



The Role of Public Policies in Strategic Documents for Regional Development in Bulgaria

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The dynamics of the time in which we live, with ongoing global and regional processes requires a rethinking of the entire system of policies that we have adopted as correct. The "top-down" management approach does not take the best result. It turns out that in many cases municipalities receive support for policies that are not entirely wrong but do not meet their needs. On other hand, the regions continue to lag behind in their development, despite the ongoing regional policy. The aims and objectives set out in the approved strategic documents for regional development does not lead to the desired results. Vision, priorities and public policies, which regions lead, lose focus or achieve different results. Precisely, because of that the purpose of this study is to point the link between the regional development strategy papers and the public policies which are implemented. However, the difference between the two types of documents - some purely strategic, other policy - they aim to achieve a common aim, namely development of the region. Because of that the role of ongoing public policies should be in line with the adopted strategic documents and as well as with the adopted national legislation. This necessitates to explore public policies - what are they and what is their aim, who creates them and why? It is also necessary to clarify the difference between strategy and policy, in particular a specific or public policy. In addition, to review the adopted strategic documents for regional development by identifying which regulations impose their creation and what aims to be achieved by them. Once we have the answers of these questions, it is possible to draw conclusions on what could be done to improve the current situation of the regions. This would also clarify the role of public

policies in the process of drawing up and implementing strategic documents in the field of regional development.

Public policy

In the XX century there has been a change in thinking attitudes of society as well as in the development of the countries. On the one hand, past ideals such as parties (whether left or right), separate lobbyist and ideological tendencies are giving way to seeking concrete solutions to certain problems rather than just promises. On the other hand, the dynamics of the countries' growth at that time was linked to the development and demarcation of public policy making tools and the accumulation of programs and policies in individual sectors in which the state intervenes. Each stage in the development of the countries or their restructuring is accompanied by a wave of innovation related to their instruments. This is the premise for the rapid growth and welfare of the countries in the post-war period. The above two features required in the 70 years of the XX century, for the first time in universities to develop new majors and graduate programs in "policy analysis". The main idea of these courses is to train and highlight experts in the field, whose main role is to properly assess the overall system of conditions and to find a precise algorithm to solve a particular problem. The finished product of their work resembles a "public project" aimed at political leaders who are the decision-makers. Policy analysts give specific recommendations on what can be done to solve a social problem such as increasing local taxes and fees in the area without negatively impacting the labor market (cuts in labor), etc. All these prerequisites are at the heart of the idea of creating specific policies and analysis, as well as seeking the best solution to the problems, namely through "public policies".

Public policies are often discussed topic of our daily lives. Preparation, analysis, evaluation, monitoring, undertook much of the expertise in specific areas. We can say that public policies are as old as government. Regardless of the form of government, public policies have always been present as a way of coping with a problem that has arisen. The process of public policy making is a part of the country's policy and political action.

There are different ways of studying public

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policies, which also makes different interpretations of the concept depending on the nature of the study. Some of the key definitions are given by a number of scientists such as Robert EyeStone, who defines "public policies" as "the relationship of government unit to its environment". According to political scientist Thomas R. Dye "public policy is whatever government chooses to do or not to do". Another definition of the nature of public policies is given by another American political scientist, Richard Rose, who argues that "public policy is not a decision, it is a course or pattern of activity". In the opinion of Carl J. Friedrich, they are "proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing opportunities and obstacles which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal 01 realize an objective or purpose".¹ Essentially "public policies can be defined as a tool for directly solving a social problem" (Tanev, 2008). In the methodological manual "Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies and Programs", the term "public policy" is explained as "a system of principles and guidelines for actions aimed at achieving certain goals by means of certain means and often within a certain time, which are developed and implemented by state or supranational bodies with political, legislative, executive and financial powers". It states that public policies are created as "concepts, strategies, bills or laws".²

It is clear from all these definitions that public policies are "governmental decisions, and are actually the result of activities which the government undertakes in pursuance of certain goals and objectives. It can also be said that public policy formulation and implementation involves a well planned pattern or course of activity".³

