planning basis, mechanisms and procedures of harmonising and coordinating spatial and sectoral planning. This means that the frameworks (concepts, general solutions and guidelines) for the development and regulation of space, determined at national level, are binding for sectoral planning bases at the same levels of planning and that they are being elaborated at regional and local levels of spatial and sectoral planning and corresponding technical documents. The same relation exists between regional and local planning levels. Established mechanisms and procedures also provide the reverse course of actions in the harmonisation process - from local to higher levels of planning. In this process, the regional level of planning plays a decisive role for horizontal (between local communities and sectors) and vertical (between planning levels) coordination.

Coordination and integration of spatial, environmental and sectoral planning is established by providing legal basis, and implementation is secured by institutional-organizational arrangements.

The **legal basis** in Serbia is extremely extensive and uncodified, even though it has been reformed for nearly a decade. The problematics of managing space, protecting the environment, resources and heritage, and sustainable development are directly or indirectly regulated by more than 40 laws.

The legal basis in Serbia has established the hierarchy of spatial and urban plans, but establishing relations between spatial and urban plans with sectoral planning basis, as well as mechanisms and procedures for their coordination and integration are lacking. Only the Law on Spatial Plans of the Republic of

Serbia (1996) set out the obligation to realise or elaborate this spatial plan with other spatial, urban and sectoral plans, strategies, policies and programmes.

The law which regulates spatial planning and management of space ought to be the basic law to provide a planning basis and the implementation of sustainable development of territory and settlements. The Law on Planning and Construction from 2003 specifically mentioned spatial development among principles for management of space. The problem is that this law did not deal in management and protection of space, but the focus was on building and legalisation of unplanned/illegally built buildings. This is the reason why this law did not provide efficiency in planned management and protection of space, and with it no foundation for sustainable territorial development. It seems that, from the aspect of sustainable development and management of space, the new law from 2009 offers even more unfavourable solutions. The primary focus of that law is constructible land, i.e. placing government-owned constructible land on the market, and construction of buildings, i.e. facilitating the acquisition of building permits, all with the apparent aim of attracting foreign investors. The law which does not protect public interest in use and construction of space, and therefore not all of resources in space, can not represent the legal basis for planning and realising sustainable territorial development.

The most advanced in view of establishing relations on coordinating the planning basis is the package of laws on environmental protection from 2004. The law on environmental protection, modelled after the legislation from European countries, established an integral system of environmental protection, as well as measures and instruments for sustainable management and protection of natural resources and heritage. The law stipulates that the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia and the National Strategy for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Goods represent legal bases for sustainable use and protection of natural resources and heritage, whereas spatial planning represents planning basis for integrated protection of the environment, resources and goods. The law on strategic impact assessment provides for use of this environmental tool for plans, programs and bases in the domain of spatial and sectoral planning of transport, energetics, agriculture,

forestry, fishery, hunting, industry, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism etc. with the aim of avoiding or limiting negative impacts of planned decisions on the environment. The problem is that in practice it is applied only in the domain of spatial and urban planning.

The laws on planning and construction and environmental protection have not sufficiently established obligations of coordinating planning and guiding the use and protection of space and environment, especially between spatial and urban plans on the one hand, and the national environmental protection programme, local environmental protection action plans, action and sanitation plans at national, provincial and local levels on the other. Simultaneously, obligations and propositions for the coordination of sectoral with spatial and environmental planning and guiding sustainable development are lacking.

The Law on Regional Development (2009) established a new system of regional planning for NUTS II and III planning regions - the national regional development plan, regional development strategy and programs of funding regional development. It was intended that these plans be harmonised with adopted spatial plans, as well as to represent one of starting bases to develop new spatial plans and programmes for their implementation. In other words, there is formal talk on harmonising but not coordination of regional plans/strategies with spatial planning. The manner in which the obligation for spatial plans was formulated indicates that there will be no verification of spatial impacts of regional plans/strategies, i.e. that coordinating and integration of this planning basis into the spatial planning process and the realisation of sustainable regional development will be disabled in practice. As this law does not mention the obligation of implementing instruments of strategic environmental impact assessment, it becomes clear that environmental impact of regional planning basis will not be checked. Owing to this, the environmental policy control tool - strategic environmental impact assessment - will not be able to play its part in establishing coordination and integration of planning basis at regional planning level.

A similar constatation can be made for the new set of laws on tourism. The 2005 Law on Tourism declaratively mentioned sustainable development and integral planning of tourism development among tourism development principles. That law only established the

obligation to harmonise national sectoral strategy with the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia. The new Law on Tourism (2009) is retrograde in relation to its predecessor, because it does not mention integral planning, but planning the development of tourism is reduced only to sectoral planning which was not adequately connected to other forms of planning. The provisions of the new law make no mention of coordination with spatial and environmental planning, as well as with other sectoral planning bases. The following system of sectoral plans and programs is established under the title "integral planning": Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, Strategic Marketing Plan of the Republic of Serbia, Strategic Master Plan for Prioritised Tourist Spaces, Tourist Product Development Programme, Tourism Development Programme and Promotional Activities Programme. Only the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia is intended to contain an analysis of impact on cultural heritage and natural resources, but not on space and the environment. The strategic master plan was in no way connected with the protection of space, environment, resources and heritage, but with the economic evaluation of the tourist infrastructure, tourist superstructure, transport network and utility infrastructure, as well as the estimate of economic justification of individual and total investments. It was intended that the strategic master plan represents a starting ground for spatial and urban plans, which indicates, and is verified in practice, that there will not be any verification into spatial impacts of the sectoral strategy, i.e. that coordination and integration of this planning framework into the spatial planning process will be disabled in practice. This law was also not connected with the set of environmental protection laws from 2004, and there is no mention of the obligation to implement strategic environmental impact assessment, so that - apart from declarative, no factual protection of the environment and resources - including tourist resources - is provided. In other words, the new Law on Tourism does not provide for even the basic preconditions to manage and guide sustainable development of tourism and sustainable territorial development.

