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Summary

The report analyses the process of public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 in Poland, initiated by the left-wing government of Premier Marek Belka and conducted in January-September 2005. They were the first consultations in Poland after 1989 conducted by the government on such a large scale and with participation of a broad group of various organizations. The consultations of the NDP draft are treated here as an example of increasing participation of social partners and interest groups in activities and decisions of Polish public administration. They are also an example of leaving behind the path of a narrow dialogue with employers and trade unions, and separate contacts with territorial self-governments, in favour of a civic dialogue, where the group of partners is broadened by numerous non-governmental, academic and community organizations. The main research questions concern the extent to which NDP draft consultations can be treated as a beginning of a more institutionalized application of such non-hierarchic methods of consulting and deciding in the Polish governance process, and to what extent these consultations have introduced the principles of transparency and accountability to the Polish system of governance.

In the report two main dimensions: sectoral and regional are analyzed. At the regional level, two provinces were selected: Mazowieckie and Dolnośląskie Voivodships. At the sectoral dimension the study was focused on three particular sectors: tourism, natural environment, and NGOs. The study was qualitative in nature. The key research methods were in-depth interviews with actors involved in consultations process and document analysis. The study was conducted between September and November 2005.

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I. Foreword

This text analyses public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 initiated by the left-wing government of Premier Marek Belka and conducted in January-September 2005. They were the first consultations in Poland after 1989 conducted by the government on such a large scale and with participation of a broad group of various organizations. The impetus to take up work on a strategic document for the development of Poland lied before all else in the perspective of getting access to EU budgetary resources. Consequently, the debate of the NDP draft involving the central government, territorial self-governments and non-governmental organizations can be treated as one of the indications of Europeanization – impact of membership in the European Union on the process of governance in Poland. However, the authors of the draft and originators of the idea of consultations aspired to more than just preparing a document that would meet the criteria set by Brussels. In their opinion, the National Development Plan should not be only a “timetable for spending EU funds” but a “Polish edition of the Lisbon Strategy”, (...) a document bonding the entirety of developmental undertakings and activities conducted in Poland”.¹ This study report, however, analyses not as much the content of the project as the objectives, structure and course of public consultations *per sé*, as well as their political background. Main research questions are related to the level of institutionalization and scope of the dialogue, effect of public consultations on the legitimization of the NDP draft itself and on the government and politicians therein, as well as the effectiveness of consultations.

We treat consultations of the NDP draft as an example of increasing participation of social partners and interest groups in activities and decisions of public administration, introduced in order to maintain societal legitimization of the increasingly specialized and technocratic administration². This method of governance can assume the form of a classic social dialogue involving trade unions and employer organizations (such as the Trilateral Commission) or a civic dialogue understood as a manner of consulting government decisions with a broader group of social and non-governmental partners. Terms of such interaction between the government and social partners are set out in a document entitled *Zasady dialogu społecznego* (Principles of Social Dialogue), adopted by the Polish government in 2002. It lists the following forms of conducting a civic dialogue: “exchanging information, reviewing legislative proposals, cooperating and collaborating with public administration institutions in the performance of public tasks for the purpose of narrowing the gap between positions advocated by the government administration and social partners, consulting and assuming positions (i.e. submitting comments and reservations).”³ Consultations of the draft of the NDP 2007-2013 are an example of leaving behind the path of a narrow dialogue with employers and trade unions, and, as a rule, separate contacts with territorial self-governments, in favour of a civic dialogue, where the group of partners is broadened by numerous non-governmental, academic and community organizations.

We look at consultations of the NDP draft as an attempt to apply “new modes of governance”. Although several definitions of that notion coexist, thus demonstrating various aspects of

¹ www.npr.org.pl

² Grosse T.G., *Inception Report: Democratisation, Capture of the State and New Forms of Governance*, 2004, www.eu-newgov.org

³ *Zasady dialogu społecznego* (Principles of Social Dialogue), a government program document adopted by the Council of Ministers on 22nd October 2002.

governance⁴, the term applies first and foremost to such methods of making and implementing public decisions which, although binding for the society in question, are to a lesser degree based on the traditional hierarchic bureaucracy in the Weberian sense. Decisions are not imposed exclusively by the hierarchy. Actors included in the decision-making process have the (formal or *de facto*) right of veto within the framework of the given policy and voluntarily comply with the ultimate decision. Secondly, non-state actors (both profit oriented and non-profit – commercial companies, various interest groups and non-governmental organizations) are regularly included in the decision-making and implementation process⁵. We ask in our report to what extent can NDP draft consultations be treated as a beginning of a more institutionalized application of such non-hierarchic methods of consulting and deciding in the Polish governance process. Another important research question we ask concerns the extent to which these consultations have introduced the principles of transparency and accountability to the Polish system of governance - for the purpose of reducing the state capture risk and counteract the pathologies of a weak state. One of the hypotheses is that new methods of governance, including civic dialogue, will make it possible to overcome weaknesses of the state and its administration.

Placing the issue in this context gives birth to two subsequent research questions. Firstly, why and in what circumstances does a government decide to launch a civic dialogue? Is it because it is aware of its weaknesses and searches for resources outside the public administration? Or, on the contrary, does it launch a civic dialogue knowing that it will be able to control the entire decision-making process, whereas consultations play only a *pro-forma* role or a role imposed by an outside institution like the European Union in legitimizing a project already prepared? The other question is how new methods of governance affect social partners. A broad spectrum of consultations could promote the empowerment of various types of community organizations. This is one perspective from which we have analyzed the role of social partners in consultations and the nature of interaction between government institutions and non-governmental organizations. One of the objectives of the authors of the NDP draft was to reinforce a certain type of organizations such as territorial self-governments. There was a visible effort to transfer the centre of gravity in the selection of partners from the central administration and traditionally strong partners such as trade unions toward empowerment of territorial self-governments and non-governmental organizations⁶. Before we can answer the questions about the empowerment of various actors we must at this introductory stage not only analyze consultations *per sé* but also draw attention to events that played themselves out already after the completion of the study, when a new government came to power in Fall 2005. That government decided to start work on a completely new strategic document and abandon the consulted NDP draft.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 was the Polish government's second strategic document prepared under this name with EU resources in mind. The preceding document covered the time between Poland's accession to the EU and the end of the current EU budget period - from 2004 to 2006. The work on a project covering the successive budget period –

⁴ Comp. *The Scientific Objectives of the NEWGOV Project. A Revised Framework*, September 2005, www.eu-newgov.org

⁵ Comp. Boerzel T., Guttenbrunner S., Seper S., *Conceptualizing New Modes of Governance in EU Enlargement*, p. 6, 2004, www.eu-newgov.org, p. 6.
For a discussion of new methods of governance and an attempt to refer them to the reality of CEE countries, see Grosse T.G. (2004).

⁶ For more on this topic see Falkowski M., *Tripartite Commission, Effectiveness, Legitimacy and Pathologies of Weak States: Case Study Report Poland, 2005*, www.eu-newgov.eu

2007-2013 – started in the early 2004. Throughout that year there were consultations of the assumptions at the base of the project and of regional and sectoral strategies. The preliminary overall draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 was adopted by the government on 11th January 2005. Between January and September 2005, the draft was under consultation both at the central level and in the provinces. Key to the consultation process were meetings of the Interministerial Team in Charge of Preparing the NDP 2007-2013, which in addition to government representatives included social partners such as *Rada Działalności Pożytku Publicznego* (Public Benefit Activities Council) and *Rada Przedsiębiorczości* (Entrepreneurship Council). Since the creation of the team in February 2004 and until September 2005, it met 44 times. The ultimate amended version of the NDP was adopted by the government on 5th September 2005. It was decided that the project would be handed over to the successive government⁷.

The successive government established by the Law and Justice Party decided to abandon work on the submitted draft of the NDP 2007-2013, which had been subject of consultations conducted in 2004/2005. The government decided to draw up a totally new strategic document – *Strategia Rozwoju Kraju* (Country's Development Strategy), the initial version of which is slated for February 2006⁸. Similarly to the National Development Plan, the Country's Development Strategy is meant to be a comprehensive strategic document encompassing all developmental activities in Poland rather than not only those supported by the European Union. The new government's criticism of the NDP draft refers not as much to the system of inscribed priorities chosen by the previous government as to the structure and number of particular operating programs⁹. Consequently, the question comes to mind why did the groups which formed the new government and which at that time were in opposition not present their reservations during the consultation process? On the other hand, one should ask whether the authors of the NDP draft and initiators of accompanying consultations were indeed interested in drawing the then political opposition into the work on the NDP. On one hand, the opposition did not want to legitimize the government at any price by becoming involved in the work on the project. On the other hand, despite the fact that one of the main government objectives was to hand the project down to its political successors, it chose the path of escaping political negotiations and focusing on consultations with actors who did not belong to the political party system or parliament. In addition, the strategy of NDP "depoliticization" was applied very inconsistently, as President Aleksander Kwaśniewski demonstrated in his speech that inaugurated the consultation process, when he turned the NDP debate into a tool of current political rivalry¹⁰. The cause of complete depoliticization of the NDP debate was not helped by the election campaign that was taking place at the same time. As a result, the new govern-

⁷ Parallel to the development of the NDP draft, work proceeded on regional and sectoral strategies, and on detailed operating programs. It was completed in December 2005. Comp. the Council of Ministers communiqué after its meeting on 06.09.2005 - http://www.kprm.gov.pl/1937_14549.htm. In September 2005, the Council of Ministers also adopted the draft of the National Strategic Reference Framework. The chapter *Basic Information about Consultations of the NDP Draft* presents in more depth the successive stages in the work on the NDP 2007-2013.