To be a working mechanism, it should also be properly analyzed. Public policies are subject to constant analysis in search of the best and most effective decision. The analysis of specific policies is the one activity that experts carried out to establish what is best to take in order to correct imbalances in a relevant area of life. Thus presented

in the analysis of the specific policies the experts are those specialists who take into account the priority long-term political importance and the social consequences of the forthcoming actions taking into account the risk and the financial conditions of the actions that will be taken. Generally speaking, the team of experts has the task of examining many different policy options, while choosing the most appropriate and efficient among them. The focus of their work is on the studies and comparisons with other analyzes to solve the given social problem. Their role is limited and expressed only in giving advice to governing bodies, without necessarily analysis which are prepared to be taken into account. Any analysis of public policy motivates a particular course of action that takes into account not only the objective conditions and subjective factors of nature, ie looking for arguments. This is done for the purpose of proving that a line of solving the public problem "properly" favors groups more than others. When analyzing a particular policy, the different stages in the expert decision-making process are distinguished. First, determine and analyze the problem itself, then it is a clear and concise aims to provide criteria for the assessment of different options. The expert team compares measured advantages of each of the options and choose the one that best fits the given requirements. From the above, it can be said that the aim is achieved when the most effective action is chosen. In case the managing authority selects a particular option, the analysis of the policy is evaluated and monitoring of the implementation of the policy. This can be said is the end of the cycle of analysis of specific policies.

It is increasingly common to mix and adopt synonymous concepts such as "strategy", "policy" and "specific policies". This is an inappropriate approach, as strategic documents such as programs, development plans, etc., are not policies. They are an instrument that is subordinate to the governing bodies and to be executed for a certain period of time. Policy is much more complex term and therefore need to distinguish between the concepts of strategy and policy. According to the statement of Tanev (2008) "strategy sets the general direction of social development formulated to object, while specific policy solves a social problem. Strategy and policy do not compete, they meet different management needs". "Strategies do not deal with this or that social problem, and as far as problems

¹ Public policy. - http://niilmuniversity.in/coursepack/humanities/Public_Policy.pdf - p. 4 - 5.

² Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies and Programs, Center for the Study of Democracy, 2009.

³ Public policy. - http://niilmuniversity.in/coursepack/humanities/Public_Policy.pdf - p. 5 - 6.



are concerned, they affect the whole chain of complex issues of the strategic subject" (Tanev, 2008, p. 45). When writing a strategic document, the expert analyzes competing public entities such as organizations, particular groups of society, etc. The intention in the private sector is to create a strategic plan through which an undertaking has an advantage over the rest of the competition. However, when it comes to policy analysis undergo competing options/plans for action on the same subject by making a comparison between them to choose the most effective. Here is that government is also the role of the public policies through which these alternative plans are implemented. Strategies do not seek to achieve the "best" state, which is a characteristic of policies, but is intended to indicate the strategic direction of movement. Naturally difference can not look only at the level of documentation. There is a difference between policymakers and experts dealing with policies. Strategists are political figures, while the latter are mostly people working in the public administration (professionals) and decision-makers (politicians). Experts carry out and deal with public policies.

The term "policy" should be understood at the same time as the specific public project as a pragmatic plan and the broader political significance of the results. In English has a clear distinction between the concepts of "policy" and "politics" in general. Analyzing a particular policy is not pure political science because it does not explore the political process, but how a particular group holding a given authority solves a particular social problem with political benefits. This analysis is an intermediary between governance and politics. It can be considered as a management analysis relating to the administration. Analyzing a specific policy itself is not a strictly defined management technique or methodology for solving social problems. It consists in finding the optimal, most appropriate decision-making action plan that undergoes some changes in the course of implementation in order to adapt to other decisions related to the same case and plays an additional role in the whole system of public decision- problems of the ruling.

In general, "specific policies are a plan that is strictly aimed at achieving certain public aims that are directly or indirectly related to longer-term goals of social development set by the political sphere in government, state or local authorities, thereby

helping to achieve political aims and contributes to the stabilization of the authorities. The problematic orientation and the public character of the specific policies are their distinctive features" (Tanev, 2008). The analysis of specific policies covers the formation of public policies and policies at the "level of the public system in general". Most public problems are solved in the public sector, so specific policies can be called "public policies", although they cover a larger field of impact and analysis. Public policies also coped with "the particular area in which the emerging problems of distribution of public goods are resolved, as well as the problems of social justice, equality of opportunity, principle of decisions". This part of them also crosses the other parts, because the problems of justice have arisen in all the components of social life (health, protection of order, etc.). In this way it creates prerequisites for the inclusion of so-called "social policy" in the scope of public policies other than sectoral policies.