In the local **planning system**, sectoral planning basis is comprised of general and sectoral/trade plans, strategies, policies and programmes which exert major influence on realisation of management of space, protection of the environment, resources and heritage,

and sustainable development. The impacts of sectoral planning are manifested directly or indirectly, in a coordinated or uncoordinated manner in relation to general strategies, spatial and urban plans and environmental plans and programs. A large portion of the sectoral planning basis has not been connected with space and environment in Serbia, so that the guiding role from the aspect of use and management of space and protection of the environment, resources and heritage, i.e. sustainable development, is realised indirectly or not realised at all.

Formal and informal types of **coordination** have been established in the planning practice for the process of spatial and sectoral planning in the domains of agriculture, water power engineering, forestry and protection of natural resources. An informal type of coordination has been established with several other sectors (transport, energetic and telecommunications infrastructure), but is undergoing difficulties due to the underdevelopment of certain sectoral planning basis, which have mostly been reduced to short-term building programmes (reconstruction, modernisation etc.) and technical documents.

The problem has been aggravated over the previous years by adopting or developing a multitude of general and sectoral strategies and master plans (with various purposes), which are in most cases not in accordance with the legal basis, so their contents, development methodology, procedure of consideration and public inclusion, obligations of harmonisation with spatial and environmental or other sectoral planning bases remain unknown, as well as jurisdictions in respect to how they were adopted and implemented.

After the European Union model, Serbia has adopted a set of general strategies in the first decade of the 21st century which have direct or indirect influence over management and guidance of sustainable development. These are primarily the following long-term and mid-term strategies: The National Sustainable Development Strategy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, National Employment Strategy for the period from 2005 to 2010, National Youth Strategy, Birth Incentive Strategy, Regional Development Strategy of Serbia for the period from 2007 to 2012, National Economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia from 2006 to 2012, Strategy for the Development of Competitive Small and Medium Enterprises for the period from 2008

to 2013, National Environmental Protection Programme and other strategies and programs.

The legal basis for developing and adopting the National Sustainable Development Strategy remains unknown. It is based on generally accepted principles defined in the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, UN Millennium Development Goals and EU Sustainable Development Strategy, but the conception of sustainable development of Serbia remained too general and without the spatial dimension. Although adopted general and sectoral strategies were used when developing this strategy, it remained unclear who and how provides their coordination and how to elaborate and implement the National Sustainable Development Strategy. One thing is certain, sustainable development can not be achieved by partially implementing various strategies and policies.

One can make a similar statement for the Regional Development Strategy of Serbia for the period from 2007 to 2012, which primarily deals with the problem of regional disparities, but does not offer a concept of polycentric and balanced regional development of Serbia, or represents a basis for spatial and functional differentiation, specialisation and networking of regions, preservation and improvement of regional identity, as well as sustainable regional development of Serbia.

The concept of polycentric and balanced regional development and network of urban centres in our regional planning and regional development practice has not been achieved so far. It was only during the development of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia that an exact analysis of all elements and factors of regional development was conducted and strategies for the de-metropolitanization of Serbia and a functional balancing of the system of centres and settlements were defined. The problem is that political and legal frameworks for resolving issues of legislative-functional subsidiarity, i.e. vertical and horizontal distribution of competences, obligations and responsibilities among levels of administration and planning, have not been established yet. This is why the questions of functional homogeneity, transport connectivity and regional networking of urban centres in Serbia remain open (Tošić, Maksin-Mičić, 2009).

The problem of coordinating spatial and environmental with sectoral planning basis is most pronounced in the tourism sector in

current practice. Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2006) has definitely been linked to the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, but not with the adopted sectoral strategies. The largest problem arises due to the implementation of certain new sectoral planning tools - such as the 'master' plans (visit the website: www.merr.gov.rs/dokumenti), which were not in accordance with the legal basis for tourism until recently. Over the past three years, 12 strategies and master plans have been developed for tourist areas. It can generally be stated that a sectoral approach is predominant in these strategies and master plans, without analysing the impact of planned tourism development to the surroundings and without assessing environmental, spatial, social and cultural effects of these impacts. The overall structure of master plans for tourist areas, as a rule, consists of the following: 'as-is' analysis (analysis of resources, capacities and infrastructure, locational analyses), analysis of supply and demand, SWOT and PESTLE analyses, benchmark analysis, competitiveness analysis, marketing, directions for development, tourist products, management, investments and impacts of investments. Due to sectoral approach and partial overview of developing tourist areas, substantial negative effects of tourism impacts on natural heritage, resources and environment, as well as local community development can manifest themselves in the realisation of certain master plans, especially for macro- and mezo-regional tourist areas and natural resources of Stara Planina, Golija and Kopaonik.

Reforms of the planning system and the processes of spatial, environmental and sectoral planning to date have not secured their harmonisation with the approach, policies, concepts and principles of planning and managing sustainable and competitive territorial development of the European Union. The process of developing and implementing the planning grounds in Serbia is unsuitable for guiding and managing sustainable territorial development of Serbia and its approximation to the European Union. The integrative role of spatial and environmental planning can not be realised due to poor coordination and absence of integration between various forms of planning.