⁸ The work on modifying the National Strategic Reference Framework – a document also prepared by the previous government and indispensable if Poland wants to take advantage of EU funds - is being pursued concurrently.

⁹ Statement made by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Regional Development Agnieszka Jankowska in an interview with report authors.

¹⁰ President Kwaśniewski's speech at the Royal Castle; comp. Niklewicz K., *Początek debaty o Narodowym Planie Rozwoju. Wielki plan bogacenia się kraju i jego obywateli* (Start of the NDP Debate: Grand Plan for the Enrichment of Poland and its Citizens), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21.01.2005.

ment began working on a new document and is planning to launch a new cycle of public consultations in February 2006. Early reports say that these consultations will be similar to those conducted in 2005.¹¹

Our report covers the consultation period up to September 2005, when the preliminary comprehensive draft of the NDP 2007-2013 was adopted. However, certain conclusions and interpretations appearing in this text draw from the knowledge of what happened to the project later, i.e. its rejection by the new government. Even a sketchy and incomplete awareness of the activities surrounding the NDP calls for an additional dose of scepticism, particularly as concerns institutionalization of the dialogue and long-term impact of consultations on the position of social partners and their relations with public administration.

This report is a part of the project *Democratization, Capture of the State and New Forms of Governance in CEE Countries* conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs within the framework of the scientific consortium *New Modes of Governance*, led by the European University Institute in Florence. The report complements earlier studies of the functioning of the Trilateral Commission on Socio-Economic Affairs.

¹¹ The government is planning to “organize conferences, seminars and meetings with various communities and socio-economic partners. There will be a way of submitting comments via the internet. Consultations will be taking place on the central and regional level.” This information was provided by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Regional Development Agnieszka Jankowska in an interview with authors. That means that six months after completion of preceding consultations, the government is about to by and large replicate their structure and scale.

II. Main conclusions

Reasons for conducting consultations

Various types of arguments – ideological, pragmatic and political – contributed to the decision to hold consultations of the draft of the NDP 2007-2013. This differentiation only serves analytical purposes as, in practice, these factors were strongly intertwined. The ideological (or “fashion”) - factor that influenced consultations lied undoubtedly in a certain trend present in the European Union, in administrative and political sciences, for “new methods of governance”, which assume inclusion of actors from outside the administration in the making and consulting of public decisions. It was linked to specific EU instructions and standards relative to planning and spending EU budgetary resources. Therefore, it also had a pragmatic character, the more so since one of the goals of public consultations was to facilitate the subsequent process of NDP implementation, hence also absorption of EU resources. Ideological premises of the consultations were also visible in the legitimization of the idea of broad consultations by Deputy Premier Hausner, who was declaring the supremacy of the “interactive” method of introducing reforms over the “imperative” method. Moreover, political factors and arguments were also important. The principal factor among them was the strive to get support for a large strategic project worked out by an increasingly weak minority government, which was experiencing mounting opposition in the parliament. Broad public consultations and measures such as a series of regional conferences were meant to help in building up the political and public image of the initiators of the NDP debate, which was particularly valuable in the face of the election campaign. The argument about “creating development actors”, according to which Poland needed a new developmental impetus and new agents of change, mainly territorial self-governments, business communities and NGOs, had both a political and pragmatic character. Main reasons for launching public consultations are provided below.

The principal reason for conducting public consultations lied in the resolve to ensure that the NDP project was pursued after the current parliamentary term came to an end and opposition parties took over the government. Ultimately, however, that objective was not achieved. The government decided that broad consultations would earn supporters for its NDP project, who would have a sense of its ownership and would lobby the new rulers in its favour. Consultations were conducted under the slogan of their “depoliticization”, understood as a dialogue with civic organizations rather than with political parties. However, that attempt at “depoliticization” was pursued inconsistently, with ruling politicians trying to discount broad public consultations in favour of current political rivalry.

Broad consultations with participation of social partners were meant to reinforce the civic dialogue institution in Poland. The draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 and the project of consultations were to a large degree an outcome of personal involvement by Deputy Premier Jerzy Hausner. The scope and shape of consultations can be ascribed to his personal conviction about the necessity to reinforce the role of a civic dialogue in the governance process.

The initiation of broad public consultations of the NDP draft was dictated by the resolve to apply new methods of governance, such as collectivization of the decision-making process, also in Poland. Both the initiators of the consultation process and the participants therein underline the role played by EU standards applicable to public consultations and reviews of government documents in bringing about and accelerating these processes in Poland.

The goal of conducting a broad civic dialogue (not limited to traditional partners from the Tri-lateral Commission and ministries) was to even out sectoral and corporative influence and in-

terests (including those of central ministries) by increasing the involvement of regional and self-government actors. A wider group of consulted partners, including NGOs, was also meant as a tool for curbing the traditional trade union influence. The government saw these sectoral and corporative interest groups as an obstacle to Poland's economic development.

Another goal was to popularize the NDP among key communities and organizations, and within the population as a whole, and thus facilitate its subsequent implementation. Initiators of the NDP draft and of its consultations assumed that a broad consultation program would also facilitate absorption of structural funds.

Consultation procedure

We looked at consultations of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 from the viewpoint of their transparency, i.e. openness, legality, publicness and representativity.

The consultation process found its legislative framing in a Council of Ministers ordinance concerning the consultation procedure. Since that legal act described government intentions, it provided a general outline of the procedure and gave consultations a planned and definite character.

However, the framework of consultations described in the ordinance was not filled with specific executive instructions allowing for a transparency of the consultation procedure. Government declarations seemed to indicate that the consultation process had been designed as completely open to all interested parties. But there were no uniform rules, no instructions for administration institutions responsible for the organization of consultations, no indication who should be invited to comment on the NDP and how those invitations would be extended. It was up to direct organizers of meetings at which NDP provisions were discussed and amendments were suggested whether they were indeed open to everyone or only to partners indicated by government officials. Consequently, the declared openness of the consultations was in reality quite limited.

The system of handling opinions submitted by social partners was not transparent. It was up to the author of the particular section of the NDP draft to decide whether an opinion concerning that section would be taken into account. The government had not worked out any criteria or procedures. Partners were not informed of the criteria or procedures that governed the handling of submitted comments.

The criterion of representativity was not present in the process of handling submitted opinions – an opinion expressed by an individual weighted as much as an opinion of an entire community. That approach allowed the government to ignore critical comments provided by organization coalitions such as the environmentalists.

The publicness of the consultation process was not sufficient enough. There was no system for documenting opinions submitted by social partners or making them accessible to those who wanted to see them.

NDP legitimization

The process of consultations of the NDP draft was meant to provide societal legitimization to the plan. However, that objective was not fully attained.

It is true that consultations had an impact on the legitimization of the government in the eyes of its partners. All social partners without exception agreed that the government administration was correct in conducting a civic dialogue with respect to strategic decisions that affected the future of the state. Everybody approved the fact of initiating consultations, turning to the

“population” with a request for opinions; in the eyes of our respondents, it raised government credibility.

But putting the NDP draft up for consultation did not automatically legitimize the document itself. Public identification with the NDP depended decisively on how social partners participating in the consultations assessed their outcome and the shape of the ultimate version of the document. They accepted the NDP when its content matched their vision of the country’s development. However, when provisions forced through during the consultations were at odds with their convictions, they were not inclined to consider the NDP draft as their own and to legitimize it.

Participation of social partners

Jerzy Hausner had repeatedly stressed that consultations of the NDP draft were not only to serve as a way of getting feedback about the document but also to strengthen social partners’ ability to collaborate in the process of making public decisions.

Most important government partners in the consultation process were territorial self-governments, NGOs and business associations. The principle of “depoliticization” of the consultation process marginalized the importance and participation of political parties and trade unions.

There were a few reasons why social partners became involved in the consultation process. Some wanted to secure the interests of their organization or community by adding relevant provisions to the NDP. That was the case of communities experienced in using EU assistance funds and aware of the important role played by NDP provisions in subsequent decisions concerning the allocation of financial resources.

Employees of some organizations treated their presence at consultation meetings and preparation of comments as an element of their daily routine. Indeed, consulting on draft government legislation relating to the environment in which they operated was a part of their job description. Other communities used the public consultation process as an opportunity to prove to government officials that they were a partner worthy of participating in discussions and public decision-making. They were less interested in the NDP and more in gaining the status of a valuable partner of the government administration, which in the future would give them access to the decision-making process.

Social partners selected various strategies of participation in the consultations of the NDP draft. They acted individually, particularly when their involvement was limited to taking part in a meeting or formulating an opinion. But when it came to forcing through a particular position rather than just getting information about the NDP, they would try to build alliances. Their cooperation, creation of coalitions, would take place on their own initiative at the grass-roots level and they often financed it themselves. In some cases, partners’ integration around making changes to the NDP was inspired, supported and even financed by the government.

The effectiveness of social partners’ endeavours depended on the extent to which their communities could be mobilized, their ability to formulate opinions and then to disseminate them and hand them over to government officials who had appropriate deciding powers. Those communities which had experience in handling strategic government documents were better at using that process. They knew what the government expected of social partners who participated in consultations. Their power to persuade also depended on their access to finances and experts. However, it is worth noting that a bias among government ministers in favour of the position worked out by a given organization or community played a very important role in that position finding its way into the NDP draft. Indeed, ministers often acted as social part-

ners' allies and promoters of their ideas vis-à-vis NDP authors, and whether an idea was taken into consideration often depended on the strength of their position in the government. That happened because certain ministries or ministerial divisions were keen to elevate the importance of their sector in the NDP. In such cases, there was a unity of objectives and a peculiar alliance would form between social partners and government officials, who jointly tried to exert pressure on people directly responsible for writing new provisions into the project. Consequently, social partners' success often depended on whether government members responsible for the relevant area were determined to support their ideas and did it effectively.