„In any society, governmental entities enact laws, make policies, and allocate resources. This is true at all levels. Public policy can be generally defined as a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives”⁴.

Individuals or certain groups are often attempting to model public policies through education, protection, health care, or mobilization of stakeholder groups. Public policy models in Western countries are different from others. This gives reason to say that the efforts made by certain groups affect policy-makers in their own way. One of the best models for implementation and enforcement of specific policies, particularly public, is the European Union, which applies the same approach of creation and implementation of unified policies for all member states of the Union. Other organizations with international importance are, for example, NATO, which establishes a common policy for military mobilization for all members, as is the situation with the International Monetary Fund, which creates a single monetary, monetary policy in particular, for all the parties of the agreement.

Government is entirely focused on shaping and implementing public policies. "Governance

⁴ Kilpatrick, Dean „Definition of public policy and the law”
<https://mainweb-v.musc.edu/vawprevention/policy/definition.shtml>



based on public policies is contextually and nuanced, resulting from specific situations in which different, previously unpredictable constellations of social problems interweave" (Tanev, 2008).

We should be aware that public policies are related to strategic management, with the creation of plans and programs. Strategic management is a dynamic process of creation and implementation of specific policies, in addition to political power is exercised through social and economic groups, which have their own interests in the field of public policies.

The management, which is built entirely on public policies developed as managing a team whose goal is to influence the future in order to achieve positive results. This type of governance is complex because it encompasses public values, state institutions, and public policies. This type of government seeks interaction between the state apparatus, the private sector and citizens.

Increasingly, there is a tendency in the difficulty of governments to make the right decisions in case of public issues, so we have to resort to the creation and use of expert judgment by analysts of public policies. An example of this is the development of demographic and social policies arising from a particular social problem. The social problem as a whole is "an imbalance within the public system that affects the subjective level and causes an imbalance in the realization of the subjective function of maximizing objectively affected social subjects" (Tanev, 2008). Human capital is the most needed factor for the development of society for all problems affecting the population of the given territory/ region require searching and finding the best mechanism to curb the negative imbalances.

In the field of regional development, the right public policies is extremely important. Thanks to them, by solving a specific problem can be achieved progress in a given sector. To trigger a mechanism that regulates ongoing processes, as its benefits are visible to the entire population of the particular territory. Each policy should be in response to solving a particular problem when it comes to depopulation, low birthrate, aging structure of the population, lack of investment and reduction of natural and financial capital, the need for infrastructure, educational infrastructure development of the economic and social processes on the territory, we are actually talking about the

development of the territorial unit, in particular the region, and hence the state. The link between regional policy and the implemented public policies is strong because, regardless of the direction in which specific policies are developed, their aim is to improve the quality of life of the population. Something which is one of the main aims of the ongoing regional policy.

Strategic documents for regional development.

The concept of regional development aims through assistance to the private sector and urban society to reach the efficient use of resources - both human and natural, which has given territory and hence to increase the standard of living of the population. Over the years, different approaches for regional development have been developed and applied. Each of them has met individual management needs by providing a way to evaluate individual policies and programs. Some of these approaches are purely theoretical, giving more awareness of "how" and "why" certain problems of regional development have been arising. The main purpose has always been to make optimal judgments when conducting government policies in this field. Precisely, because of this, at the end of the XXth century regional development underwent a number of changes in the scope of its influence. It is subject to a number of disciplines, including political, social and economic. This is also the main reason why regional development focuses on what the region can be and how on the basis of many factors the region is formed. The evolution of the regional development object is evolving, focusing on the spatial dynamics of the regions, expressed in places of living, work and investment.

Regarding the development of the regions, each government takes a certain course of action in the preparation of its regional policy. In essence, regional policy can be perceived as a practical tool to ensure stability of economic growth in a given territory. It is a set of specific solutions, concepts and theoretical models that are applied according to the needs of a particular territory. "The main objective of the solutions implemented by means of political and legal regulations is to introduce changes to the structure of the already functioning social and economic structure as well as to the spatial arrangement of a given territory" (Strzelecki



Z., (2008) p. 78).

