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Małgorzata Markowska, Dariusz Głuszcuk,  
Beata Bal-Domańska



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**Andrzej Sztando**

Wrocław University of Economics

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## TWELVE RULES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF PLANNING DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS

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**Summary:** The article discusses the problems of planning in Polish self-governments. Its introduction presents the whole plethora of implemented planning processes. Next the author concentrates on twelve rules for preparing such documents, the identification of which results from the research he has conducted. The discussed rules are as follows: compliance with the development strategy, internal compliance, vertical compliance, horizontal compliance, legal compliance, meeting social, economic and environmental needs, sustainable development, external financing sources maximization, internal consultations, financial feasibility, implementation procedures, monitoring and evaluation procedures. The study is completed with comments on the permissible deviations from their application, as well as application tips.

**Keywords:** self-government, management, planning, Poland.

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### 1. Introduction

The system of Polish self-government units is made up of three levels – regional level (16 regions), district level (314 districts) and communal level (2534 communes<sup>1</sup>). They prepare and adopt rulings in the form of resolutions or ordinances, issued by their decision-making and executive bodies, as well as implement numerous planning documents. These documents cover, in their substantive scope, either a fragment or the entire area of their functioning determined by law. As a result of undertaking activities for the benefit of other public authorities, these plans frequently include operations not provided for them by law. Some of these plans are characteristic for all three self-government levels, others occur only at one of them. The first of these two groups covers the following: development strategy, budget, multi-annual investment programme, waste management plan, environment protection programme, promotion programme, public safety programme, environmental education

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<sup>1</sup> 65 of which can make laws and carry out district level tasks.

programme, the programme of cooperation with NGOs and entities carrying out public benefit activities. In the case of local governments the typical plans are: local development plan, multi-annual financial plan, the study of determinants and directions for spatial management, local plan of spatial management, the programme for prevention and alcohol problems solving, the programme for drug addiction prevention, revitalization programme (usually a city fragment), arrangement and farming plan, education development plan, local economic policy plan, the draft of guidelines for heat, electric power and gaseous fuels supply plan, development plans of particular villages. District governments prepare local development plans, entrepreneurship development programmes, unemployment prevention programmes and programmes for people with disabilities. In the case of regions the typical planning documents represent: innovation strategy, social integration strategy, health care plan, the programme for equal chances of disabled persons and preventing their social exclusion, the regional plan of spatial management, water retention programme, the programme for farming and food development sector, the strategy for rural areas development, regional operational programme, the regional action plan for employment, as well as the electric power strategy for the region.

Confronting the above facts with the number of Polish self-government units, the conclusion can be easily drawn that the discussed planning documents can be estimated in at least the tens of thousands. On the other hand, having considered that their basic characteristics are of a long-term nature (between a year and several years), their extensive scope of tasks covered and also the high cost of their implementation from the perspective of self-government revenue, the irresistible conclusion is that their content has substantial impact on both the pace and directions of national development in micro, mezzo and macro-scale. The correct preparation of one of the crucial planning documents, i.e. development strategy, has been broadly discussed in both Polish [e.g.: Binniecki, Szczupak 2004; Klasik 2002; Wysocka, Koziński 1998; Juchniewicz et al. 2009; Domański 2000; Hławacz-Pajdowska 2006; Ziółkowski 2005; Sztando 2013] and international [e.g.: Pina, Torres, Yetano 2011; Poister, Streib 1999; Poister, Streib 2005; ed. Ramirez, Kebede 2010; ed. Potter 2008] scientific literature. The remaining planning documents have, so far, received much less coverage. Therefore there is a need for initiating research in this matter to reveal key determinants of their quality aimed at their practical improvement. The reaction to such a need is the research carried out by the author, the presented below part of which discusses the rules for preparing the previously mentioned plans in Poland. Their utilitarian value, however, does not refer to the Polish self-government system only. Such research can become an inspiration, an object of comparisons and the starting point for research conducted within this field in other decentralized countries.



