

Sustainability in Latvia: Integral Part for Socio-Economic Growth

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Introduction. The concept of sustainable development was introduced in the UN environment and development report “Our Common Future”, 1987; it has been reassessed lately, i. e. at the UN Conferences (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and recent Paris-agreement on climate change in December 2015. Since then, sustainability has become the political idea for states wishing to “meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future ones to meet their own needs”, declared the UN Summit at the end of 2015. The global framework to achieve sustainable development by 2030 was fixed in the UN-2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (known as SDGs); the agenda was adopted by the international community at a special UN Summit in September 2015. More than 150 nations approved the global sustainable goals; the EU supports sustainability, which provides policy’s orientation for the Baltic States and Latvia.

Aim, Materials and Methods. The global and European leaders have made valuable impetus in introducing sustainability principles and methods into the socio-economic growth in the EU states. Politicians, economists and business community in the Baltic States and Latvia feel the need for changes and new approaches to growth. Global competition for resources is increasing (particularly in raw materials, oils and gas), which makes European and Latvian industry dependent on imports. National growth is being increasingly vulnerable to resources’ high prices, to new trends in digital agenda, to complications in labour markets with needed reforms. Implementing SDGs can resolve most of these issues: their successful implementation in Latvia can significantly increase national growth potentials. Thus, the article reviews the options for SDGs’ practical introduction into Latvian political economy strategies.

Analysis include recent global and EU’s materials on SDGs’ politico-economic and social aspects in Latvian development, providing ground for creating a somewhat new strategic guidance in the form of a new “Latvian SDG’s narrative”. The analysis include, e.g. recent publications concerning the Latvian economic situation, e.g. OECD Economic Outlook-2017. The outcomes from a number of international conferences and seminars on EU integration and Baltic Sea Area development process are included in the research too.

Results. The article suggests that Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy for 2030, adopted by the Saeima in June 2010 and the Latvian National Development Plan for 2014–2020 shall be amended according to the new UN and EU SDGs’ guidelines. Latvian executive branch, i.e. Cabinet of Ministers and Saeima as a legislative branch shall review national strategy to use global and European “instruments and tools” to ensure that the mentioned three SDGs’ pillars of sustainable development, social, environmental and economic, are transposed into Latvian strategies.

Conclusions. The article concentrates on two examples providing insights into practical SDGs’ implementation in Latvia: in sustainable business (as sustainability principles are becoming closer connected to corporate strategies with new “modes of business” including present development needs with both “profitable” part of corporate activity), and with social and environmental aspects. Also, in teaching sustainability, the educational process which incorporates SDGs’ guidelines into optimal growth, with its main aspects of streamlining Latvian labour situation.