Regional policy focuses on the accumulation and the creation of high-tech incubators and clusters, which is a prerequisite for regionalists and the management elite to cope with the need to seek quality and effective solutions to address specific issues. The actual problem solving requires proper definition and understanding of problems, analysis of the situation and development of new approaches in which to use the accumulated over the years knowledge in order for the results to be used in the development and creation of a legal framework responding to the opportunities and challenges that a particular region has. To overcome problems of different regions, differences and imbalances should be made a separate set of strategic documents which are part of the overall framework. They aim to develop specific policies to serve the region. Thus, regional policy can be seen as a corrective, which aims to create rules and guidelines for improving the development of individual regions. Regional policy, together with various private and public organizations, and civil society aims to achieve economic growth by harnessing the potential of a region (human and natural resource) to raise living standards.

The legal framework in the field of regional development in Bulgaria is basically constructed on four major pieces of legislation – the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Regional Development Act, the Administrative and Territorial Structure of the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Spatial Development Act. Although that document there are still laws that are related to the management of regional development, the Law on Local Self-Government and Local Administration and the State Administration Act. Impact on the legal framework of our country in the field of regional development have a number of European documents. Leading among them are the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020, the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, and so on.

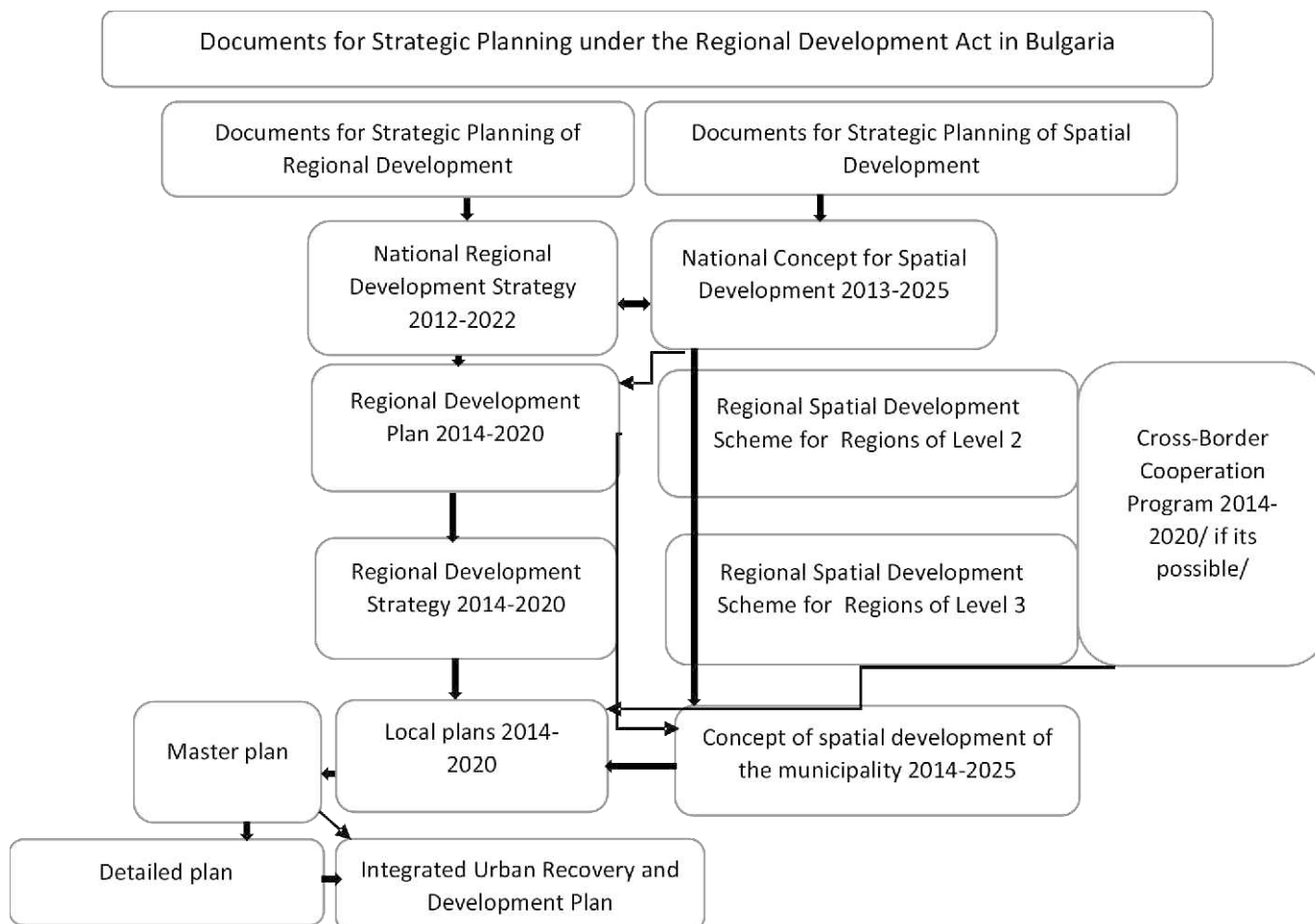
The strategic framework in the field of regional development in the Republic of Bulgaria is constructed on two main normative acts - the Regional Development Act and the Spatial Development Act. Precisely, based on these two normative documents are created a special set of strategic documents discussed in the scheme below (Scheme 1). Strategic documents are hierarchically bound and outline the main priorities for