Effectiveness of NDP consultations

The principal reason for holding public consultations was to provide the NDP with public legitimization of such proportions that the government established after the autumn election would feel obligated to continue working on the document. That objective was not attained. The government led by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz did not take up where Marek Belka's government left off – on the contrary, it is now working on an analogous document, the Country's Development Strategy (CDS). Regional Development Ministry officials responsible for preparing the CDS have announced that they will also conduct public consultations of that document.

The National Development Plan has not changed very much as a result of consultations. Main changes consist in the number of developmental priorities having been reduced from ten in the draft to six in the final version. Public consultations have not led to a larger number of objectives campaigned for by interest groups. On the contrary, the content of the plan has been somewhat firmed up in the final version.

The consultations were effective in publicizing the process of setting developmental goals for 2007-2013 in the sense that the communities selected by the government were informed of the NDP being prepared and that their representatives had the opportunity to become familiar with its content. They also had an educational effect in that they popularized the knowledge of mechanisms used in the distribution of EU funds. That knowledge is particularly valuable to territorial self-governments, which are ultimate beneficiaries of the measures set out in the NDP.

From social partners' perspective, the consultations were effective when the goals of the given organization found their way into the NDP. Those organizations whose ideas ended up in the ultimate version of the document recognized the success of holding consultations.

General conclusions. Tentative overall comments about new methods of governance in Poland)

In the European Union, consulting strategic public-administration decisions with social partners is a standard political practice. The NDP example gave us an opportunity to examine the success of one of the first attempts at applying this method of governance on a larger scale in Poland.

1. "New" methods of governance versus "old" methods of governance

The civic dialogue and other forms of participation in public-policy making by community organizations should be closer linked to the search for a political compromise. Otherwise the effects of participatory democracy will be threatened with rejection by traditional political actors, discontinuity and constant obstacles to their institutionalization. The rejection by the new government of the consulted NDP draft shows that the attempt to substitute a civic dia-

logue for traditional methods of governance such as parliamentary debate or negotiations with political parties in the peculiar circumstances of Polish political culture is impossible (ineffective). In Poland, new methods of governance must be better integrated with traditional rules of parliamentary democracy and the traditionally hierarchic public administration. Institutions of representative democracy have deeper roots in Poland than institutions of participatory democracy. This is because social partners have not yet been able to build channels of influence which would allow them to exact the implementation of decisions they helped to make.

2. New methods of governance in Poland. Procedures are in place; what is lacking?

The Polish government administration possesses the skills and means necessary to introduce new methods of governance (NMG) into public policy. It was able to work out a procedure for broad public consultations and find money needed to finance them. Social partners responded positively to the invitation to consultations. The administration is logistically ready to apply new methods of governance.

However, the effectiveness and institutionalization of NMG in Poland is limited because for a number of reasons. Firstly, because of social partners' inherent weakness demonstrated in their inability or unwillingness to defend decisions they helped to make. Secondly, owing to lip service paid by the rulers to public decisions worked out using new methods of governance. The government organizes consultations but feels under no obligation to be bound by their outcome or, at least, to explain to partners in consultations why it decided to ignore their postulates. The effectiveness of NMG is limited because the government treats these methods instrumentally. As a consequence, the population is reluctant to trust them.

3. NMG and institutionalization of the public dialogue in Poland

The institutionalization of new methods of governance such as the civic dialogue will proceed in Poland because the European Union uses them as a standard way of making decisions and will require the same from the Polish administration. The pressure exerted by social partners will also contribute to their institutionalization. Our study has shown that social partners are expecting the application of these governance methods. However, the form in which NMG will function within the framework of the Polish political culture remains an open question. The current trend toward their instrumentalization and their superficiality, when the effect of NMG does not translate into decisions made in public matters, is worrisome. Consequently, there is a threat of "shallow institutionalization" of NMG in Poland, where stress is put on procedural matters and the fact itself of holding consultations.

4. Impact of NMG on Polish state pathologies

One of the weak points of the Polish state is the absence of continuity in the performance of its administration and successive governments, which often reject *en bloc* projects prepared by their predecessors. It is associated with the absence of long-term strategic thinking in the public domain. New methods of governance, public consultations of the NDP 2007-2013, were meant to force certain changes in this area. But the consultations turned out to be an insufficient protection against the rejection of the NDP draft. It should be stressed that the new government has the right to its own decisions with respect to the substance of the project. However, the fact that it did not find it fitting to explain this to the social partners participating in consultations, be it only symbolically, proves that its approach to consultations is somewhat instrumental. The process of broad public consultations of the NDP was meant to contribute to the development of the civic dialogue in Poland. Meanwhile, as Marcinkiewicz's cabinet rejected the NDP draft, social partners found out that their effort had been unneces-

sary and that their work had been ignored. That contributes to an even further demise of citizens' trust in public institutions and, in a longer term, may discourage them from cooperation with the public administration.

III. Basic information concerning the consultation process

“The National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007–2013” is a document whose role is to bring together all developmental undertakings. It provides a concept of modernization of Polish economy and suggests institutional changes which will make that modernization possible.

The NDP mission is to take up and pursue undertakings that will ensure a high rate of economic growth, raise competitiveness of regions and individual enterprises, and provide jobs, all this while ensuring a higher level of social, economic and spatial cohesion.”¹²

The government was obligated to create the NDP for 2007-2013 pursuant to the Act of 20th April 2004 on the National Development Plan. The necessity for public consultations of the NDP is inscribed in that Act. It lists government's social partners whose opinions must be taken into account during NDP preparation. They are local self-government representatives, i.e. the Joint Government and Territorial Self-Government Commission, and provincial administration bodies. The NDP also needed to be consulted with territorial self-government field units and social and economic partners¹³.

A more detailed description of the terms of public consultations is provided in Prime Minister's ordinance on the consultation procedure and deadlines, collaboration and cooperation in drawing up the National Development Plan, operating programs and strategy of using cohesion funds.

The NDP was consulted both at the phase of developing its assumptions (up to the end of 2004) and after the government prepared its draft. Opinions as to its assumptions were solicited from a narrow circle of individuals and institutions invited to the discussion by government representatives. Only consultations of the NDP draft, held in the first half of 2005 – from 20th January to late May – bore the features of a civic dialogue. That stage of consultations was the object of our study.

Consultations of the draft of the NDP for 2007-2013 were held by the minority government of Prime Minister Jerzy Belka supported by the Democratic Left Alliance Party. The function of government plenipotentiary for NDP matters in the rank of secretary of state in the Ministry of Economy and Labour was held by Lech Nikolski, who also headed the Government Centre for Strategic Studies. The actual designer of the plan was Professor Jerzy Hausner, deputy premier until the end of March 2005 and, after resignation, public government consultant for the National Development Plan.

The work on the NDP draft was coordinated by the Interministerial Team in Charge of Preparing the NDP for 2007-2013. The team was headed by the deputy premier – economic policy coordinator, seconded by the member of the Ministers' Council who oversaw the Government Centre for Strategic Studies. Members of the team represented relevant key government administration bodies. In addition, the team included representatives from provincial governments and from the Joint Government and Territorial Self-Government Commission.

¹² Introduction, *Wstępny Narodowy Plan Rozwoju na lata 2007 – 2013* (Draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013), 2005, www.npr.gov.pl

¹³ Article 13, Act of 20th April 2004 on the National Development Plan (*Dziennik Ustaw* of 24th May 2004), www.npr.gov.pl

Social partners' representatives, e.g. *Rada Działalności Pożytku Publicznego* (Public Benefit Activities Council) and *Rada Przedsiębiorczości* (Entrepreneurship Council), participated in the team's work as observers.

A Sub-Team for Public Consultations and Promotion was appointed within the Interministerial Team. Its members included representatives of various ministries, community, business and employer organizations, and NGOs.

The work on the NDP draft in accordance with the art of creating this type of documents and pursuant to the NDP Act should be based on assumptions inscribed in other strategies. Art. 5 of the NDP Act states that "the work on the NDP must take into account the objectives of the national regional-development strategy, sectoral strategies, provincial development strategies, national spatial management concept, and assumptions of the state scientific and technical policy and innovation policy". In practice, however, many strategies, e.g. provincial development strategies, were being updated parallel to the work on the NDP draft.

Public consultations on the NDP were taking place mainly during conferences and meetings, and in the form of written opinions submitted to the government. The process of NDP consultations initiated by the government had a regional and sectoral character.

Every provincial government organized a regional conference jointly with the Ministry of Economy, at which the NDP was presented and discussed. In addition, provincial marshal's offices organized local meetings.

The sectoral process of consultations was executed during meetings devoted to particular areas of policy covered by the NDP such as culture, environmental protection, agriculture. Ministries responsible for preparing the substantive part of the NDP draft were required to consult it with social partners.

Institutions, organizations and individuals could express their opinions concerning the NDP draft by way of e-mailing or faxing them to the Ministry of Economy, other ministries or provincial marshal's offices. The process of evaluating the NDP draft proceeded not only on the initiative of public administration institutions but was also organized by NGOs, business associations, etc.

IV. Methodology

The objective of the study was to analyse the process of public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013, conducted in the first half of 2005. We wanted to examine the course of the consultation process and the method used in process planning.

For the purpose of scrutinizing the consultation process, we analyzed the regional and sectoral dimension of the consultations. At the regional level, we selected two provinces and studied the manner in which provincial governors and marshals organized consultations, as well as the level of social partners' involvement therein. The study was conducted in Mazowieckie and Dolnośląskie Provinces due to the different scope of consultations characteristic to each. Mazowieckie Province was an example of very broad consultations, whereas consultations in Dolnośląskie Province were limited.