## 2. Research methods and results

The following methods were applied in the presented below rules: field observations, literature studies, deductive and functional reasoning, inductive reasoning and inference by analogy. Field observations were carried out from 1997 till 2013 during the conceptual, research and implementation work covering Polish local governments conducted by the author. This consisted in the individual or team creation of 35 municipal development strategies, 7 district development strategies, 3 regional development strategies and 47 other plans and programmes of Polish local government units at all levels. Among them there were also tasks involving the long-term, complex coordination of the implementation and evaluation of 29 such studies. They lasted altogether about 2 000 days and were performed in a methodologically systematized way [in accordance with the recommendations provided in: Lofland, Lofland 1995, pp. 91-96]. Literature studies covered about 90 Polish and international publications in management, including mainly public governance [apart from the references listed above the following examples apply: Bovaird, Löffler 2003; Bovaird, Löffler 2005, Aprea 2005; Kozuch 2004; Kozuch 2010; O'Flynn 2007, Steurer 2007; Brudney, O'Toole, Rainey 2000]. As a result of the listed methods' application, the following 12 rules for preparing planning documents have been identified. Owing to the limited framework of this study the problem has been presented in a synthetic manner.

The strategic management of local or regional development requires self-government to take advantage of numerous planning documents of both a long-term and short-term nature. Regardless of the fact whether their preparation represents an optional activity performed by self-government authorities, or results from statutory dispositions, all of them should constitute a coherent and hierarchical structure. This rule can be defined as the principle of compliance with the development strategy (1). For obvious reasons, the superior role in this structure is played by the strategy, while the remaining ones represent its extension or specification. A planning document can be regarded as compliant to the strategy if it meets four conditions simultaneously. Firstly, in the course of its preparation the characteristics and factors typical for a self-government unit, constituting the material of strategic analysis, which presents the foundation for defining the strategy, were considered. Secondly, the operations carried out by a self-government, its units and partnership companies, to be provided for in the planning document, result in meeting at least one of the strategic goals. Meeting the third condition means refraining from reducing the possibilities for the full realization of any of the operations included in the strategy in the course of implementing the projects listed in the planning document. Performing the activities included in the planning document by the self-government, within the specified in the strategy timeframe, represents the final requirement.

The second rule is the principle of internal compliance (2). Its purpose is to ensure the mutual coordination of activities they include and to avoid their unnecessary

replication. Thus, it is possible not only to avoid wasting public means, but also to achieve synergic and multiplier effects occurring between the operations carried out in different areas of self-government activities, performed by its different entities, and therefore to increase the effectiveness of spending these means. Meeting this rule consists in carrying out, by the entity which prepared the planning document, such activities as: the analysis of planning documents currently in force or prepared by a given self-government, ensuring coordination in space and time of the planned operations with these listed in the adequate documents, as well as avoiding unnecessary re-planning of the actions which they already include.

Another principle to discuss represents the rule of vertical compliance (3). The term vertical compliance should be understood as the planning document compliance with plans, programmes and strategies adopted by the decision-making or executive bodies of higher local government, national or European Union levels, later referred to as higher rank entities. Maintaining such compliance consists in taking into account these indications and guidelines for the planning documents prepared by self-government units and included in the above mentioned plans, programmes and strategies which decide about the possibility of entering into or developing cooperation with the already referred to higher rank entities, their units or partnership companies. The goals for meeting such compliance are diversified and consist in ensuring possibilities for obtaining extra-budgetary funds by a self-government to implement its own and optional tasks listed in the planning document. Winning all available non-financial support forms may also turn out to be of crucial significance, e.g. substantive, personnel and information oriented forms. Another goal is to increase the probability for the realization of investments or “soft” projects by higher rank entities in the area of a given self-government. Achieving vertical compliance starts with the identification of all programmes, plans and strategies either approved or undergoing the consultancy phase and prepared by the above mentioned higher rank entities, which are substantively related to the prepared planning document. Later it is analysed from the perspective of the capacity to meet the above presented goals. This is followed by introducing all the activities aimed at meeting these goals to the planning document under preparation.

The next principle takes the form of the horizontal compliance rule (4). Horizontal compliance means the compliance of a planning document prepared by a self-government unit with the plans, programmes and strategies adopted by the decision making or executive bodies of the neighbouring self-governments at the same level and the self-government unions the given unit is a member of. Keeping such compliance consists in considering the content of these plans, programmes and strategies which decide the possibility to enter into or develop cooperation with the above mentioned self-government and unions. The first goal of the discussed compliance is to ensure the possibility for a given self-government to obtain, in cooperation with the neighbouring self-government or local self-government unions, extra-budgetary funds (or non-financial support, i.e. substantive, personnel and

information oriented) to be invested in the implementation of their own and optional tasks, in terms of the activities included in the planning document under preparation. The second goal is to increase the probability for implementing, by the above mentioned higher rank entities, investments desired by a given self-government in its territory or in its direct vicinity [see Sztando 2012, pp. 203-209]. Fulfilling this rule consists in:

- the identification of all programmes, plans and strategies either already adopted or going through the consultation phase, which are substantively related to the prepared planning document and belong to the above mentioned neighbouring self-government and unions,
- their analysis in terms of opportunities for meeting the horizontal compliance goals,
- including projects aimed at meeting these goals in the course of the planning document preparation.