development, from national to local level. The implementation of these priorities is achieved through the implementation of correct and key policies. Implementing them in strategic documents can be called the key point that makes these documents "alive", ie. seeking the best solution to address the problems that a particular region, region or municipality faces. The possibility of updating strategic documents can be taken as an assessment of currently implemented public policies. It allows to search for better solutions through analysis of the results of policies and in case of any new problems finding concrete solutions.

All public policies are part of the ongoing state policy in the country. It can be said that the state policy represents a "purposeful activity of the state bodies for solving the social problems, achievements and realization of the socially important purposes for the development of the society or of its own spheres" (Nikolov, 2016, p.12). State policy is a means of achieving the objectives set in specific areas and areas of impact. It includes the development of policy strategies and objectives. The strategic documents, which are part of the country's management, include different types and scope plans and programs. They are divided into higher and lower ranked documents depending on their impact range, but they are all interrelated i.e. there is no way for a document of the lowest rank to be incompatible with the principles, priorities and aims set out in the top-level document. Highest ranking strategic documents generally mark the framework in which individual strategy papers are developed. The main documents represent a strategy, concept, program and plan. Strategic planning itself aims to achieve the most effective solution to the use of available financial, human and natural resources.



Scheme 1. Documents for Strategic Planning under RDA, Spatial Planning of Territorial Planning and Spatial Development and Cross-Border Development, on the example of "Municipal Plan for Development of Vidin Municipality for the Period 2014-2020", p. 17, prepared by REGIOPLAN EOOD



Advantages of the link between "public policy" - "strategic documents for regional development".

The role of public policies in the regional development strategy papers is precisely to achieve the maximum positive result on the basis of minimum resources. Which means that public policies should not be seen only as sectoral/vertical policies developed by experts of the relevant line ministries but implemented horizontally/spatially on the whole territory of the region and respectively on the territory of the country. Each region is characterized by a shortage or surplus of a resource, and precisely by enhancing the implementation of specific policies at a point, the resulting imbalances can be overcome. The objective is not an equal

policy for each region but structured and narrowly defined by regions according to their specific and particular needs. The idea of public policies to be implemented through strategic documents for regional development is the necessity their economic and financial aspect to connect with their spatial manifestation. They must be precisely that key mechanism to develop the regions. When establishing the individual regional strategies and municipal plans which are subordinated to the national strategy, the individual priorities set in them should be subordinated to the leading sectoral policies of the state but narrowly defined according to the specific needs of the region.