REGIONAL SPATIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

Due to the undeveloped regional policy, absence of regional administration level and slowness in selecting some form of regionalisation, Serbia does not have a developed practice of developing regional spatial plans. Two were adopted in the previous decade, and several regional spatial plans are currently being developed. On the other side, there was a continuous development of the practice of developing spatial plans for special use areas of macro- and mezo-regional scope. This is the reason the paper analyses the implementation of basic principles of spatial planning, the concept of territorial development of the European Union and individual UNECE recommendations for the regional level of spatial planning, at the example of regional and spatial plans for special use areas with a macro-regional dimension for the Eastern and South-Eastern parts of Serbia - Regional Spatial Plan for Southern Pomoravlje, Regional Spatial Plan for Timočka krajina and the Spatial Plan for the Stara Planina Nature Park and Tourist Region area (hereinafter: regional plans).

Developing and passing these plans is part of the elaboration and implementation of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the implementation of general and sectoral strategies, plans and programmes and their adaptation to regional and local specificities. The possibility to implement concepts and priorities of the territorial development of the European Union was checked simultaneously with the development of regional plans, and primarily the following:

- concepts of balanced polycentric development, i.e. polycentric system of urban centres,
- establishing new forms of developing urban and rural areas at the level of functional urban areas;
- strengthening and widening the network of traffic corridors, improved technical infrastructure - energy in particular - and decentralising services of public interest;
- conserving and using natural capital (forests, waters, minerals etc.), strengthening ecological structures and cultural resources as development potentials in areas which lag behind in

development and are classified as ecologically and culturally sensitive areas.

Regional plans for areas of Jablanica and Pčinj, Zaječar and Bor counties and Stara planina tourist region (part of Zaječar and Pirot counties) encompasses the territory of 5 counties and 23 municipalities with the total surface of approximately 14,200 km² (representing approximately 16% of the territory of Serbia), with about 1000 settlements and about 800 thousand citizens (Image 1). Physically and geographically, this area covers most of the Basins of Južna Morava and Timok rivers, a part of lower Podunavlje region and the highland dominated by the high altitude Stara planina and Krajište with Vlasina massives.

The following characteristics of the area were decisive to implement the concept and select the vision and planning solutions for sustainable territorial and regional development:

- It is categorised as undeveloped and both economically and demographically depressive regions;
- It is peripheral to developmental axes and the largest urban centres in Serbia, with unevenly developed and functionally insufficiently networked system of settlements, predominated by medium and small urban centres;
- potential cross-border area (with the state border in approximate length of 500 km) between Pan-European transport corridors X to the West, IV to the East and VII to the North, with natural and cultural areas of international significance and regions with similar development problems in Bulgaria, Romania (EU) and Macedonia;
- possesses significant natural capital - exceptional hydroenergetic potentials of "Đerdap 1" and "Đerdap 2" hydroelectric plants, agricultural, cattle breeding and forestry area, minerals, natural and tourist values with exceptional potential for the development of tourism on Stara planina, Danube, Krajište with Vlasina, spas etc., water springs of national and regional significance with 8 existing and 7 planned accumulation basins, a potential waterway corridor, substantial reserves of mineral resources and developed mining industry;
- chief transport corridors in the areas are a section and leg of corridor X (including partly built infrastructure systems) and a

section of corridor VII (Danube with partly utilised waterway and unused nautical potentials) etc.

Regional plans set the vision, basic concepts and planning solutions to achieve more balanced regional and subregional development, increase competitiveness and integrate the area in its surroundings (neighbouring functional areas of Southern Serbia and autonomous provinces, as well as with neighbouring border municipalities and regions in Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia). Special attention has been paid to increasing attractiveness of the area for investment by defining planning solutions for: activating and mobilising territorial capital, sustainable use of natural and man-made resources, long-term reconstruction and development of human resources, increasing transport availability to Pan-European corridors, infrastructure installations and energy efficiency, development of the economy and institutions, protection of natural and cultural heritage as factors for the development of the area, sanitation and protection of the environment (Image 1).

territorial development, similarities can be perceived among general sustainable development goals for the area in question and regional plans as follows:

- responsible administration of the development, management and protection of space in accordance with realistic potentials and limitations of natural and man-made resources, as well as the value and long-term requirements of economic and social development and protection of the environment;
- more balanced development at intraregional and interregional levels, stimulation for the development of agriculture, tourism, energy, mining and infrastructure, improvements on the infrastructure corridor X and waterway/nautical corridor of the Danube, significant improvement in accessibility of mountainous and remote parts of the area, initiating cross-border programmes for border areas;
- quality of life improvements and creating conditions for demographic renewal, retention and stimulation of settling and