In both provinces, the study covered in-depth interviews with:

- an employee of the provincial marshal's office
- an employee of the provincial governor's office

- representatives of two non-governmental organizations which had taken part in the consultations
- representatives of two territorial self-governments which had taken part in the consultations

We also analysed public consultations of the NDP draft focused on particular sectors. We studied consultations concerning tourism, natural environment, NGOs. In each area, the study involved an in-depth interview with:

- a ministerial employee responsible for public consultations of the NDP draft
- two representatives of organizations which acted as social partners in the process of consultations

The other significant component of the study was an analysis of the manner of planning the process of public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013, and of the ways these consultations had been managed. To this end, we analysed the activities of central administration bodies that coordinated the consultation process.

Within the framework of that part of the study, we conducted the following scientific activities:

- in-depth interviews with ministers responsible for NDP consultations
- document analysis making it possible to recreate the manner of organizing consultations at the central level (i.e. procedures involved in the promotion of consultations, in documenting and using submitted opinions, etc.)

The study was conducted between September and November 2005.

V. Reasons for conducting consultations

A few factors influenced the model of holding consultations of the draft of the NDP 2007-2013 adopted by the left-wing SLD-UP government. Firstly, both the project of the strategic document and the idea for its consultations were to a large extent personal creations of the then Deputy Premier Jerzy Hausner. The scope and shape of the consultations came out of his conviction about the need to reinforce the role of the civic dialogue in the governing process (Hausner 2004). Secondly, that conviction coincided with relevant EU requirements and that factor was considered very important by high-ranking officials in the Ministry of Economy and the Government Centre for Strategic Studies. Thirdly, by conducting broad consultations, NDP authors wanted to depoliticise it and thus facilitate its adoption by the next government and ensure continuity of work on Poland's long-term development strategy. Fourthly, broad and decentralized consultations illustrated the government's desire to reserve a larger role in the process for provincial self-governments. That was dictated by the desire to balance out the influence and interests represented by economic sectors and corporations (including central ministries) by way of reinforcing the role played by regional and local self-government actors. A wider circle of consulted partners, including NGOs, was also meant to balance out the traditional influence exerted by groups such as trade unions. These sectoral and corporative interest groups were seen by the government as obstacles to Poland's economic development. Fifthly, the ultimate shape of the consultations was affected by pressure exerted by community organizations, which had a negative opinion of the experience of the preceding NDP 2004-2006 and lobbied the government to ensure that the NDP 2007-2013 was consulted earlier in the process and on a wider scale.

Depoliticization and broad legitimization of the NDP project

Broad public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 were meant, among other things, to give that strategic document a supra-political character and facilitate its adoption by the next government. Prime Minister Hausner considered that “to guarantee the continuity of the work on the NDP, the only possible way was to lead that work in a manner ensuring that both the content of proposed solutions and the procedure to achieve them were maximally depoliticised and based on a partnership consensus”.¹⁴ The national debate of the NDP 2007-2013 was solemnly inaugurated at the Royal Castle in Warsaw on 20th January 2005. The conference, which in addition to scholars, community and professional organization representatives, and local-level government officials, was attended by President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Prime Minister Marek Belka and the main author of the NDP - the then Deputy Premier and Economy Minister Jerzy Hauser - was boycotted by the political opposition. That showed from the start the difficulties behind achieving one of the main objectives set by the initiators of public consultations – providing the NDP with a rank of a national document rather than a government one. Neither was the fulfilment of that objective helped by the inauguration speech of President Kwaśniewski, which put the NDP back in a strongly political and party context. The president said that “Poland can either choose the road proposed in the National Development Plan or the road of ‘European marginalization, xenophobia, populism and irresponsibility’ – it’s either NDP or LPR”¹⁵. Consequently, the government wish to depoliticise the consultations was not totally consistent.

Pressure from social partners

The broad nature of the consultations was to some degree forced by the involvement and pressure exerted by certain community organizations. The most important role was played here by an employer association – Polish Confederacy of Private Employers “Lewiatan” - and by NGO “umbrella” organizations. Both these communities had a strong sense of having played too small of a role and having committed too many mistakes in previous consultations of the NDP 2004-2006. Henryka Bochniarz, Lewiatan’s president, admitted that: “we had treated previous consultations rather superficially. Today we know what price had to be paid for that. Businesses have been protesting for several months against vague and - in our opinion - unfair terms of dividing the initial pool of structural funds we have received from the EU.”¹⁶ Such evaluation snowballed into a great deal of interest in the NDP 2007-2013 consultations and close cooperation in this matter with Deputy Premier Hausner. In addition to being present at government conferences and in the interministerial team, Lewiatan started its own national NDP debate.¹⁷

The thought process involved in the consultations of the NDP 2007-2013 and negative experience of the past were also the reasons for a considerable amount of involvement by NGO organizations. Their representatives, particularly those from large “umbrella” organizations that act on behalf of other smaller NGOs, have been for many years gathering knowledge about EU structural funds and lobbied the government for as broad public consultations as

¹⁴ Hausner J., *Jak podjąć wyzwanie* (How to Take Up the Challenge), *Rzeczpospolita*, 21.03.2005.

¹⁵ Niklewicz K., *Początek debaty o Narodowym Planie Rozwoju. Wielki plan bogacenia się kraju i jego obywateli* (Start of the NDP Debate: Grand Plan for the Enrichment of Poland and its Citizens), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21.01.2005.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Niklewicz K., *Przedsiębiorcy o Narodowym Planie Rozwoju* (Corporations on the Topic of the National Development Plan), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 03.02.2005.

possible. An NGO official pointed at the lack of consultations with respect to the NDP 2004-2006: “non-governmental organizations have known for years that such consultations had to happen and were anticipating them. Already at the time of drawing up the preceding NDP, operating programs, already then there had been a considerable effort in support of such consultations and there had been attempts at participating in the development of operating programs. But it was done completely unprofessionally – someone would get called from the NGO sector to participate, sit down, work a bit on a program...” Hence NGOs’ effort to better institutionalize the practice of consultations. Consequently, one of the reasons why they happened on such large scale in 2005 was the fact that some non-governmental actors were strong enough by that time to consistently pressure the government to consult important decisions with them. That NGO pressure on the government as to the manner of spending European funds and drawing up development plans had existed for many years. And then, suddenly, NGOs happened to be facing Deputy Premier Jerzy Hausner on the government side, who was in favour of their demands.¹⁸ What is more, NGOs became so involved in the process that they thought out and drew up, largely unaided, the “Civic Society” operating plan, which was also approved by Hausner and other ministers.

Impact of European integration

Government officials and NGO representatives alike agreed that Poland’s accession to the EU had a lot to do with the ultimate shape of the consultations. According to an NGO worker who has been involved with the structural funds for years, the fact that consultations were so important for that community and that they ultimately happened “resulted, of course, from the European influence, from being told over and over that the consultation process is a must”.¹⁹ A high-ranking Economy Ministry official listed that factor before all others saying that “EU rules put a stress on partnership and consultations, they are an important element of the process ...”²⁰ Government officials also underlined the role of EU standards in forcing the inclusion of long-term planning in Polish administration: “It is obvious: European requirements impose thinking on a longer term than a year ahead. And that’s fortunate.”²¹

NPR 2007-2013 as Jerzy Hausner’s political bequest

Both the draft of the NDP 2007-2013 and creation of the consultations themselves were to a large extent thought out by the then Deputy Premier Jerzy Hausner. The scope and shape of the consultations were a result of his conviction about the need to reinforce the role of civic dialogue in the governing process (Hausner 2004). He identified with the NDP so much that he wrote large portions of it himself and was present at most regional conferences.²² The NDP and the consultation process were to a great degree his inventions. They remained his main ambitions as Hausner built his professional and political position on the civic dialogue. He admitted that: “it gave me an additional advantage – I could refer to my image as a person who represented the social dialogue. [...] I was consciously trying to show that - out of honest conviction and because I am a man of communication and dialogue. Precisely, I am the man of the interactive method, as I call that process of social change. So that reinforced my position a great deal. When I became Deputy Premier, then, of course, the combination of that

¹⁸ Interview with an NGO representative.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Interview with an Economy Ministry official.

²¹ Interview with a high-ranking official from the Government Centre for Strategic Studies.

²² Comp. interview with the Economy Ministry official.

large amount of institutional power with the opportunity to initiate projects put me in a very strong position indeed”.²³

Behind the well-defined shape of the NDP draft and accompanying consultations there also stood a vision of an intellectual who had strong opinions on what should be the social and civic dialogue in Poland and what role it should play. According to Jerzy Hausner, “the NDP draft is in fact a plan for building a foundation of the future civic dialogue, which will show what role a dialogue should play. In other words, a dialogue should serve building developmental concepts and strategies, ensure continuity needed to build developmental strategies and grand developmental undertakings. It should not serve particular interests such as what should be the minimum wage, what should this or that be, because I believe that it is not a domain of the state, it is not a domain of social dialogue.”²⁴

Search for new partners and new developmental impetus

Broad and decentralised consultations also hid the desire to give a larger role to provincial self-governments. All government officials stressed the key role regional self-governments played as the most important partner in NDP consultations. That was dictated, among other things, by the desire to balance out the influence and interests represented by economic sectors and corporations (including central ministries) through reinforcement of the role played by regional and local self-government actors. A wider circle of consulted partners, including NGOs, was also meant to balance out the traditional influence exerted by groups such as trade unions. These sectoral and corporative interest groups were seen by the government as obstacles to Poland’s economic development.²⁵ In this context, the Deputy Premier created a sort of opposition between the business community as the engine of growth and trade unions that impeded that growth. “I was trying particularly hard to draw in employers into the NDP project. I decided that they would be able to help me later in making the project credible and in legitimizing it. Particularly employers – trade unions to a much lesser degree.”²⁶ Similarly, the government was searching for a common ground with NGO organizations: “to move in two different directions: decentralized dialogue with traditional partners and building a broader civic dialogue with new partners. Partners that the government needs first and foremost to talk to, to discuss the philosophy of development.” Provincial self-governments were that key partner whom the government wanted to boost up via the NDP consultations. It hoped that that would give the developmental undertaking a new impetus.