The rule of legal compliance (5) which represents the next principle to be discussed can be approached in two ways. The first refers to those planning documents which are prepared as the result of statutory requirements. This covers e.g. local spatial management plans, waste management plans, environment protection plans and also prevention programmes or those aimed at solving alcohol-related problems. Legal compliance, in the case of such planning documents, consists in their preparation in line with the rules specified in the underlying legislation or ministerial regulations. The second approach towards legal compliance refers to the remaining planning documents. Self-government practice frequently offers examples of presenting proposals for actions in planning documents, which are insufficiently defined from legal standpoint, or are contrary to the applicable law. It is obvious that such defects can influence the effectiveness and efficiency in the course of implementing the planned actions. In order to avoid such situations, and therefore to maintain the discussed compliance, it is indispensable to verify and ensure the compliance of all the legal solutions included in the planning documents with the legislation currently in force, as well as the law which will come into force during the implementation of projects listed in a particular planning document. It is also crucial to determine at least the fundamental components of the legal solutions which represent the necessary or sufficient conditions for achieving the goals provided for in the planning document and which should be adopted in the form of resolutions or ordinances issued by the decision-making and executive bodies representing a self-government.

The reason for establishing self-government units is the performance of public tasks specified by law. Therefore self-government provides its local or regional community, as beneficiaries of all undertaken actions, with certain services. The idea underlying the construction of every planning document is the improvement of this mission undertaken by the self-government, which should result in greater benefits for local or regional residents in both their public and private life compared to the advantages resulting from alternative self-government activities devoid of adequate

planning. These benefits are the same as the needs voiced by residents not only in the social sphere, but also economic and environmental one. This means that while attempting to meet them in full by the planning documents' implementation, a self-government unit optimises the processes supporting business development as well as protecting and renewing environmental resources. Having considered the above, it is obvious that the processes of constructing planning documents should be based on diagnosing social needs and on closely related domains such as entrepreneurship and natural environment. It is also desirable to consult with the given community representatives the most conclusive solutions included in the drafts of planning documents [see: Sztando 2013, pp. 20-30]. This can be defined as the rule aimed at taking social, economic and environmental needs into account (6). As far as planning documents referring to the social (economy) sphere are concerned, meeting this rule requires to:

- identify social groups (enterprises) which are most affected by the expected results of activities provided for in the planning document,
- diagnose the needs, aspirations and expectations of the above mentioned social groups addressed to self-government and related to the substantive content of the planning document (executive management or owners of economic entities),
- consult the draft of the planning document with the above mentioned social groups (executive management or owners of economic entities),
- include the results of the mentioned diagnoses and consultations in the planning document.

On the other hand, in the course of preparing planning documents related to the environmental sphere it is advisable to:

- identify the enterprises located in the area of a self-government unit which, to a great extent, influence the natural environment's condition,
- identify public entities and NGOs which are the most active in carrying out projects for the benefit of the natural environment in the area of a self-government unit,
- diagnose the environmental expectations and intentions of the above mentioned enterprises, entities and organizations related to the substantive content of a planning document,
- provide the draft of the planning document for consultation with the above mentioned entrepreneurs, entities and organizations,
- include in the planning document the results of the mentioned diagnoses and consultations.

Sustainable development represents development which takes simultaneously into account economic, social and environmental needs. The rule of sustainable development<sup>21</sup>, more and more commonly applied in self-government units'

<sup>2</sup> Development balance is not identical to development evenness, e.g. the domination of ecological sphere development occurs in municipalities characterized by exceptional values of natural environment and the low level of its transformation, and also in municipalities featuring a severely degraded

management (7), assumes the possibility of all its three spheres' parallel development as a result of understanding their importance and the skills for investigating compromise solutions. In accordance with this rule, self-government should perform and stimulate such socio-economic transformations which can, on the one hand, maintain the commonly desired condition of a local or regional nature and, on the other hand, do not unnecessarily limit the development of both the community and its economy. In order to meet the sustainable development rule the projects suggested in the planning document have to concur with the componential rules of sustainable development, such as the principle of equal access to the natural environment, the principle of regionalization, the principle of socialization, the principle "the polluter pays", the prevention principle, the prudential principle, the principle of best available techniques application, the subsidiarity principles and also the principle of ecological and economic effectiveness [more in e.g.: Pęski 1999; Kachniarz, Korzeń 1998; ed. Borys 2003].