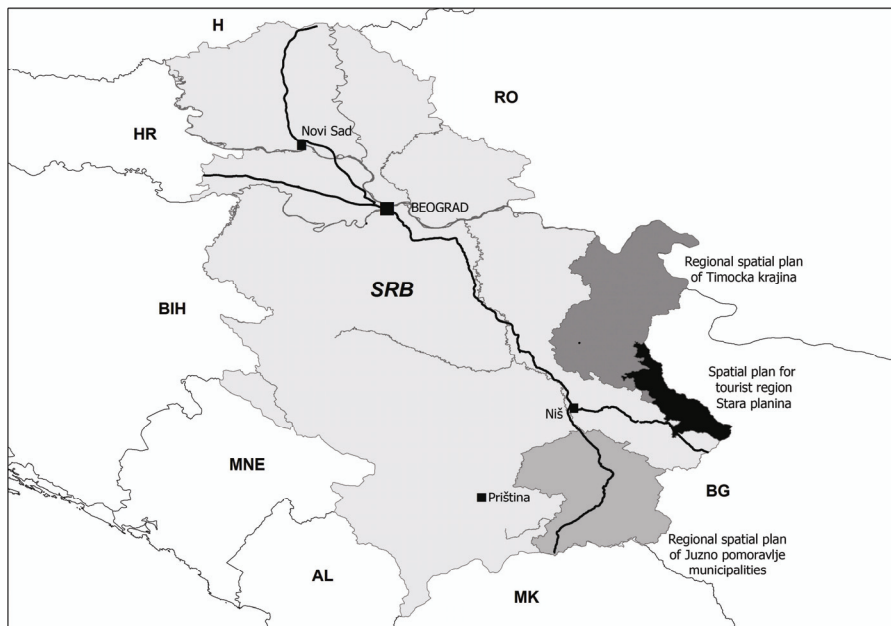


Image 1. Area of regional spatial plans for Southern Pomoravlje region, Timočka krajina and Stara planina tourist region.

Source: Spatial plan for the area of Stara planina nature park and tourist region (2008), Regional spatial plan of the Southern Pomoravlje municipalities, Spatial Plan Strategy - Concept (2009), Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia; Regional Spatial Plan for Timočka krajina - Spatial Plan Concept (2009), Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia

Starting from propositions for the national spatial plan and taking into consideration conceptions and priorities of the Union's

return of the population, especially into economically disadvantaged rural areas or centres by way of investment into

construction, reconstruction and maintenance of infrastructure, public services, preservation and advancement of the natural and cultural heritage, development of economically viable and status-appealing activities.

The paper indicates only several key regional plan solutions to achieve general goals, conceptions and principles of sustainable territorial and regional development.

It was intended to realise twofold achievement of a greater degree of **functional integration of areas** by regional plans Intraregionally, within the space of Jablanica and Pčinj, Zaječar, Bor and Pirot counties, planned qualitative changes in spatial, transport, economic and social structure shall enable harmonisation of development and networking between subregional entities, especially highlands and border areas with pronounced dysfunctions of social and economic development. Interregionally, functional integration with neighbouring functional areas and Republic of Serbia shall enable the realisation of prioritised planning solutions significant for several municipalities and regions, primarily for transport linking with corridors X and VII, the development of other infrastructure systems and regional cluster (economy, tourism, education etc.) formation. Connecting and cooperating with international surroundings, neighbouring border municipalities and regions in Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia implies preparation and realisation of cross-border programmes for which certain planning solutions have been proposed in the domains of infrastructure, energy, tourism, ecology, urban centre cooperation etc.

The support to realising integration, more balanced and polycentric development of the area is planned by improving **transport availability and infrastructure installation of the space**. This particularly relates to planning solutions for completing the construction, equipping and arranging the infrastructure corridor for E-75 highway and connecting the area with E-75 highway

new sections in the following areas: E75-Bor/Zaječar; E75-Stara planina; E75-Trgovište-Bosilegrad; E75-Kriva Feja-Bosilegrad etc; completion of equipping and regulating the section of the Danube waterway/nautical corridor; reconstruction of existing railroad tracks (Niš-Zaječar-Prahovo, Niš-Makedonija etc.) with legs into Romania and Bulgaria and building E-85 high-speed railroad;

development of energy and telecommunications infrastructure. Planned transport infrastructure construction ought to contribute to improving transit and mediatory connections of Eastern and Southern Serbia along corridor X and on roadways to Pan-European infrastructure corridors X to the West and IV in the East, improving spatial and functional positioning, increasing competitiveness of the region and quicker development of regional centres. The realisation of internal integration, development of small towns, micro-developmental rural centres, activation of highland and border areas has been supported by planning solutions for the improvement in the capillary, regional and local road network, especially transverse roadways, and their connection with trunk roads and highways in Pan-European corridors.

In the application of the **balanced polycentric regional development** concept, model of dispersed-concentrated development and allocation of population, economic and other activities was used to slow down the rate of population concentration and activities in primary development axes (infrastructure corridor X) and stimulation for the dispersion of development in areas with significant territorial capital and potential. Planning solutions were intended to resolve the following issues:

- Development of functional urbanised regions in single and dual urban centres (directions Bor-Zaječar, Leskovac-Niš, Vranje-Vladičin Han), strengthening regional functions in Bor, Zaječar, Leskovac, Vranje and Pirot and decentralisation of remaining functions to municipal and sub-municipal and micro-developmental centres in rural areas as exponents of socio-economic development of rural communities and their functional integration with urban centres;
- Development of spatially functional links (in Vlasotince, Lebane, Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Trgovište, Dimitrovgrad, etc.), mutually and with regional centres in immediate and cross-border surroundings (Vlasotince, Bojnik, Lebane in the functional region of Leskovac; Surdulica, Vladičin Han, Bujanovac, Bosilegrad, Preševo in the functional region of Vranje; Dimitrovgrad in the functional region of Pirot and Sofia, etc.);
- Continuing work on the formation of the secondary development axis in Timok (directions Niš-Knjaževac-Zaječar-

Negotin-Kladovo, to be joined by Bor) and regulation of the primary South Morava development axis (directions Preševo/Bujanovac-Vranje-Vladičin Han-Leskovac/Vlasotince-Niš) and regional functional urban systems that link the macro-region of Niš with East Podunavlje, South Serbia and immediate international surroundings;

- Development of existing successful small and mid-sized enterprises that shall, apart from modernising and specialising in production and environmental restructuring, become leaders in economic connections into regional production and service clusters that compete with companies within the region and companies from Niš, Belgrade and other industrial centres. Development of economic activities and structures will be based on an increased level of investment, technical-technological equipment, improvement of competitiveness, advancing of the knowledge pool through education and development of professional expertise, rational and efficient use of natural resources and spatial and environmental plausibility with priorities in the fields of energy, mining, transport services, storage and logistics activities, tourism, etc.