VI. Consultation Procedure

In examining NDP 2007-2013 consultations, we wanted to check how new methods of management, in this case collectivized methods, impacted overcoming the features of a weak state and, by so doing, contributed to transparency, openness and legality of administrative procedures.

²³ Interview with Jerzy Hausner.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The logic behind that statement is well illustrated by argumentation used by Deputy Premier Jerzy Hausner: „Take the railway sector, for example, where I had to intervene and break up deals made between the relevant ministry and corporations at the detriment of the budget, of the state and of growth itself. At least I was trying to block it. And I used that instrument again to push the issue in a different direction. And how did I do it at the time of railroad workers’ strikes? *I immediately unleashed provincial self-government officials to counterbalance them* (emphasis mine - MF]. Interview with Deputy Premier Jerzy Hausner.

²⁶ Ibid.

Legality

The procedure of consultations of the draft of the NDP 2007-1013 was specified in the form of Prime Minister's ordinance, which means that the process was neither accidental nor arbitrary as concerns its form. The ordinance of 13th January 2005 governs the consultation process we have studied, i.e. the expression of opinions with respect to the NDP draft. However, it does not cover the first phase of consultations which concerned NDP assumptions. The very fact that such regulation existed was considered a great novelty by members of Marek Belka's government.

That ordinance contained guidelines as to the organization of consultations. They, in turn, provided requirements as to the place of publication of the announcement of the start of the consulting process and the announcement content. The ordinance also referred to the forms of consultations such as conferences and meetings, and to dissemination of the NDP draft. It spoke of the need to draw up a special form to be used for submitting opinions via the internet. The ordinance also admitted other forms of consultative activities. The government undertook therein to provide public access to studies and data used in writing up the initial version of the NDP. Finally, the ordinance specified the procedure for reporting on meetings and conferences organized by public administration institutions, which included the need to prepare attendance lists and compendia of comments made with respect to the draft.

The fact that the procedure of holding consultations on the NDP draft was specified in the ordinance proves that it was planned and detailed. Putting it down in an ordinance that was publicly accessible in the official government journal made that process predictable and open to public scrutiny because it presented its authors' intentions and thus made it possible to assess the extent of the execution of objectives specified therein. In addition, provisions thereof compelled the administration to act in a specific manner and thus excluded the randomness of public servants' actions.

In essence, government activities aimed at subjecting the NDP draft to public consultations did not exceed its obligations set out in the ordinance²⁷. Regional conferences were organized jointly with local self-government authorities. The Economy Ministry prepared a website dedicated to the NDP - www.npr.gov.pl. It contained studies and data used in drawing up the NDP draft. In addition, it contained a summary of the NDP. Pursuant to the ordinance requirement, the website also served as a medium for submitting opinions concerning the NDP via the dedicated on-line form.

Openness

Consultations of the NDP draft were meant as generally accessible, open to all interested parties. Government information on the consultation process was permanently posted on the website. Moreover, a single announcement inviting the population to submit opinions on the NDP was published in a national newspaper, *Rzeczpospolita*, an important opinion-setting daily.

It should be noted that this particular method of extending an invitation to participate in consultations defines the target audience to a certain degree. When the invitation is posted on the portal dedicated to structural funds, it reaches those who visit that portal or websites that have links thereto. Indeed, government administration and regional self-government websites had links to the NDP site. Therefore, someone browsing central or regional government websites could come across the NDP link.

²⁷ Even though the ordinance also allowed "other" consultative activities than those listed directly therein.

On the other hand, the merit of publishing the invitation to submit opinions on the NDP in *Rzeczpospolita* seems doubtful – one edition of this information had little chance of embedding itself in readers' consciousness. It can also be said that the selection of the medium – *Rzeczpospolita* daily newspaper - is understandable only if we accept that the government aimed at reaching the managerial class, which is the target audience of that newspaper. Indeed, there are other daily newspapers with a broader reach and a large and more socially diverse readership.

Consequently, it is safe to say that information on the consultations of the NDP draft was addressed to people interested in that subject matter but did not aim at raising a broad public interest.

In addition to the general invitation to consultations found on the portal dedicated to structural funds and in the one-time press announcement, people potentially interested in the issue would find out about consultations from information distributed by institutions directly involved in the organization of conferences and meetings, such as provincial marshal's and governor's offices, or ministries. In these cases, however, the manner of informing the potentially interested audience was somewhat arbitrary. Sometimes the possibility to participate in consultations was left completely open, i.e. the announcement was posted on the website of the given institution and anyone who wanted could participate. Other institutions created closed lists of participants, invitations were sent out to specific addresses selected for varied reasons, and information about a forthcoming meeting was not publicly available.

Direct organizers of consultative meetings did not receive any guidelines relative to the dissemination of information about consultations. Consequently, the manner they followed ensued from their experience, practices and time they had to organize the meeting.

Transparency of consulting terms

One of the government's objectives to hold public consultations of the NDP draft was to get a feedback from various communities as concerned the content itself of the NDP document. In other words, by opening up the consultation process the government undertook to consider suggestions and opinions submitted by social partners during consultations and, consequently, change the provisions of the NDP draft accordingly.

Therefore, a scrutiny of the manner which the government applied to collect, consider and document opinions submitted during the six months of consultations seems key. The "wide stream" of received opinions is noteworthy. Indeed, opinions would come in by way of filled-out forms freely available on the NDP website. They were also submitted orally at numerous meetings organized by the public administration and social partners alike. Finally, some groups would draw up complex documents and expert opinions which referred to the entirety of issues covered in the NDP²⁸. An additional difficulty in the analysis of submitted opinions was the fact that they were sent to different recipients. That happened because the ultimate recipient of submitted opinions was not specified clearly enough.

The system of "coping" with opinions assumed that they would all end up at the Government Centre for Strategic Studies. Its employees would examine the given opinion and then direct it to the member of the Interministerial Team in Charge of the NDP responsible for the ultimate

²⁸ *Nasza wizja Polski w procesie przygotowania Narodowego Planu Rozwoju 2007 – 2013. Stanowisko pozarządowych organizacji ekologicznych* (Our vision of Poland in the process of preparing the National Development Plan for 2007-2013. Position of non-governmental environmentalist organizations.), Warsaw, April 2005.

form of that particular NDP section. However, opinions that the GCSS would send to those who were drawing up the NDP did not contain any information about their authors.

The absence of criteria for taking opinions submitted during the consultations into account seems problematic. Whether they were adopted or rejected dependent entirely on those who drew up the NDP draft. A government representative noted that “in practice, the ultimate shape of the NDP document was decided by Professor Hausner. In other words, for a government document, the NDP was very personal. Professor Hausner approved the final version of the draft, he ultimately decided its shape. When he decided that something was missing he would order the author or person responsible for the given chapter or section to put it in”. Only those opinions that fit the vision of NDP creators were taken into account.

Another problematic issue associated with the transparency of the opinion handling procedure was the fact that opinion authors were not informed about the subsequent fate of their submissions, and that despite Professor Hausner’s public statement summing up the consultation process that “it had followed the feedback principle – participants would receive answers to their proposals and positions”²⁹. In the case of opinions submitted during meetings with government officials, one can speak of a certain feedback at the time of summing up the conference or during the question-and-answer period. But people who submitted their opinions in writing, hence those who sacrificed their time and energy to participate in the consultations, never found if their opinions had been accepted or rejected.

That did not take place for prosaic reasons because “that would have really been very time-consuming. The time needed to do it well would have not been much shorter than the time needed to draw up the NDP itself”. Social partners often stressed their dissatisfaction with the absence of response from opinion recipients. “Those opinions would be put aside and left there. Moreover, opinions could also be rejected because those who read them could not understand what their authors meant. A whole lot of opinions would be rejected for this reason because those who were supposed to take them into account could not understand them. That is natural when you do not know who is the opinion’s author and have no opportunity to speak to him and find out what he meant. What was the guiding idea, why it was written so and not so... That is a fundamental shortcoming of the consultation process, that feedback is provided only in the ultimate document itself, that the document needs to be analysed very carefully once again to find out whether the opinion has been taken into account...”. It is worthwhile to underline the correct comment that the absence of recipients’ feedback can lead to various misunderstandings, to not understanding the intention of the opinion’s author.

The absence of a system of responding to partners’ positions submitted during the consultations had another negative dimension – educational. The consultation process was meant to be more than a substantive discussion of the vision of Poland’s growth, it was meant to serve the development of civic dialogue. In a way, the opportunity to teach social partners how to express opinions to government proposals was wasted. Feedback information on why the given suggestion could not be included in the NDP would teach social partners how to formulate opinions in the future. Providing feedback would also promote the empowerment of organizations and individuals, which after all was meant as one of the effects of civic dialogue.

The next dimension of the transparency of the consultation process lies in documenting opinions submitted by social partners and making them available to whoever may be interested in the subject matter both during consultations and thereafter. The form of documentation

²⁹ Hausner J., *Jak podjąć wyzwanie* (How to Take Up the Challenge), *Rzeczpospolita*, 21.03.2005.

adopted by the government was a report on consultations, which consisted mainly of edited opinions.