The eighth rule refers to external financing sources maximization (8). Even the wealthiest self-government units do not have the means at their disposal which allow meeting all collective social needs. Therefore each of them not only can, but also should become the beneficiary of external financing sources supporting the implementation of its own and optional tasks, including mainly the sources related to the European Union structural funds. In the course of preparing planning documents their authors should carry out a detailed verification of the opportunities for obtaining external funds in order to implement the projects they include. The necessary actions in this matter are as follows:

- entering these activities in the planning document (however, not just those) which meet the following conditions simultaneously: they can contribute significantly to achieving the goals presented in the planning document; they can be implemented in the entire area of a given self-government unit; it can be assumed that these projects are highly likely to be financed, in their major part, from sources other than this unit's budgetary means;
- identifying and including all non-budgetary financing sources which can be used as the sources of the remaining activities listed in the planning document;

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environment. An economic sphere, on the other hand, gains arguments – obviously acceptable from the perspective of more and more rigorous emission standards – supporting its advantage in the municipalities which do not present currently and did not present in the past any particular values, but were characterized by a high unemployment rate and social pauperization. In both such extreme examples the decisive model will indicate the desirable form of sustainable development, and it will be a patchy development. This, however, does not mean that a situation may occur where the total ecosystems' development is dominated by economic growth. this would be contrary to any principles of environment protection or even socially detrimental and economically unfounded. The possible scope of evenness in sustainable development spreads from the slight advantage of the economic sphere over the environmental sphere to the almost total domination of the economic sphere by the environmental one.

- specifying and including, in the planning documents, the key determinants for acquiring means from the mentioned sources to carry out the activities covered by this document.

Work on the planning document can be conducted by the municipal (town) office (city hall), county office, Marshal Office, partnership company owned by the self-government unit or an entity preparing the planning document as the subject of a civil contract signed with the self-government unit. In order to ensure its high substantive quality, it is indispensable for the executor, while preparing it, to conduct internal consultations, the so-called consultations with the selected departmental heads of the municipal (town) office (city hall), county office, Marshal Office, with the management of partnership companies owned by self-government, as well as persons holding independent positions. Additionally, all the planning documents which can be adopted as resolutions by the decision-making body of a self-government unit should be subject to revision and opinion by adequate, from the substantive point of view, commissions. Completing these procedures will correspond with meeting the next rule, i.e. the principle of internal consultations (9).

Implementing the vast majority of the projects provided for in the planning documents prepared by self-government, requires incurring adequate financial expenses, while the financial possibilities presented by self-government are frequently highly limited. Thus any of the activities included in the planning documents has to have an option of being covered from either of the budgetary means. This also refers to those projects which are supposed to be financed from aid means, since in their case also self-government's own means are indispensable, or the means of its units or of partnership companies. Meeting this postulate by an entity preparing the planning document is equivalent to the application of the next rule – the principle of financial feasibility (10) – and in practice consists in estimating the outlay necessary to carry out the projects planned and including information about them in this document, along with at least the preliminary schedule of their coverage. In the case of the planning document prepared by the executing entity, as the subject of a civil contract with a municipal unit or a partnership company, this involves opening it up to consultations with such a unit (company) management in order to approve the financial outlay for its implementation.

The characteristic feature of every planning document is the combination of many activities aimed at achieving a limited set of objectives. This is indispensable for determining adequate implementation procedures for their efficient and effective realization, i.e. meeting the rule referring to the implementation procedures (11). For this reason every planning document should include an implementation procedure characterized by at least the following attributes:

- each of the one-time projects it provides for has a particular deadline, whereas each of the permanent or cyclical actions – an implementation period,
- each of the included activities has a contractor assigned in the form of an entity, constituting the component of a self-government unit system, i.e. the municipal

(town) office (city hall), county office, Marshal Office or partnership company owned by self-government. Including executors who are not a part of this system, is allowed only having obtained the consent from their authorities,

- a single or collective body was appointed to coordinate and supervise the activities included in the planning document,
- adequate changes necessary to carry out the above mentioned activities were specified regarding: organizational structure of the municipal (town) office (city hall), county office, Marshal Office or partnership company owned by self-government, and also changes in the new or currently in force resolutions and ordinances by the decision-making and executive bodies of a self-government unit.