- One of the main strongholds of planning solutions to establish **new forms of development and partnerships between rural and urban areas** are substantial natural resources and environmental structures in rural areas on the one hand, and economy, scientific research, innovative, informative, developmental, administrative, cultural and other functions of urban centres on the other.

The implementation of new forms of development and partnership in rural and urban areas will be achieved by establishing a nucleus of socio-economic transformation of rural and poorly urbanised areas in the region (in accordance with principles of sustainable territorial development, particularly pertaining to rational use of space, resources, energy and transportation) and development of daily urban systems (formation of functional urban regions). Daily urban systems in Leskovac, Vranje, Zaječar and Bor, Negotin, Knjaževac and Pirot include fifteen municipal and sub-municipal centres, and approximately one hundred village community centres and

settlements with specific functions. It is necessary to support job creation policies investment and other measures for intensifying specific regional, economic, public and social functions in small centres, so as to slow down the concentration of economic and other activities in large urban centres and stimulate economic and social development of other centres in the urban network.

Part of planning solutions for more even regional development is based on economic prosperity, development and improving living conditions in rural areas, maintaining and promoting rural values, strengthening the economic position of agriculture and agricultural producers, developing infrastructure and raising utility and public standard in villages. Agriculture, depending on the availability of agricultural funds, traditional dependency of local population on agriculture as an economic branch and development of agri-industrial capacities, represents one of the most important developmental resources. The intensification of agricultural development and villages as a whole shall be based on increased market competitiveness of local agri-environmental assets, in accordance with specific conditions in rural areas, as well as on improvement of agricultural structure within the scope of implementing integrated rural development programs in accordance with the new model of Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union.

What is of particular importance for future development, especially pertaining to peripheral and rural areas, are tourism and complementary activities based on preserved environment and tourist resources of national and international significance. Planning solutions are aimed at: (i) completion and integration of the existing tourist offer across the region (littoral of the Danube with Đerdap lake/„Đerdap National Park“, Stara planina Nature Park, Vlasina Lake, Sokobanja, Vranje spas, Bujanovac, Sijarina and Gamzigrad, archeological sites Felix Romuliana, Lepenski Vir, etc); (ii) construction and arrangement of new contents to generate year-round exploitation of the regional tourist offer (nautical and tourist infrastructure at the Danube, tourist centres and ski resort in Stara Planina and Besna Kobila, variety of tourism options pertaining to lakes, mountains, immovable cultural goods, Negotin breweries, tourist centres-towns and localities/traditional events, spas, villages and hunting grounds, transitory waterways and roadways etc.); (iii) functional integration and

diversification/specialisation of the tourist offer in accordance with regional plans and regional surrounding in Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia. The development of tourism will provide one of the mechanisms for compensating the local population for limitations of the regime for the preservation and protection of natural resources and heritage.

A portion of regional plans will base their development on sustainable use of water resources and energy, metallic and non-metallic minerals. Planning solutions provide for integrated protection and use of water resources within the scope of regional water power engineering systems as a basis for rural areas to collect substantial revenue from renting resource. The planned solutions further stipulate utilising actual reserves in developmental function and continuing research related to potential copper reserves (with offside elements of gold, coal, lead and zinc, architectural stone, limestone, quartz sand, sandstone and rare minerals); completing the privatisation process, restructuring Radio and Television Station Bor and active coal mines with ground exploitation; implementing measures for sanitation of degraded environmental areas and reduction of emission of pollutants to an acceptable level in all phases of exploitation, processing and disposal of mineral products.

The spatial planning process utilises an **integrated approach** to sustainable territorial and regional development. On the basis of available potential, limitations and recognised tendencies and requirements pertaining to regional development, a vision of integrated development has been offered, and concepts and planned solutions for sustainable and balanced regional development have been determined. However, the process of regional spatial planning did not incorporate its coordinating and integrative function pertaining to the planning basis in terms of general and sectoral strategy, plans and programs. In the process of developing spatial plans, principles and concepts of general strategies were implemented and adapted to regional and local specificities, although they mostly do not possess a spatial dimension, which complicates their implementation. Sectoral strategies, plans and programs in the field of water economy, forestry, transport, economy, communal waste management were used and harmonised in the same manner. Perceived problems, planning concepts and regional

spatial planning solutions as a rule did not have a corrective impact on sectoral planning basis, due to unresolved issues pertaining to responsibilities and mechanisms for coordinating sectoral with spatial planning basis.

The principle of subsidiarity was implemented in the process of regional spatial planning. Furthermore, all recommendations and initiatives of local communities, concepts, solutions and local strategy priorities (sustainable development, economic development, etc), plans (municipal spatial plans, local environmental protection plans, etc), programmes and other developmental documents in local communities were taken into consideration.