Opinions were not quoted in their entirety. The shortcoming of this manner of documenting was that it did not provide any specific information about opinion authors but only about the broad community to which they belonged, e.g. agricultural organizations, NGOs, etc. It was not known if a particular opinion was submitted by 200 organizations or by two. When it was written “women’s groups”, we did not know whether it meant a coalition of non-governmental organizations or a single voice of the academic community.

The government failed to establish a procedure for accessing opinions in the form they were submitted by social partners. There was no generally accessible list of all opinions submitted in writing. Professor Hausner did not assess the situation properly when he stated that “all government documents concerning the project and opinions expressed by participants in the discussion were universally accessible”³⁰. Public control of the content modified during the consultations due to pressure exerted by diverse groups was made quite difficult.

VII. Role played by Social Partners

In the preamble to the National Development Plan we can read that “the objective of the consultations does not lie in receiving acceptance for government proposals but in launching a broad debate about the future of the country. Hence the need for participation therein of as broad representation of social groups and professional communities as possible”. It is clearly stated that the debate, the involvement of social partners therein, is the main objective of the consultation process. Professor Hausner goes as far as underlining the significance of consultations to the process of building up and empowering the government’s social partners. “The work on the NDP was pursued in a manner that promoted shaping a real regional partnership between the public administration, businesses, NGOs and the academic community”³¹.

The government listed those groups which “due to their statutory entitlements, social reach and reliability” became its most important social partners: trade unions, employer organizations, community and occupational agricultural organizations and agricultural self-governments, territorial self-governments, business associations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, churches and religious associations, representatives of scientific communities³².

Social partners were invited to conferences and meetings, and were encouraged to formulate opinions on the content of the NDP. “Representatives of the Entrepreneurship Council (which represents business associations), Public Benefit Activity Council (which represents NGOs), Convention of Marshals (which represents regional self-governments) and finally experts from the academic community”³³ took part in the work of the transministerial team which prepared the NDP and the accompanying documents.

The government expected a certain amount of involvement from social partners. “The consultation process was thought out in a manner that, on one hand, included compulsory elements,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Report on public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013, (2005), www.npr.gov.pl.

³³ J. Hausner, *Kreowanie aktorów rozwoju gospodarczego*, Paper presented at the 17th Annual Meeting on Socio-Economics, CEU and Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, June 30 - July 2, 2005

i.e. conferences organized by the administration at the end of the process, and on the other hand, it was an invitation to communities that wanted to join the process, but on the condition that they would show their interest and themselves organize conferences and meetings. We were ready to participate in that. In the end, two communities that showed that interest were NGOs and business associations”³⁴. A very active and effective community was the cultural one: cultural organizations participated in the consultations in great numbers and co-organized them. Government members were disappointed with an exceedingly low involvement of the scientific community, which had only the initiative to edit an opinion prepared by the Polish Academy of Sciences. More involvement was also expected from organizations grouping territorial self-government units, not because they turned out to be passive but because the central government considered local self-governments as its main social partner by virtue of it benefiting most from the NDP policy.

Motivations of social partners to participate in consultations

There are a few main motivations that should have governed social partners toward involvement in NDP consultations: “interest awareness”, routine consultation system, wish to build up the position of the organization or community as a potential partner of the public administration.

Most partners that put a considerable deal of effort and work into developing opinions on the NDP document were guided by the “interest awareness” of their community. They were convinced that the content of the NDP document was not only a general vision of the country’s development but that its provisions would be translated into specific deeds in the future. Social partners’ awareness of the importance of the NDP had its sources in the experience of the NDP 2004-2006, as illustrated by the tourism sector: “The previous NDP got rid of the Task 2.6, combined it with culture and deprived tourism of notification for a year and a half. Indeed, the tourism industry has been receiving document notifications only now. As a result, the Polish tourism industry has no access to funds available under the Integrated Regional-Development Operating Program, it is totally deprived of financial assistance as the only country joining the European Union”. To prevent this situation from happening again, the tourism industry became a very active participant in the consultations and was directly involved in ensuring that the rightful place was reserved for tourism in the document. Similar motivations guided the business community: “It is evident from statements made by the business community, at least by its leaders, that these processes must not be disregarded because they may bring real practical results, results in the form of real spending money”³⁵. Non-governmental organizations also understood that the NDP was the base of a system of spending resources received under EU structural funds and that the share of resources handed to NGOs would depend on the importance given to the development of civic society in the NDP.

Another important motivation behind the participation of social partners in the consultations was the wish to empower their communities vis-à-vis the public administration. As one of NGO representatives said: “the objective of our participation in the consultations was not as much the document itself as our resolve to demonstrate that we represented a certain strength (...). In a way we wanted to show ourselves off, not for the sake of self-promotion but to demonstrate the weight of our sector”³⁶.

³⁴ Interview with a high-ranking Economy Ministry official.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Interview with a non-governmental organization worker.

There also existed social partners who consulted on government documents within the framework of their statutory responsibilities and were experienced in doing it. The submission of opinions on legal acts and program ordinances was an element of their daily working routine.

Social partners' strategies of action

Social partners chose various strategies of participation in the process of consulting on the NDP draft. Some acted unilaterally, but those who cared for their position to be forced through rather than just wanted to find out what the NDP was about tried to build coalitions. Cooperation, creation of coalitions, was either initiated by social partners at the grassroots level or was in a sense inspired and supported by the government.

The grassroots mobilization of social partners is well illustrated by the NGO example. Some non-governmental organizations decided that the role of civic society must be stressed in the NDP and a similar involvement was demonstrated by non-governmental environmentalist organizations. Their engagement in the consultations did not require any particular encouragement or support from the public administration.

The so-called “infrastructure” NGOs, i.e. those whose task is to develop the NGO sector, provided a consistent support to non-governmental organizations which participated in the consultations so as to make that participation easier. Their two main undertakings consisted in appointing the Secretariat for NDP Consultations and organizing a micro-grant competition for NGOs wishing to prepare NDP consultative meetings for NGO representatives.

The Secretariat was created in the Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives because of the conviction that the NDP “was a very complex document and that no NGO would want to become involved in its examination unaided. So we needed to create a body that would encourage NGOs to look into the document and help them scrutinize it”³⁷. That initiative was put into service at the very beginning of the consultation process. Consequently, its originators held a well-grounded conviction that NGOs would not be able to act as government’s social partners without assistance. The Secretariat acted as a sort of mediator between the government and NGOs. As one NGO representative stated, it prepared “cribs” meant to help NGO workers in understanding the NDP, which had the form of summaries of themes raised in the NDP and briefs focusing on specific areas, e.g. culture.

The Secretariat opened a website dedicated to the NDP, which provided information and studies important to NGOs. It was also used as a medium informing about the course of consultations, forthcoming meetings, etc.

The Secretariat was located in Warsaw but, for the purpose of increasing its impact, it collaborated with *Structural Fund Liaison Officers*, who assist NGOs in every province in acquiring EU funds. Their role was to “encourage NGOs to become involved in consultations at the regional level, to participate in regional meetings and say their piece.”³⁸

The second initiative aimed at encouraging NGOs to join in NDP consultations was a micro-grant competition for organizations wishing to hold NDP consultative meetings. The competition was administered by the SPLOT Network and financed by a non-governmental source, the Polish-American Freedom Foundation. Micro-grants supported initiatives taken up by NGOs that operated on a regional scale. Consultative meetings could concern regional topics

³⁷ Interview with an NGO representative.

³⁸ Ibid.

and other selected issues, provided that they were associated with the NDP 2007-2013. Activities proposed by applicants could take place only once (conference, seminar, preparation of an expert opinion or meeting with an expert) or be a series of consultative events. Thirty-one consultative meetings were organized in all provinces. Their organizers believed that “a great amount of suggestions submitted at those meetings found their way into the NDP version adopted in September”.

The effectiveness of the impact of the NGO community can be linked to the fact that a member of the Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives, Kuba Wygnański, took part in the work of the Interministerial Team in Charge of the NDP. Hence he was a member of the most important body responsible for the creation of the NDP and, consequently, was current on government activities and plans³⁹, knew about them earlier than the general public. That made it possible for the NGO community to have a greater impact on the NDP content.

One of the sources of the NGO community’s success in the consultation process can be undoubtedly traced to the charisma of the leader, Kuba Wygnański, who has been enjoying a great amount of respect both in non-governmental organizations and in the government administration. He was able to initiate activities that supported the ability and willingness of the NGO community to participate in the consultations and convince the government that non-governmental organizations were a serious partner indeed. The participation of more than 1200 NGO members⁴⁰ in the consultations was a result of having created an effective NGO support infrastructure. Various available support measures were effective precisely because their organizers had a good knowledge of obstacles impeding the NGO community from joining the consultation process and because they had at their disposal instruments equal to the task.

In addition to acquiring an infrastructure of support from institutions ready to become involved in the consultations, the NGO community responded as a rightful partner to the government’s encouragement to hold various types of meetings. As one government member stated in this connection, “it was an invitation to communities that wanted to join the process, but under the condition that they themselves demonstrated initiative by organizing conferences, seminars, etc.”⁴¹. This said, it needs to be noted that the “partnership” was possible because a non-governmental foundation had assigned its own resources to the organization of these events. The involvement of the NGO community in the consultation process was made possible by that funding.

