

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF ROMANIA, 2007-2013 - CONTEXT AND PREMISES

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ABSTRACT - Having the role of a preamble in the elaboration of the National Development Plan for Romania for the period 2007-2013, whose sequences will be hosted by the following issues of the review, the paper underlines the economic and social context in which the plan was formulated. It is the first coherent territorial development plan elaborated after 1990, which is logically structured, with precise objectives, elements that confer an imperative actuality and a definite theoretical and practical value. The favourable premises of its implementation are underlined, as regards the rich and diversified natural basis, and the numerous and of quality human resources, respectively.

Keywords: national development plan, natural support basis, human resources

For about 18 years, since the fall of the communist regime during the popular revolt of 1989 up to nowadays, Romania has struggled in a grievous transition, which has been the more difficult and long, the new pathway of the economic and social evolution has been the more ambiguous and unclear. In the absence of a guiding line (the famous “*light from the end of the tunnel*”, uselessly invoked by the ungifted authorities), synonymous to a rigorously elaborated development strategy, the phenomena have evolved spasmodically, directly influenced by the decisions of an irresolute political administration, unprepared to manage the transition from the nationalized economy to the market economy. The lack of firmness as regards the political lever, correlated with the incapacity of the institutions to adapt quickly, on the way, to the new standards of a democratic society, have made possible the ample economic regress, materialized in the disintegration of agriculture and the bankruptcy of industry, the free fall of tourism and the country’s galloping indebt. In the agricultural field, the regress consisted in the excessive division of the agricultural properties, becoming thus impossible to exploit in a modern manner, the decrease of the irrigated areas from 3.2 million ha in 1990 to 600,000 ha nowadays, the destruction of orchards, vineyards, animal breeding complexes. Industry, which in 1990 used to produce 1% out of the total world’s production, was gradually bankrupted (under the cover of the uninspired syntagm “pile of scrap iron”, launched by a politician of that time), so that today, it does not even count in the statistics of profile. Therefore, it is no wonder for the ones who know the economic situation of Romania in the last three decades, that any comparison of the present state of economy with the one from 1989 – the last of the former regime – is still unfavourable. Moreover, Romania has become in 2008, a country dependent on the imports of agricultural products (despite its exceptional land fund), of the absolute majority of industrial products made in other states, of other countries’ tourist offer (having, as result, a deficient tourist balance), etc. The national economy, which until 1990 had a mixed character, the share of industry being predominant, has gradually transformed itself into an economy of services, with a subsistent agriculture and a lohn industry, with a tourism situated at the periphery of the European statistics.

In such a context, lacking a clear vision on the country’s affirmation on long term, lacking some pragmatic solutions for avoiding the social convulsions and crises generated during the 1990’s by the quick dismissals, without appropriate reconversions of numerous workers (the well-known “*mineriade*” – the miners’ uprisings), the elaboration, at last, of a development plan for the proximate period, 2007-2013, cannot be but salutary, all the more as it is the work of a collective of redoubtable specialists in the problematic of complex regional approaches, in the formulation of regional, zonal, or sectorial socio-economic development strategies.

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Without entering the intimacy of the study's process of elaboration, based on the most redoubtable paradigms and arguments, we will try to emphasize some of the favourable premises for its application, for the materialization of its concepts, objectives, and measures in the factual reality.

First of all, we make compulsory reference to the *natural support basis*, equivalent to the material support of the national territorial system, whose structural and functional features form a series of sine qua non conditions for the accomplishment of different strategic or sectorial objectives of the plan. From this point of view, Romania shows a mixed physical support (lithological and morphological), of great compositional diversity, which diversifies at maximum the range of suitability in the economic, infrastructural, or environmental domain. The geographical position in Central Europe, offers Romania a temperate continental climate, lacking exceptional excesses, favourable for all types of habitat, but often transformed, through its thermic or pluviometric peculiarities, into a tourist resource as well (climatotherapy).

In a period in which water begins to become a vital resource for more and more extended areas on Earth, Romania has, due to the Carpathians' water resources, hydrographic resources that allow its unrestricted development, of course, in the conditions of an optimal spatial distribution and of an efficient management. The moffetic aureola of the Eastern Carpathians – the most extended in Europe – concentrates numerous aquifers with carbonated, ferruginous, chloride, sulphurous, etc. mineral waters, not to mention the great reserves of thermal waters from the Western Plain, the Romanian Plain, the Eastern Carpathians, or the Southern Carpathians.

The bio-pedo-geographical potential can bring an important contribution to the implementation of the above-mentioned development plan. Having about 26% of the territory covered with forests of good quality, consisting of deciduous and coniferous trees, with an optimal consistency and conformation, it can support the both the landscape equilibrium and a diverse wood industry. Mountain grasslands or those from the hilly areas (4.7 million ha) assure great reserves of fodders for animal breeding, while the fertile soils from the plains, meadows, low hills are suitable for some diverse crops: cereals, technical plants, vegetables, fruit trees, vine. We appreciate that Romania's agricultural fund (about 15 million ha), consisting of mollisols (5.7 million ha), cambisols, argilluvissols or spodosols, can be exceeded in European Union, as fertility and its suitability to a great number of uses are concerned, only by that of France. Still, it must not be omitted the fact that the Carpathian and Subcarpathian regions own one of the richest hunting funds of the continent and the Danube Delta is unique as regards the European piscicultural and ornithological fauna.