Participativeness in the process of regional planning was only partially implemented due to insufficient training and education of professional planners and local management, insufficient knowledge and lack of motivation on the part of local stakeholders and underdevelopment of institutions at the level of regional administration. Notwithstanding above limitations, cooperation with the National Spatial Planning Agency resulted in consultations and assessment of respective phases of developing regional plans. Cooperation with competent municipal administration authorities and services and certain regional institutions (Jablanica and Pčinj County Development Centre, Regional Agency for the Development of East Serbia, regional chambers of commerce, etc.) was important in preparing and developing concepts/strategies of the plan, and resulted in improved quality and attainability of planned solutions. Local stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of funds allocated by the Republic of Serbia for development of areas covered by regional plans. Local stakeholders in Timočka Krajina further expressed lack of trust and resistance towards cross-border programs initiated in the domain of economic cooperation and infrastructure development, including joint approach of local communities from Serbia and neighbouring countries in applying for EU funds and assistance by relevant international associations. Initiative at the level of local communities pertaining to forming and engaging of regional development agencies is of high importance for planning and managing sustainable regional development. The core task of such agencies is to initiate and coordinate development programs and projects

of interest for several municipalities. Problems emerged in the cooperation between agencies and the national administration, while cooperation with international institutions was more successful. Due to above reasons, development of regional plans prioritised measures for cooperation between national, (sub)regional and local administration, including activities pertaining the construction of institutional framework for managing sustainable regional development, headed by regional development agencies.

The principle of **prevention** was implemented in the process of regional spatial planning by incorporating the aspect of environmental protection and preservation of resources and heritage in planning concepts and solutions. This primarily relates to concepts and solutions pertaining to: prevention of degradation of natural resources and assets and irrational use of space (especially high-mountain areas of Stare Planine and Krajište, littoral of the Danube and water accumulation basins); air protection, recultivation and revitalisation of soil in areas for exploitation of minerals (particularly in Bor and Majdanpek); protection of agricultural and forest land from building not included in spatial plans in valleys and border urban zones and infrastructure corridors, etc. The effects of planned conceptions and solutions were evaluated in the process of strategic environmental impact assessment of regional spatial plans.

Proportionality in planning statements has been achieved successfully. The only planned solutions, principles, regimes and protective measures with direct/binding effect are those that impacted more balanced regional development, protection and sustainable use of sensitive areas and areas with critical natural capital, development of regional and subregional infrastructure systems, development of industrial zones, tourist complexes, etc. Statements included in remaining planned solutions and proposals have streamlining capacity on the level of deliberations, regulations, criteria and recommendations, and are thus open/flexible to be harmonised with developmental requirements, changes and innovations.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

Strategic environmental assessment is a relatively new tool in the planning process, both in Serbia and across the European Union. EU Directive on Strategic environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC of the European parliament and the Council of 27th June 2002 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment), including the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, constitute European legal basis for the implementation of sustainable development and planning ideas. The above documents constituted the basis for defining the set of environmental protection laws in the Republic of Serbia that included the environmental protection component in the planning and decision making processes.

Accordingly, the process of spatial planning is drifting further from the previously implemented determinative towards the participative principle, given that strategic environmental impact assessment ideas introduced new methodological recommendations, bringing substantial changes to previous decision making processes (Healey, 1997).

Strategic environmental assessment is an environmental planning tool that possesses a controlling, coordinating and integrative role in the planning process. Strategic environmental impact assessment is a **process** that integrates objectives and principles of sustainable development in spatial and sectoral planning (of transport, energy, water power, agriculture, forestry, tourism, etc.). The importance of strategic environmental assessment is reflected in the following aspects:

- preventive role due to involvement with causes of environmental problems at the source, i.e. on the strategic level of planning – plans, strategies, policies, programs and respective projects;
- processing of issues and impacts of wider significance that can not be assessed at the level of respective projects – synergy, cumulative and social effects;
- enabling assessment and evaluation of impacts, risks and consequences of various alternative and varying environmental development options;

- setting forth an adequate context for analysis of the impact of concrete projects, including prior identification of problems and impacts worthy of detailed research, etc.

Depending on the level of hierarchy of the planning document and specificities of the area, it is necessary to determine different strategic impact analysis goals that shall be used to conduct an evaluation of the planning solutions in relation to specific planning segments (environmental protection, tourism, infrastructure, economy etc.). The results of the analysis shall enable the provision of recommendations for adopting or rejecting certain planning solutions which are not in accordance with the goals of environmental protection, immovable cultural goods, health and quality of life of the population.

The role of the strategic environmental assessment is primarily to create a cause-and-effect connection between protecting the environment and planning development, regulation and construction in a given space, by way of determining measures to neutralise impacts certain activities and interventions on location might cause. Owing to this, strategic environmental assessment must have clear and realistic goals and indicators based on which it shall adequately assess variants of planning options and solutions.

Apart from this, representatives of all stakeholders take part in the decision-making and strategic environmental assessment processes in the countries of the European Union (i.e. local government, citizens, private and non-profit sectors). This provides the planning process with a participative dimension which also contributes to improving the quality of the planning solutions, strengthening environmental and social dimensions of planning, and confirms the legitimacy of planning decisions (Bedford, Clark, Harrison, 2002).

According to local practice, public scrutiny is mandatory concerning all affairs pertaining to strategic environmental assessment - i.e. informing the public and its participation in the strategic environmental assessment report. Such responsibility and practice should be introduced for strategic sectoral documents, both with an aim to inform and include the public, and reduce manipulation in passing sectoral planning decisions. As this is a minimalist approach to exercising citizens' fundamental rights, it should be set as widely as possible; also, the participative approach

has to be developed in our system and planning practices.