Within the framework of public consultations, non-governmental partners chose the strategy of cooperation despite the perceivable reluctance of the government side to engage in a consistent and substantive dialogue with NGOs. An example of that is provided by environmental NGOs which launched a process of scrutinizing the NDP within their own community precisely because a meeting with the Environment Ministry convinced them that the government did not view them as an equal partner. That suspicion was a result of the form of consultations selected by the Ministry. There was only one conference at which government officials would rather inform invited partners than engage them in a substantive discussion. That experience swayed environmentalist NGOs to establish a coalition that worked out the community’s own response to NDP provisions. Workshops were organized and paid for by environmental NGOs themselves (with the help of a foreign grant!). The outcome was a 60-page document

³⁹ That team was responsible for the ultimate shape of the NDP.

⁴⁰ As estimated by the Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives.

⁴¹ Interview with a high-ranking Economy Ministry official.

entitled *Our vision of Poland at the time of preparation of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013: the position of environmentalist non-governmental organizations*. The document sketches out a general vision of Poland's development and the position of environmental protection therein. Moreover, it discusses areas such as transportation, energy, waste, water, nature, rural development. The effective preparation of this document is an outcome of earlier experiences acquired during the consultation process and collaboration of experts in the given field during the development of the position paper.

Authors of the document delivered it to the Environment and Economy Ministries, but received no feedback. From a comparison of their postulates with the NDP draft they deduced that none of their suggestions had been taken into account. Why? They do not know. Obviously, the partner who had taken seriously government declarations about the principle of partnership had been totally dismissed.

The example of environmentalist NGOs showed that the efficacy of submitting opinions did not depend only on the competence and involvement of those who submitted them, but also to a large degree on the willingness of government officials responsible for the given area of the NDP to take these opinions into account.

This is confirmed by the case of tourism industry organizations which worked on the NDP in full cooperation with the Economy Ministry Department of Tourism. Here, it was the government side that initiated and propelled public consultations – it mobilized social partners and gave logistical support to their work.

The Department solicited partners' cooperation as early as at the stage of the work on NDP assumptions. "The Department of Tourism co-financed three smaller projects, sort of working seminars directed at specific sectors, because we wanted these sectors to contribute their postulates to the discussion of NDP assumptions." In other words, the government paid for meetings of communities associated with the tourism industry - marshal's offices, travel agencies, NGOs – so that they could work out their own position. The government initiative was founded on the conviction that a stimulus in the form of specific meetings and invitations was needed for its partners to be able to take up cooperation.

It is important to note that Department officials routinely submit important documents to public consultation. Hence, their knowledge of groups with an interest in tourism is quite good. They are governed in the practice of consulting partners by the conviction that "a document submitted to broad consultation becomes an endeavour of the entire tourism industry. The industry feels co-responsible for it, is proud that it has been able to work out joint provisions, defends them, tries to make them as beneficial to the industry as possible. It is our common creation and the industry identifies with it"⁴².

In this case, the process of consultation covered not only "compulsory" industry conferences but also work on the NDP within the Tourism Council – Economy Minister's advisory body responsible for tourism – and an informal team composed of social partners and departmental officials, which formulated NDP provisions relative to tourism. On the social partner side, "the lobbying was quite assertive. For example, we met with Deputy Premier Hausner twice at "mini-conferences" to discuss problems associated with tourism. Our community is trying to make its issues known, ensure that tourism finds its way into all strategic documents, make a space for ourselves".

⁴² Interview with an Economy Ministry official.

The Department also took upon itself the task of informing its partners of the progress made in the consultations. Its website featured successive versions of the NDP. Its officials on the interministerial team also kept watch over tourism issues being included in the draft of the NDP.

Departmental partners, i.e. tourism industry organizations, possessed resources which enabled them to formulate substantive proposals for the NDP, valuable to the government. These resources included expert knowledge⁴³, but also experts' willingness to work on NDP provisions, borne out of the understanding of future profits resulting from forcing through provisions beneficial to the industry. Despite the availability of these resources, the government provided financial support to the preparation of expert opinions, which became the basis of NDP provisions related to tourism.

In this case, the tourism industry and the Department of Tourism had a common goal: to increase the significance of tourism in the NDP. That mobilization was a result of the experience of the preceding NDP 2004-2006, where issues associated with tourism had been overly dispersed. A higher rank given to tourism in the NDP is expected to translate into operating program resources for social partners and, for the Department, into a higher rank given to tourism as a branch of the economy, which, according to departmental employees, has so far been neglected.

The effectiveness of social partners' involvement depended on the mobilization of the community, its experience in submitting opinions on government documents and its resources – both financial and substantive.

What benefits did social partners draw from participation in the consultations?

Benefits to social partners can be divided into four types: specific legislative provisions, promotion of the community or organization, community integration and acquisition of know-how.

Most satisfied with participation in NDP consultations were those social partners who were able to introduce provisions commensurate with their interests. The benefit then lied in the hope that the content they have been promoting would translate into specific measures included in operating programs, which in turn would benefit their community. It should be noted that many social partners, also those who have been "effective", were sceptical about the chances of the NDP coming into force: "I have already participated in many such consultations. We talk, consult, and at the end there are no executive documents."⁴⁴

As a result of participation in NDP consultations, many institutions obtained the status of a partner of the public administration. Their involvement demonstrated by way of organizing meetings, formulating opinions, helped to prove that they could act professionally and that their opinions were worthy of consideration. Their entire community benefited from it: "It's another small step, another activity aimed at making the society aware what is the purpose of non-governmental organizations"⁴⁵. The participation in NDP consultations is a sort of *laissez-passer* to future cooperation with the government.

⁴³ Experts engaged by the tourism industry were specialists from EU member states experienced in incorporating the priorities of the industry into strategic documents in their own countries.

⁴⁴ Interview with an NGO representative.

⁴⁵ Interview with a territorial self-government official.

The participation in NDP consultations made it easier to promote individual players – they became recognizable, achieved the rank of expert. In effect, “for us, the benefit of such broad consultations is that we acquire a whole new group of potential clients”⁴⁶.

Some communities were not able to sway the government to their suggestions despite their involvement in the consultation work. However, they considered the fact itself of having worked successfully together on a joint position with respect to the NDP as beneficial. As a result of that work, the community became better integrated. In addition, representatives of different organizations found out that they had goals and visions in common. The work on the assessment of the NDP contributed to a higher quality of cooperation within the community.

Some social partners achieved “educational” benefits from their participation in the consultations. One of the respondents said the following: “we found out that something like this is in the works, we became familiar with future directions of the development of our country and individual branches of its economy”. These organizations do not see as yet direct benefits of being interested in the NDP but believe that they are obligated to be well informed. Such attitude is common among territorial self-government representatives who participated in consultative meetings.

VIII. Legitimization

*I understand legitimization as the process of social identification.*⁴⁷

One of the goals of public consultations of the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 was to obtain societal legitimization of the vision of Poland’s development inscribed therein. As a government representative has said, “we wanted to prepare it in a manner that would provide (...) a sense of ownership broader than only within the government administration or within a group of experts that could have written such text”. This sense of ownership can be otherwise defined as an identification of social partners with the NDP document.

The weight given to social partners’ identification with the NDP is associated with two prerequisites determining the execution of the plan. One, minimal, refers to the acceptance of the document by a government that was formed after the autumn parliamentary election and that is composed of members of the Law and Justice opposition party. Jerzy Hausner spoke about that: “As we embarked on the work on the NDP we asked ourselves the question how should we prepare it so that it would not be rejected by the next government”⁴⁸. The other reason why NDP’s legitimization was important refers already to the implementation of the concept of development the document contains and is expressed in the conviction that support and understanding of its provisions will translate into the wish and ability by social partners to use the document and developmental instruments inscribed therein. “We decided that it should be a social/civic/territorial plan and not one imposed from above by the central government. That compelled us to treat all sides participating in its consultations as equal partners. So that they would all become its creators and implementers, and so that they could execute it in the future”⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Interview with an NGO representative.

⁴⁷ Interview with a high-ranking government official.

⁴⁸ Hausner J., *Jak podjąć wyzwanie* (How to Take Up the Challenge), *Rzeczpospolita*, 21.03.2005.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

All respondents approved and were satisfied with the very fact of the existence of NDP consultations, of being kept informed about them and of the government's declared openness to opinions and suggestions. All considered that public consultations in the legislative process were an important element of governance. In this sense, the civic dialogue as a method of governing promoted the feeling among social partners that the proposed legislation had to be correct if the government opened it to public scrutiny. It contributed to the transparency of public life, and that also seems to have been the intention of the government when it stressed its resolve to take the strategic plan of the country's development out of the office and into the street. As one government official said, "we treated the term 'national' very seriously – 'national' meant created by the nation, that is by the people and not only by the government"⁵⁰. The NDP consultation process was conducive to legitimizing government activities as a whole.

On the other hand, the process had no effect on social partners legitimizing the plan itself. That sense of "owning" the NDP to which we have referred earlier would fully depend on the outcome of consultations and the final version of the plan.

In other words, the public identification with the NDP would depend on how social partners participating in the consultations assessed their outcome and on the ultimate content of the plan.

Those groups whose suggestions the government had taken into account had the sense of "owning" the NDP. Respondents from the tourism industry were such a group. Tourism organizations participated in the entire process of consultations – from developing its initial assumptions to writing its draft – on a large scale and consistently. As a result, the new NDP gave much more attention to tourism than the NDP 2004-2006. This is why social partners called the NDP "theirs" and said that they would "defend it". Also NGOs could feel satisfied with the outcome of the consultations as their role had increased significantly after their proposals had been taken into account. As a result of the consultations, "NGOs had a say in most areas of activities where they should have a say. Why is that important? Because operating programs that are now being prepared ensue from the NDP and NGOs may expect to become beneficiaries of funds assigned to these activities. There is a direct link between the two"⁵¹.

