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TYPICAL MISTAKES IN STRATEGIC PLANNING OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS UNITS DEVELOPMENT – POLISH EXPERIENCES

Polish local self-governments prepare and implement numerous plans which cover in their merits either a part or an overall range of their activities and sometimes even reach outside this scope. In case of communal self-governments, the main plan – strategy of development – covers the most extensive spectrum of activity, its time span is usually the longest and its role, with reference to all other plans, is of primary nature. Professional literature devoted to it seems to be exceptionally rich. Such abundance of literature may result in an opinion that almost everything has already been said about strategic planning, the recipients of which, i.e. self-government authorities, should just resort to the application of due recommendations. However, the gap between solutions depicted in theory and practical application of the prepared plans turns out to be big. Having applied the assessment criteria based on planning principles included in professional literature, the quality of many development strategies of communes in European countries has to be assessed as presenting poor quality. The discrepancies between theory and practice refer to almost all stages of strategic planning, which results in extensive disadvantages occurring in almost every part of a given development strategy. The author's researches conducted in Poland during the period of several years facilitate the opinion that the most frequently encountered failures are as follows:

- Incorrectly conducted diagnosis. Most of diagnoses are based on data collected by the entity preparing the strategy from such sources as public statistics, monographs, registers and files kept by the local self-government and its units, as well as plans prepared by the self-government in the past. However, the scope of data collected in this way is, in many cases, incomplete and therefore many phenomena or processes pass unnoticed.
- Lack of forecasts. Strategic planning represents, among others, the method of preparing economy, society and environment of the local self-government for taking up most important future tasks, the occurrence of which is highly likely, but the preparation of forecasts in the process of local self-government unit development strategy construction represents rather rare activity.
- The application of strategic analysis methods elaborated for the construction of enterprises' development strategy. One of the most frequently applied strategic analytic procedures is the “SWOT” analysis, since it represents the procedure created at the background of economic enti-

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ties' strategic planning, but also widely applied by other organizations. However, its application without any modifications in the process of local self-government development strategy does not seem fully correct, owing to many serious differences between the analysis and an enterprise.

- Incorrectly conducted social consultancy and overestimation of its results. The frequently made mistake is conducting consultancy based on totally unrepresented social group for the local community. It is a commonly applied rule that “the absent are not right”, and emphasizing these directions of strategic activities development which were suggested (enforced) by these present during strategic workshops. It also happens that while striving to provide social acceptance for a given strategy it is constructed exclusively as a compilation of collected suggestions.
- Lack of choices. Strategy represents the choice of such activities regarding which there is an assurance among local authorities' representatives that they will stimulate many positive developmental impulses, facilitating, or making it significantly easier to take advantage of all strong points and opportunities and eliminating or extensively diminishing possible problems, as well as protecting the strategy against potential threats. However, there is an abundance of strategies passed in line with the legislation in force, in which self-government authorities promise to meet almost all needs of both present and future residents, as well as legal entities, and even carry this all out in a surprisingly short time.
- Lack of or an improper implementation system. One of the most frequently occurring mistakes is depriving the strategy of the correct implementation procedure. Therefore this, most important for the self-government, document immediately after having been passed ceases to fulfill any role in the activities of its authorities. This is because it lacks indications who, when and how is supposed to make use of it, how it should be implemented, or its implementation monitored, as well as corrected if the need arises.

Despite the presented difficulties, strategic planning results, to a great extent, in the development of Polish communes. Imperfect strategies created a few or more years before are being substituted by more precise ones at present. Many strategic plans are being improved already within the process of their implementation. There also occur standards regulating their contents, as well as the process of their preparation. Research results in this field should become the subject for discussion not only at Polish national forum, but rather an international one. It is especially important in post-communist countries, where self-government system regained its significance or was established relatively recently and where problems of similar nature are observed.

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