

Statistics- Involment in the regional development of Kosovo

Clementina Ivan-Ungureanu, National Institute of Economic Research, Romania

In the European Union (EU), since its reform in 2006, the cohesion policy has focused on the achievement of the priorities of the Lisbon strategy for the period 2007-2013.

The reformed cohesion policy has brought about the decentralisation of responsibilities to local and regional partners, the pooling of their knowledge and resources, and the development of strategies suited to local and regional levels. The regional development policies have become one of the priorities of the mid-term and long-term development strategies of the European Union EU Candidate Countries(CC) and of the Potential Candidate Countries (PCC).

One of the PCC is Kosovo, which is entering a new phase of economic and social development, including the regional aspect, after the declaration of the independence in February 2008. Five Kosovo Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have been established in December 2008 and in present they are striving to functionalise, strengthen and consolidate their activity in order to become an instrument and tool for Kosovo's economic development, European integration as well as ethnic reconciliation.

The creation of a robust economy in Kosovo is an important step forward in the stabilisation of the Balkans, an important step forward for the creation of a tolerant, multi-ethnic society, and an important step towards integration in Europe. In this process, the decentralization, the activity of these five regions could be used also as a tool for ethnic reconciliation.

The paper approaches a very topical issue in general and particularly for statistics in Kosovo, a country without experience in regional development. The approach of regional development topics requires, based on the analysis of the concrete situation, the development of new concepts, superior in terms of quality, able to meet the data needs at territorial level, in accordance with the *acquis communautaire* practice in this field.

A primary aim is an increase in the capacity of the statistical institution to provide the decision-makers, economic units and other users – both at central and territorial level – with reliable and useful statistical indicators. Thus, the paper presents the concerns of the Statistical Office of Kosovo, the results achieved in recent years, as well as the objectives of a needed strategy which should be developed in the near future.

As a matter of fact, the elaboration of this strategy is a follow-up to the need for the preparation process of EU accession and to provide the conditions which are necessary in order to have access to the Structural type Funds. An important issue, emphasised as such in the paper, concerns the perspective from which Kosovo's regional development is considered, as a component which is decisively important for sustainable development, based on the proper use of resources, while also ensuring the conservation of environmental assets – related to environment, economy, society, culture. The regional development in Kosovo should be integrated in the European area, having as objectives, on the one hand, the full turn to account of the development factors – knowledge, information, high technologies, human potential – and, on the other hand, to take the necessary actions for the revival of the regions which didn't keep the pace, in the name of solidarity, of economic and social cohesion, with a view to diminishing the disparities that exist between different areas.

* key expert in the EU funded project managed by the European Commission Liaison Office to Kosovo "*Further support to the Statistical Office of Kosovo*" in the period February 2007 – May 2009

The contribution of Kosovo official statistics to this course of action is even more valuable if we consider that the new type of approach of regional development issues,

based on the principles of decentralisation, partnership and planning development, allows the new authorities and new regional agencies to increase their involvement in promoting their own interests. Based on the information made available by the Statistical Office of Kosovo will be possible to initiate local development projects and programmes so necessary for the economic and social development after a long period of war.

For the Statistical office of Kosovo will be necessary to develop a strategy for the use of different administrative resources so as to obtain as much information as possible at regional level, consisting in highly reliable social economic indicators.

As a conclusion, an unitary and coherent activity of statistics at the level of the five regions in Kosovo, by developing its efficiency in terms of collecting and processing information and elaboration of statistical indicators, the premises for an efficient co-operation at all political decision levels are created, all parties involved being provided with the same statistical data and information necessary for their development.