Establishing spatial planning coordination with environmental planning tools is a planning challenge in Serbia. Although recommendations for developing strategic environmental assessment are a legal requirement (Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 135/04), a common methodology for development of such studies has not been officially established. Owing to this, problems occur pertaining to the implementation of multiple criteria analyses, drawing results and defining recommendations based on strategic assessment. In that respect, some authors (Stojanović, Maričić, 2008) provided methodology guidelines for the development of strategic environmental impact assessment studies that currently - notwithstanding their usefulness - do not have legal force.

Although the spatial planning practice in Serbia has in the previous five years included the responsibility to develop strategic environmental impact assessment as an integral part of spatial and general plans (in accordance with the Law on Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Law on Planning and Construction), such documents are most commonly declarative due to the insufficient systematisation and coordination of laws, since strategic environmental assessment is undertaken after the development of strategies/concepts for development, protection and regulation of planning area. Therefore, verification of planning solutions is undertaken after defining them, and is occasionally reduced to a mere confirmation of already adopted solutions, without detailed analysis of the impact.

Notwithstanding the above issues, the integration of the strategic environmental assessment into spatial and urban plans in Serbia gets good results in evaluating different territorial development solutions and contributing to the improvement of quality of life and the environment.

Non-implementation of legal requirements pertaining to the development of strategic environmental assessments for sectoral plans represents a limitation in the implementation of coordinating and integrative roles of strategic impact assessments in our planning system. Simultaneously this jeopardises the realisation of the integrative role played by spatial and environmental planning in guiding and

managing sustainable territorial and regional development in Serbia.

This will be illustrated by the example of implementing strategic environmental assessment on spatial and, indirectly, sectoral planning of the macro-regional tourist areas in Serbia.

The overall conclusion can be that the sectoral approach is predominant in the new generation of sectoral tourism plans – strategies and master plans. This is discrepant with the World Tourist Organisation guidelines that emphasise the importance of harmonising sectoral planning in tourism with spatial planning and benefits of early inclusion of tourism in the process of spatial planning – identification of most suitable areas for sustainable development of tourism, prevention of any negative impacts of tourism on the environment and negative impacts of the environment on tourism (UN WTO, UNEP, 2005).

Collision between environmental and sectoral interests in tourism development strategies and master plans will increase with the implementation of the new Law on Tourism, due to the legal obligation to include sectoral plans in spatial plans.

In these conditions, the implementation of strategic environmental assessment represents the only control mechanism that enables coordination of sector-oriented strategies and master plans pertaining to the tourism development with spatial and environmental planning. The control role of the strategic environmental assessment of sectoral strategies and plans is implemented through identifying negative spatial, environmental and social effects that may cause their uncriticised incorporation in spatial and urban plans. The coordinating role of strategic assessment relates to reducing or neutralising negative impacts of sectoral and spatial planning and coordinating planning decisions to achieve sustainable territorial development.

After the adoption of tourism development master plans for the priority tourist areas in Serbia, a significant problem occurred in developing spatial plans for areas of special use and regional spatial plans. The problem relates to the obligation (which has in the meantime evolved into a legal requirement) for the planning concepts and solutions from sectoral documents to be incorporated directly into spatial plans. Without previous verification and achieving spatial and environmental

sustainability, concepts and solutions based exclusively on the sectoral approach cannot be incorporated in planning concepts and solutions based on the integrated approach. Although strategies and master plans pertaining to tourism development do not require strategic environmental assessment, its implementation in spatial plans may contribute to striking a balance between sectoral and sustainable development.

The role of strategic environmental assessment can be explained on the example of spatial and sectoral plans for the Stara Planina tourist region and nature park.

The Report on Strategic Environmental environmental Assessment of the Spatial Plan for Stara Planina Tourist Region and Nature Park (in further text: SEA Report) concludes that significant positive effects of the implementation of Stara Planina Spatial Plan will be particularly effective in the following: protection and improvement of the condition of nature and environment; preservation, presentation and adequate utilisation of natural and cultural heritage; overall economic effects and balanced improvement of the employment rate in the local population (in the domain of tourism, agriculture and other complementary activities); improvement and protection of public health and creation of conditions for rest and recreation. It was concluded that according to the concept for dispersed development and construction, implemented in the major part of the territory covered by Stara Planina Spatial Plan (approximately 88% of the territory), none of the planning solutions will generate substantial long-term negative environmental impact that cannot be controlled.

Due to existing Master Plan solutions for the Tourist Resort of Jabučko Ravnište-Leskova, there was a doubling in accommodation capacities in the mountain zone and in the sub-mountain zone. This brought the accommodation capacity of the tourist region of Stara Planina near the maximum capacity for all skiing tracks. SEA Report concludes that a concept of concentrated building was implemented on a minor portion of the territory covered by Stara Planina Spatial plan (approximately 12% of the territory) in the tourist resort of Jabučko Ravnište, resulting in negative long-term impacts on the nature and environment, particularly in the domain of water supply, waste water treatment, incoming and internal traffic, solid waste management, electric energy supply and accommodation of employees, quality of life in adjacent local