However, in those cases when social partners were disappointed with the process and outcome of the consultations there was no increased legitimization of the NDP. A reverse situation is illustrated by the example of environmentalist NGOs. The community was very open to participation in the consultations but it decided that their form (large-scale conferences) would not promote a substantive discussion. Therefore, they took upon themselves to create conditions favourable to a substantive debate of the NDP and work out specific and cohesive comments on and proposals to the NDP draft. The full position paper prepared by environmentalist NGOs was transmitted to the government. However, environmentalist NGOs received no feedback as to whether their suggestions would be taken into account. At the end of the consultation period, they compared the NDP draft and the version adopted in September, and noticed that not only their proposals had not been included but in many areas the NDP had been modified to their detriment. Consequently, in this case, environmentalist organizations could not identify with the NDP precisely because they had participated in the consultations, knew the document and gave it poor marks. The vision of Poland sketched out in the NDP was incompatible with their vision.

⁵⁰ Interview with a high-ranking government official.

⁵¹ Interview with an NGO representative.

A similar attitude transpires from responses provided by territorial self-government representatives. They often sensed that despite the government declared intention to continue decentralizing state activities, no care had been taken to find the mechanisms which would make that decentralization possible.

Sometimes social partners identified with the NDP even when their suggestions had not been taken into account. The procedural aspect of the consultations also contributed to NDP legitimization. For some NGO representatives, the very fact of NGOs having been invited to consult on the document and, thus, being included them in the decision-making process was enough to identify with the NDP. In this case, an NGO would participate in consultative meetings and draw up its opinion, but then it would not check if the government took that opinion into account. When the participation in the consultation process was the goal in itself, then only the fact of conducting consultations legitimized government activities and the NDP.

The issue of legitimization of the National Development Program for 2007-2013 is also associated with the question of social partner representativity. To what extent did the comments submitted by non-governmental organizations, companies and individuals that the government took into account meet the criterion of representativity? Of course, it is legitimate for the government to draft a vision of the country's development since it is a democratic institution whose composition and program are determined by election results. But the issue is not as unequivocal when it comes to the role played in moulding such important legislation by government's social partners. The government represents all citizens, but who is represented by various groups that have been submitting their opinions? The issue of representativity in this meaning of the term was solved with respect to the trilateral dialogue in the Act of 2001 on the Trilateral Commission. In that legislation, opinions relating to government budgetary policies could be submitted only by organizations that met objective representativity criteria. Members of the Commission had a social mandate to express opinions on behalf of the community they represented.

Meanwhile, public consultations concerning the NDP draft were guided by the principle of equality – anybody interested could participate in the consultations⁵². "...Take comparisons, for example. We tried to take into account every opinion, I repeat - every one, but if John Smith's opinion was the same as that of a representative community, we did not put them together automatically. Only sometimes we would say that a certain opinion was expressed by regional self-governments and individuals. That they shared that opinion or that the opinion referred to the same issue. But John Smith's opinion would be nevertheless forwarded to the person who was responsible for the given area"⁵³. Whether an opinion was taken into account or not depended on whether its content fit the whole of the document. An opinion expressed by a single organization could carry the same weight as an opinion expressed by a federation of organizations. Indeed, no representative criteria were applied in the consultation process.

IX. Effectiveness of Consultations⁵⁴

We will examine the effectiveness of the process of consulting the draft of the National Development Plan for 2007-2013 in the context of the quality of the document itself and objectives established for that process by the government and social partners.

⁵² A version of the draft National Development Plan submitted for consultations in January 2005, www.npr.gov.pl. Consultation principles are set out in its preamble.

⁵³ Interview with a high-ranking government official.

⁵⁴ This chapter was written jointly with Anna Bendo, an intern at the Institute of Public Affairs.

The effectiveness of consultations in relation to the NDP quality can be evaluated by finding out to what extent its final version improved in comparison to the initial version submitted to consultations.

The NDP did not change very much as a result of consultations, “in fact, the level of changes was moderate. Comments submitted during the consultations did not cause any fundamental or radical changes. Only certain aspects that had been omitted in the initial version and were now brought to the government’s attention were added”⁵⁵.

Most important changes referred to the reduction of priorities from ten in the draft to six in the final version. That was a major change since an overly large number of priorities had been one of the charges made against the NDP in the past. In practical terms, all that happened was that priorities belonging to related areas were joined under one name. One priority is new: *Good Governance*. *Export* and *Market Protection* priorities were deleted, but activities planned thereunder found their way to the final version of the NDP. It is just the number of priorities that has changed.

The other noteworthy change was the reduction of the number of directions - from 31 in the draft to 24 in the final version. Direction names changed quite a bit. If one assessed the document only on the basis of direction names, one would have the impression that much more stress was put in the final version on issues of employment, civic activization and mobility, as well as education.

The effects of consultations indicated above show that there had been no reason to fear that the process of submitting opinions would cause the content of the document to bulge by way of adding provisions representative of the interests of particular groups, probably also because “already at the start of the process the document was sort of watered down, far from ideal...”⁵⁶

Still, as a government official who helped to draw up the NDP pointed out, “from the viewpoint of methodological purity, for the document to become a model example, it should probably be more focused”⁵⁷.

As far as the basic division into chapters is concerned, the two versions are very similar. The only difference is that a completely new chapter appears in the final version: *International, Border and Neighbourhood Dimension of the NDP*.

The structure of the *Preamble* and the chapter *Axiology, Mission and Strategic Objectives and Priorities* is the same, the content is essentially unchanged besides the priorities. The chapter *Socio-Economic Background* was expanded by a few sub-chapters, but they only serve as introductions to activities planned in various areas and set out already in the draft. Certain directions were reduced to the rank of activities under other directions, for example *Improvement of the Export Offer and Terms, Reinforcement of Market Mechanisms in the Economy*. New directions appeared: *Assistance, Rehabilitation and Activization of the Handicapped, Building a Support System for Seniors and Persons Requiring Care, Raising the Quality of Public Administration*.

In general, it is safe to say that in some areas the provisions were made more specific and in some others – more general. A whole new direction was added concerning the handicapped,

⁵⁵ Interview with a high-ranking Economy Ministry official.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

and provisions relative to seniors and persons requiring care were expanded. Since these topics would appear among comments submitted by NGOs, one can presume that the changes ensued from the consultation process.

The chapter *Proposals of Institutional Changes Conditioning the NDP Execution* was expanded by a (very short) sub-chapter entitled *Civic Dialogue and Social Participation*, which can be ascribed to the involvement of the non-governmental community.

The effectiveness of the consultation process for the government can be assessed through the quality of the achievement of its objectives.

Let us recall that the government planned to render the decision-making process more public, inform about the NDP, ensure that main social partners identified with it, obtain public support which would translate into acceptance and execution of the NDP by the successive government, and promote the awareness of the importance of strategic thinking in Poland.

The answer to the question whether consultations assured a favourable attitude of the current government to the NDP prepared by Marek Belka's cabinet is rather negative. The government led by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz is working on a document called the Country's Development Strategy, which is meant to replace the NDP. However, much content of the NDP will be included in the CDS.

The absence of declarations by the Marcinkiewicz cabinet as to the approval of the NDP for 2007-2013 and the missing will to implement it may also ensue from the fact that there is no unequivocal support for it among social partners. Indeed, only those groups identify with it that agree with its content. That agreement is by no means universal. From the most important partners in NDP implementation – territorial self-government employees – one can hear that the NDP is a “compendium of wishful thinking and, the truth be told, the chance for implementation of some of its provisions is rather questionable. I can only speak from the perspective of the territorial self-government, and at that level the document is not methodologically and conceptually cohesive. From the very beginning of the document there is the theme of state decentralization and local self-government empowerment, creation of conditions for local self-governments where they could execute their tasks, also pro-development tasks, and coordinate pro-development tasks in their region. But, in reality, besides these declarations, there is no one word in the document proving that these conditions will be indeed provided. Yes, the document presents instruments needed to achieve these goals but it lacks consistency”⁵⁸.

The objective of making the process of setting out developmental goals for 2007-2013 public was achieved in the sense that communities indicated by the government were indeed informed of the fact of the NDP being prepared and their representatives were able to become familiar with its content if they were interested in it. It seems, however, that the NDP as a document did not become an element of public knowledge. This happened mainly due to little participation by the media, including public radio and television, in the creation of a topical public debate.

Consultations also had an “informing” objective. “First and foremost, to show that such thing existed, that there was something to discuss”⁵⁹. That information was addressed to communities selected by the government rather than to the general public. As a territorial self-government official noted, the fact that information about consultations was available mainly

⁵⁸ Interview with a territorial self-government official.

⁵⁹ Interview with a Social Policy Ministry official.

on public administration websites proved that it was addressed to those who were already informed.

Social partners considered the consultations effective when their outcome was favourable to the goals they had set for them. Organizations which cared for specific provisions to be included in the NDP gave good marks to the consultations when their voice was taken into account.

However, there were groups that had found the consultations effective even though their goal therein was not to submit opinions about the content of the NDP but to raise the importance of the sector they represented. That was the case of NGOs whose representatives admitted that “as a result of the consultations, NGOs have gotten empowerment, but will that be significant to the NDP? It will certainly be important to the NGO sector”. Another objective of the NGO community was to prepare local organizations for using EU assistance funds by raising their interest in the topic. NDP consultations were treated as a good opportunity to do that: “The educational value of the consultations was particularly important as it turned out that, for many organizations invited to participate in the consultations, this was unfortunately the first real contact with European matters as, until then, they have not thought of trying to get hold of European funds”.

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