The implementation of every planning document, i.e. the long-term action programme, requires conducting both monitoring and evaluation procedures. They have three goals. The first one consists in the modification of the planning document in the course of implementation, so that the goals accepted in it are achieved as a result of incurring the lowest financial outlay, spent time and investment in kind. The second goal is to identify the moment at which a planning document has to be repealed and possibly substituted by a new one, and also to define the reasons and the scope of the change (an update or a fundamental change). The third goal is to ensure the adequate legal and organizational conditions for the planning document implementation. Failure to provide both monitoring and evaluation can result in a sudden drop of the implementation process's effectiveness and efficiency. In extreme situations this can result in postponing particular projects' implementation to an unspecified future. Thus it guarantees the achievement of the advantages expected by the community and self-government authorities from the planning process itself. The rule of monitoring and evaluation procedures (12) requires the planning document to specify the methods for monitoring the extent to which the goals it provides for were achieved. This monitoring can be based on: effect measures – illustrating the objective scale of effects resulting from the activities undertaken within the framework of the planning document's implementation; opinion measures – revealing the subjective opinions of residents and entrepreneurs regarding the effects of these activities; action measures – used in a situation when the implementation of a given action included in the planning document is the achievement of a particular goal itself. Apart from the underlying measurement tools' identification, it is also necessary to specify the entities responsible for the monitoring activities, methods for using the results of the monitoring activities, as well as the procedure of introducing changes into the planning document in the course of its implementation.

### 3. Final remarks

The limited framework of this study does not allow for detailed characteristics of rules and activities aimed at their implementation. However, the aspect of permissible deviations cannot be ignored. The application of the discussed principles cannot be

left without any critical remarks. It is not difficult to imagine a situation in which the “mechanical” and maximalist desire to meet some of them may bring about more damage than advantages, thus unnecessarily reducing the quality of the overall effect. An exaggerated aspiration to maintain vertical compliance, at the expense of ensuring consistency between the planning document and the actual needs and expectations voiced by the community or entrepreneurs, may serve as an example of such a situation. Therefore, the presented rules should be referred to as synonymous to guidelines among which none is of a disposable nature, but each of them can contribute to the planning process optimization. Apart from the legal compliance rule, it is also sometimes indicated or necessary to withdraw entirely from a particular principle application. This can take place in cases of legal regulations restricting the content of a planning document, or when it is beyond any doubt that in a certain situation it is required by the interest of self-government, its unit or a partnership company<sup>3</sup>. Failure to fulfil the activities characteristic for a particular rule can also take place when exceptional time limitations occur in the course of the planning process<sup>4</sup>, or when the actual implementation possibilities<sup>5</sup> are non-existent.

From the perspective of the application of the discussed rules in the self-government practice, the best solution is to define them and provide adequate legislation in the form of an ordinance, by an executive body, in the form of an instruction for the planning documents preparation. Such procedures have already become a fact in those Polish local governments,<sup>6</sup> where in the course of implementation activities performed by the author, the discussed rules have been verified in practice. So far this verification has brought about positive results, however, their further improvement is by all means possible.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. in a situation when revealing certain information in the planning document would weaken the bargaining position in negotiations with the third party.

<sup>4</sup> This can result in e.g. no possibility to conduct social consultations.

<sup>5</sup> As an example could serve the absence of possibilities for estimating costs of projects which variants are known only in general terms and the implementation date is quite distant, which however is an unavoidable project and prepared many years in advance.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. In the municipalities of Polkowice and Przemków located in the western part of Lower Silesia.



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## **DWANAŚCIE ZASAD BUDOWY DOKUMENTÓW PLANISTYCZNYCH JEDNOSTEK SAMORZĄDU TERYTORIALNEGO**

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł poświęcony jest problematyce planowania w polskich jednostkach samorządu terytorialnego. Wstępna jego część prezentuje bogactwo procesów planistycznych w nich realizowanych. W dalszej kolejności autor koncentruje się na dwunastu zasadach sporządzania owych dokumentów, których określenie jest wynikiem przeprowadzonych przez niego badań. Są to zasady: zgodności ze strategią rozwoju, zgodności wewnętrznej, zgodności wertykalnej, zgodności horyzontalnej, zgodności prawnej, uwzględniania potrzeb społecznych, gospodarczych i środowiskowych, rozwoju zrównoważonego, maksymalizacji zewnętrznych źródeł finansowania, konsultacji wewnętrznych, realności finansowej, procedur wdrożeniowych, procedur monitoringowo-ewaluacyjnych. Opracowanie kończą uwagi na temat dopuszczalnych odstępstw od ich stosowania oraz wskazówki aplikacyjne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** samorząd terytorialny, zarządzanie, planowanie, Polska.