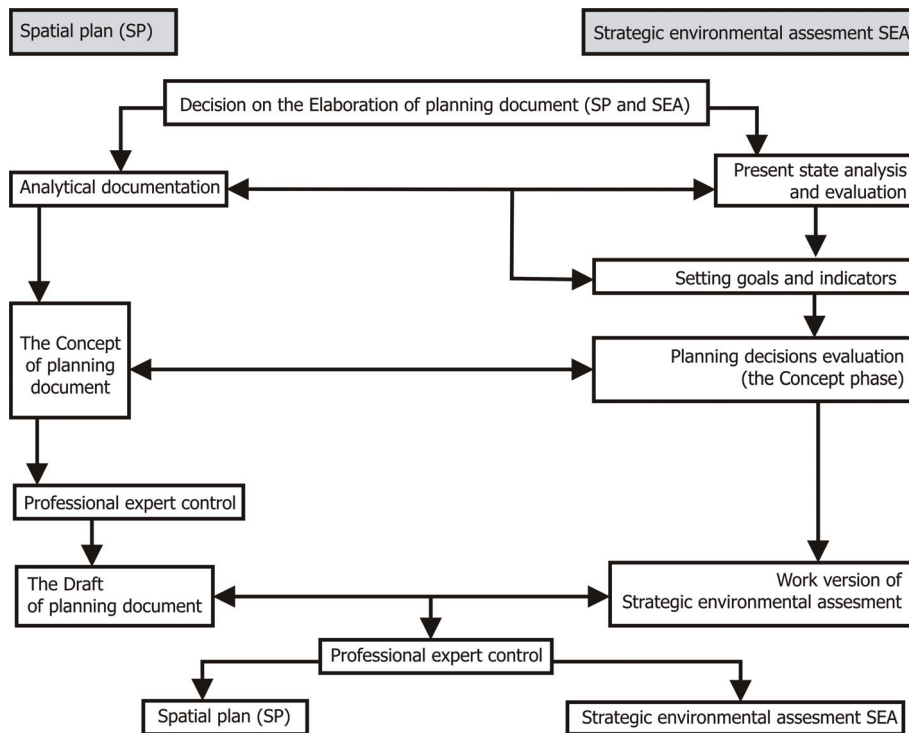


Image 2. Coordination of spatial planning and strategic environmental assessment

communities (due to heterogeneous allocation of jobs, predominant employment of employees from the vicinity, etc.) that are more difficult to control than would be the case with the concept of dispersed development that would be more suitable for the protected area of Stara Planina.

Strategic environmental assessment provided recommendations to reduce established capacities in Jabučko Ravnište to a level that will not endanger the environment, and defined measures to reduce and neutralise the negative impact brought on by the implementation of planned solutions. By introducing strategic environmental assessment instruments in the resolution of planning conflicts, a certain level of compromise was achieved to reduce the concept of sectoral plan, limit planned development and its negative impact on the most vulnerable area of the Natural Park, at least in the initial phase of developing the tourist resort.

On the basis of the above example we can conclude that collision between sectoral interests and sustainable territorial development can be prevented by stricter implementation of the legal requirement to develop a strategic impact assessment for sectoral plans and programs, which would help achieve sustainability of sectoral planning concepts and solutions.

The above example also indicated the necessity to integrate strategic impact assessments into the planning process – from preparation to implementation, monitoring and auditing of planning documentation. A proposal for the integration of strategic environmental impact assessment into the spatial planning process can be seen on Image 2.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the insufficiently developed regional spatial planning in Serbia, implementation of the basic EU territorial development concepts related to this level of planning does exist – concepts of balanced polycentric development and establishment of functional urban areas; developing the network of transport corridors, technical infrastructure and decentralisation services of public interest; preservation and use of natural resources, improvements in environmental structures and cultural resources, etc. The strategic environmental assessment applies exclusively to spatial and urban plans, but it is insufficiently integrated into the planning process. Local practices partial implement fundamental principles of the new EU spatial planning concepts. Most problems are encountered in realising the roles of control, coordination and integration for spatial and environmental planning within the framework of

sectoral planning, as well as in relation to the shift from determinative to participative planning.

Reforms to the systems of spatial, environmental and sectoral planning in Serbia undertaken so far do not enable it to be harmonised with the EU approach, policies, concepts and principles of planning and managing sustainable and competitive territorial development. Processes pertaining to the development and implementation of the planning framework in Serbia are insufficient for guiding and managing sustainable territorial and regional development in Serbia, as well as its approximation to the European Union.

What is also important for the reform of the planning system, including spatial planning, is an adequate reform of the legal framework, planning processes, planning tools and support to the implementation of planned decisions.

The principal precondition for the reform of the planning system and improvement of spatial planning is the reform of corresponding legal basis that should ensure the following:

- implementation of integrated strategic territorial approach to planning and management of sustainable development;
- establishing mechanisms for horizontal and vertical cooperation and coordination between sectors and administration levels, as well as responsibilities of all stakeholders in the assessment of environmental and territorial impact of planned development to achieve the controlling and integration role of spatial and environmental planning;
- increased participation of stakeholders and transparency of decision-making processes in all forms of planning, and especially sectoral planning;
- increased flexibility of the planning process and planning instruments, etc.

In terms of implementing the strategic environmental assessment role, harmonisation of sectoral legal basis with the set of environmental protection laws is sufficient for the implementation of legal requirements related to implement above assessment to the sectoral planning framework.

The precondition to ensure participativeness of spatial and other forms of planning is training and enabling professional planners and personnel at all levels of administration;

informing, motivating and including the citizens and other stakeholders in the process of decision-making and implementation of planned decisions.

Reform of the planning system should be focused in the upcoming period on development, coordination and integration of spatial and environmental planning with regional and sectoral planning to achieve management and guidance of sustainable development of planning regions (functional urban areas in Serbia) at NUTS II and III levels.

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