The development of industry, of some branches, has as argument the great reserves of raw materials lying underground. Thus, the chlorosodic industry benefits by great reserves of salt in the Transylvanian basin or in the Subcarpathians, the iron and steel industry by non-ferrous ores, the building materials industry by all types of rocks used in the process of production, the chemical industry by the purest natural gas in the world (exploited in the Transylvanian Depression), the precious metals industry by the auriferous deposits from the Apuseni Mountains, etc. The industrial branches Romania has gained over time an international prestige should also be mentioned: the production of oil equipment, furniture, footwear, wool, wine, cheese, and crafts, which should be reconsidered and reinforced.

A primary role in the economic development of Romania must be granted to tourism, which, through its activities, can become the main branch, in the conditions of much more reduced investments than the ones claimed by agriculture or industry and in a much shorter time. More than 3 000 mineral water springs, consisting of all the types of hydrochemical waters, 12 000 caves, 4 040 natural and artificial lakes (some of them containing great deposits of sapropelic mud with therapeutic properties), more than 80 spectacular sectors of gorges and defiles, the Danube Delta as unique landscape, the Black Sea seaside, the great number and the diversity of the historical, religious or cultural objectives, the distinct ethnographical heritage of the 18 "lands" (Maramureş, Oaş, Năsăud, Bârsa, Haţeg, Lovişteana, Vrancea, etc.), founded over time by the Romanian population at the foot of the Carpathians, form an attractive patrimony which can assure, in modern conditions of planning and exploitation, the practice of all known types and forms of tourism.

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The second favourable premise for the accomplishment of the National Development Plan is the *human resource*. Quantitatively speaking, Romania occupies the 7th place among the 27 countries of the European Union, as regards the number of population (21.7 million inhabitants). However, much more important is its quality, defined by its specific mentality, by the special adherence to its native space, respectively. The studies regarding emigration in the case of Romanians (Gr. Pop, 1990; 1993), emphasize their much more reduced uprooting over history in comparison with other people. In addition, the great number of universities (105), with the most diverse profiles, among which some of great tradition (the ones from București, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, or Timișoara) can assure the adequate formation and specialization of the above-mentioned resource. The current problem of Romania is not represented by the existence of own human resource, but by its repatriation from the continent's developed countries, where it has massively emigrated in recent years (in this context we appreciate that the 7 billion euros sent to Romania by the emigrated Romanians do not equal by far the losses suffered by the national economy because of their departure).

The third opportunity is represented, of course, by *the accession of Romania to the European Union*, beginning with January 1, 2007. This fact assures substantial structural funds, necessary for the socio-economic reinforcement, the attenuation or elimination of disparities, the quick integration into its system of material and spiritual values, on one side, and a precise target, induced by its development strategy, which will channel the intern energies towards attaining the respective desideratum, without wasting itself unproductively.

In relation with the implementation of the National Development Plan, which will be sequentially presented in the following numbers of the present review, we consider of absolute priority the following aspects:

- the edification of a modern and complex transport network, mainly highways. Romania must develop, in the proximate years, a highway network of at least 3 000 km in length (Borș-Brașov-București-Constanța; Siret (Iași)-Bacău-București; București-Craiova-Timișoara; Cluj Napoca-Bistrița-Iași; Baia Mare-Satu Mare-Oradea-Timișoara), which must interconnect rapidly its historical provinces and development regions, and, in the same time, attach it to the major international corridors of road transport. Their immediate beneficent effect will have an impact upon the affirmation of tourism and upon the entire trophic chain of the national economy;
- the selection and the defining of national, regional, and zonal development poles, as premise for the assurance of the command centres territorial system and of the territorial cohesion, as well as the creation of technopoles capable of innovation and of its diffusion into a space as extended as possible. A compulsory stage is represented by the defining and the delimitation of the metropolitan areas (București, Constanța, Galați-Brăila, Craiova, Timișoara, Brașov, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Iași, Bacău), regarded as spaces of maximum economic and social effervescence;
- the defining of priority development axes (corridors) and priority development areas, with the scope of structuring regional chorotypes, territorial patterns;
- the interrelation, mainly in the infrastructure domain, with the transport systems of the neighbouring countries in order to assure their fluency and efficiency, their connection to the European thoroughfares, respectively;
- the affirmation of the competitive economic branches and sub-branches, capable of satisfying not only the internal needs, but also the requirements of the external market;
- the orientation of development towards the creation, in all the branches of the material production, of specific brands.

An essential condition for the success of this National Development Plan, a fact valid for any other initiative of this kind, is represented, of course, by its immediate putting into practice and, especially, by the finalization of its objectives in conformity with the proposed stages and requirements.

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