Over the years, there has been a growing need to strengthen the relationship between the economy and finance with the concept of time and space. In



the dynamics of development and the shortage of quality labor and natural capital, we are increasingly in need of a clear refinement of the state policy pursued in order to strengthen its spatial influence, from one place to another. It should not be the same. The current situation requires for timely and differentiated policies that serve the needs of each region. The policy should no longer be considered the same for all, but should be reduced to a region level. Government should develop a mechanism whereby the common priorities set to meet the needs of individual regions, and from there to differentiate according to the priorities of the regions and municipalities. In order to have a properly functioning state apparatus, it is necessary to rethink the overall system and develop an in-depth analysis of the most needy. The decision to rescue a municipality is not just a state loan, but each municipality can be taught to cope with the challenges it has. Differentiating power of authority from government to the regions would alleviate this problem and create the preconditions for a better and more balanced development of the individual regions. It is this intermediary in the management that can effectively implement both national policy and the implementation of regional strategies and municipal plans. The lack of a coordinator between national and local priorities is a prerequisite for increased depopulation, low economic activity and low GDP levels.

In addition, one can say that the territory of our country, public policies are incorrectly allocated to the settlement network, this to some extent is due to the fact that recently implemented policy met the specific needs of the population, which to date are not valid. If until 30-40 years ago small settlements have played a key role in regional development through increased employment in the primary sector, nowadays the tertiary or even quaternary sector has a leading role. This largely leads to a change in the residential infrastructure of cities and a strong depopulation of small settlements. The appearance of the settlement network is completely altered - somewhere there is no land for construction, elsewhere the housing infrastructure collapses. These disproportions in the population lead to a number of social, and hence economic and environmental problems that individual regions face and for which there is an urgent need to implement proper public policies. Through the

implementation of specific policies, the negative consequences should be normalized, including the lack of population proliferation across the country, economic imbalances and environmental problems. It is not possible in a region that suffers from poor age structure to create sports facilities for its population because the leading municipality allocated funds for it. Imagine a 75-year-old man playing football. At the same time, we have amortized school infrastructure in the larger settlements of the municipality, but we want more young people. The pattern of retention of people of working age, as well as the young population in the smallest settlements has long shown its negative result. It is necessary to change the thinking of the management elite, which should take into account the grim demographic forecasts that the National Statistical Institute has prepared. It should seek a balance not by building sports facilities in the villages, but by finding employment for that part of the population still living there who has no livelihood and retirement experience. We need a working mechanism for recovery of the regions and the conversion of each specialized in a specific advantages over others. Regions should not compete on an equal sign and develop its leading conditions. The different needs of the regions are prerequisites for the availability of many different solutions to address the problems that have arisen. By developing and implementing specific public policies in the strategic documents adopted for implementation, it is entirely possible to achieve this.

In conclusion.

The main conclusions that can draw from that study are related to the need to change in the management model of the regions. Conducted 20 years of ongoing process the regional policy does not give the required result. The regional development strategy papers fail to achieve the tasks set out in them. A lot of priorities are being formed, but not all of them are achieved. Created an excessive public policies and their outcome is almost not visible. There is a gap between the objectives and results. Many municipalities today mix the notions of "policy-making" with "strategic documents" without realizing that the two processes



are different. The Municipality of Djebel has even published a manual on the formation of public policies and Batak Municipality has adopted a handbook for the management of the Batak Municipal administration functions. Both documents show a mixture of both types of documents. This proves once again that it is not the lack of quantitative but the lack of qualitative administrative capacity which is a problem of the government. Many public policies are subject to market mechanisms, and they remain more sustainable over time rather than these which are subject of the government. Why do!?

Another key point is the defense of the thesis that the development of public policies, which encompasses not only the financial and economic parameters of a given territory but is also bound to its territory, will lead to the desired prosperity. They should be applied as a tool to support the development of each region depending on the priorities set out in its strategic documents for regional development. So in practice, they will maximize positive result based on minimal resources. The balance lies in properly formulated aims and priorities in strategic documents and optimized but effective public policies to develop these ideas and achieve the desired outcome.

In response to all the above, the thesis stated in the study confirms that, however different the processes are, they have one common - purpose development of the region. Public policies play a role in the development of the regions. Moreover, their function is intensifying. Not accidentally, and one of the phases in the development of public policy called strategic planning. I.e. before we formulate the solution, we have to look into the problem itself by thinking strategically - with a vision in the future. Behind every decision remains the search for answers to the question - What can we do to improve the current situation and all this led to a positive development of the specific territorial unit?

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