Prospects for sustainable development of Russia: the case of eco-innovations

M Imekova* and E Boltanova

1 National Research Tomsk State University, 32 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk 634050 Russia

E-mail: imekova_maria@mail.ru

Abstract. The article discusses current global trends of sustainable development. Our research clearly demonstrates that environmental innovation is one of the main tools for such development. However, this tool is not widely spread in Russia, including among cross-border regions. The article identifies the causes and possible solutions to the current problem.

1. Introduction

On September 25, 2015, the UN General Assembly (UN GA) adopted Resolution A/70/L.1 Transforming Our World: The Sustainable Development Agenda for the period up to 2030 by unanimous vote [1] (Agenda for the Period Until 2030). This agenda included 17 global goals and 169 related tasks that are complex and indivisible, balancing all three components of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental ones.

In the Agenda for the Period Until 2030, science, technology, and innovation are recognized as one of the main factors for achieving the goals of sustainable development. A similar conclusion was made in another Resolution of the UN GA A/RES/72/242 of December 22, 2017 The Impact of Rapid Technological Progress on Achieving Sustainable Development Goals [2]. According to the UN GA, “Science, technology, and innovation, including environmental innovation, can play a crucial role in the development and facilitation of efforts to solve global problems, in particular efforts to eradicate poverty, ensuring food security and nutrition and more efficient development of agriculture, expanding access to energy resources and improving energy efficiency, fighting diseases, improving the education system, protecting the environment, accelerating economic diversification and the transformation process and increasing productivity and competitiveness, and supporting sustainable development.”

Given the importance of this issue, the UN GA proposes to focus on environmental innovation (eco-innovation) to achieve the goals of sustainable development. More than that, the motivation of many states to pay attention to the problem of developing and introducing eco-innovations is quite understandable. However, in contrast to such states, an understanding of the need for their accelerated development appeared relatively recently in Russia. Since it is impossible to improve the competitiveness of the country, to solve the tasks of economic, social, and environmental development without relying on them. Thus, in the rating of countries’ competitiveness in 2017–2018, which is published by the World Economic Forum, indicates that 36 countries of the world are at the stage of innovative development of the economy, which are mainly the countries of Europe (23 countries), as well as the USA, Canada, Australia, and a number of countries Asia (Japan, Singapore, Republic of
Korea, Bahrain, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Qatar, etc.). Another 20 countries, including Russia, are at the stage of transition to an innovative development path [3].

In recent years, to ensure the transition of the Russian Federation to such a development path, a number of strategic planning documents (federal concepts, strategies, programs, and projects), offering various measures to stimulate innovative activity of environmental users, have been developed and approved. Within the framework of this article, we are invited to analyze these documents in order to determine the prospects for sustainable development of Russia.

2. Materials and Methods
The study was conducted on the basis of the following materials: (a) UN GA resolutions; (b) domestic legal acts of the Russian Federation, including strategic planning documents (Concept of the Long-Term Socio-Economic Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2020, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of November 17, 2008 No. 1662-p; Strategy of Innovative Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2020, approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2227-p dated December 8, 2011; Basis of the State Policy in the Field of Environmental Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030, approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation on April 30, 2012; Strategy of Environmental Safety of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2025, approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 176 of April 19, 2017, etc.); (c) regulatory legal acts (Tax Code of the Russian Federation, Federal Law on Environmental Protection, etc.); and (d) contemporary scientific literature.

Both general scientific and private scientific methods were used in the research process. The general scientific methods used in the study include a dialectical method (when studying the development of legislation of the Russian Federation in the field of eco-innovations), deduction and induction methods (when determining measures to stimulate innovative activity of environmental users). The private scientific methods used in the study include the formal legal method (when studying UN GA resolutions, domestic acts of the Russian Federation), the method of legal interpretation (in understanding the content and determining the practical feasibility of the norms contained in the internal acts of the Russian Federation), as well as the method of legal forecasting (in determining the prospects for sustainable development of Russia).

3. Results
Strategic planning documents provide for various measures to stimulate innovative activity of environmental users. However, the study clearly shows that only the following were implemented of all the proposed measures:

1. Tax policy measures;
2. A new system of environmental regulation and minimizing a negative impact on the environment, providing for the issuance of integrated environmental permits to enterprises (hereinafter referred to as IEP) was put in place. More than that, a number of standards and plans for a phased reduction of pollution to the levels corresponding to the best available technologies were adopted;
3. Ecological certification of eco-innovations. Up to date, in the Russian Federation, a number of national standards aimed at encouraging the introduction of eco-innovations by environmental users have been developed. However, it should be noted that in our country, these standards are not mandatory, are a voluntary mechanism for confirming the compliance of products and processes with environmental requirements. In this connection, voluntary environmental certification in Russia is not widely used in the activities of business entities, in contrast to the developed foreign countries;
4. A program approach in the field of environmental protection and environmental management. In recent years, in the Russian Federation, a programmatic approach in the field of environmental protection has acquired a special scope. After adopting the Agenda for the Period
until 2030, Russia took up its adaptation to the Russian legal system by embedding it in its national policies, strategies, and plans. In this case, the three main areas of action were identified: (1) Conducting an audit of existing strategies and plans at national, regional, and local levels and comparison with global goals of sustainable development and objectives to identify inconsistencies and opportunities for change; (2) determining their own national goals guided by global goals, but taking into account national conditions and having achievable objectives; (3) developing strategies and plans based on sustainable development goals.

The following documents are the results of the adaptation work:

1. Presidential Decree No. 642 of December 1, 2016 On the Strategy for the Scientific and Technological Development of the Russian Federation. At the moment, the Implementation Plan for the first stage of the Strategy for Russia’s Scientific and Technological Development has been approved. The documents provides fundamentals for the development of the scientific and technological complex. These documents are also reflected in the State Program Development of Science and Technology for 2013–2020, including federal targeted programs and subprogrammes.

2. Presidential Decree No. 204 of 07 May 2018 On the National Goals and Strategic Objectives of the Development of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2024. The main national development goals of Russia, as well as national projects (programs) that must be developed to achieve the goals set, are defined in this act as a result of adapting the Agenda for the Period up to 2030. It is noteworthy that in the aforementioned Presidential Decree, environmental problems are not designated as the national goal of the development of Russia, although the Government of the Russian Federation was instructed to develop a passport of the Ecology national project.

The main disadvantages of all the documents listed are the following:

1. Basically, they have a “declarative” character, i.e. they lack an effective implementation mechanism;
2. In these documents, the concept of sustainable development has not been fully implemented: environmental priorities are not combined with the country’s economic objectives. In addition, there is no link between innovation and sustainable development of cross-border regions, cities and settlements, country’s economic growth try, increased productivity in the economy, efficient use of resources, and innovative modernization of industry, etc. In other words, the documents weakly link the problems of ecology and economic development of Russia.

The considered issues lead to the conclusion that in our state, at the present stage, insufficiency of the existing measures to stimulate innovative activity of environmental users is obvious. The legislative and executive bodies should move away from the “declarative” approach of legally regulating relations in the field of eco-innovations and take additional measures aimed at implementing the ideas proposed in the strategic planning documents, including through the adoption of laws and other legal acts.

In addition, in the strategic planning documents of Russia, the concept of sustainable development requires a deeper rethinking. Three components form its basis (economic, social, and environmental), which should be developed in conjunction with each other. Economic measures should provide both economic and environmental benefits that would reduce environmental risks, including depletion of natural resources, increased man-made pressures, and environmental pollution. In other words, the transition of Russia to sustainable development is possible only with the interconnectedness and consistency of the economic and environmental measures being taken.

4. Discussion
In recent years, a lot of attention among the Russian scholars (E. S. Boltanova [4], O. P. Burmatova [5], Ya. D. Vishnyakov, S. P. Kiseleva [6], D. M. Khloptsov [7]) has been given to the problems of
sustainable, ecologically oriented innovative path of development of Russia. At the same time, researchers consider these problems from various aspects: both in terms of the imperfection of Russian legislation, as well as in terms of the lack of effective economic instruments. At the same time, there is a definite unifying principle, or thought in all these works. According to the authors of these works, Russia undoubtedly has a high potential necessary for the transition to a sustainable, environmentally oriented innovative development path, and the key role in this transition belongs to the state. The responsibility for implementing a systematic policy of state regulation of the development of environmentally oriented innovation processes lies with the state.

So, E. S. Boltanova believes that Russia has created a strategic base for the implementation of eco-innovations in various sectors of the economy. However, since eco-innovations are not investment-attractive for businesses, the state plays a dominant role in this process. The state through stimulation and coercion in regulatory legal acts, regulatory technical acts can create necessary conditions for promoting energy-efficient economic activity [4].

Ya. D. Vishnyakov, and S. P. Kiseleva express a similar point of view. In addition, they propose, on the part of the state, to introduce additional measures of state regulation of environmentally oriented innovative development, which is aimed at increasing the interest of all business entities in introducing environmental innovations.

Among such measures are the following:

1. Developing a modern mechanism for the formation of a state order to develop environmentally oriented production processes and environmentally oriented innovative products (services);
2. Establishing and conducting short and medium-term state support for domestic producers;
3. Developing a national integrated information and communication infrastructure, ensuring the formation of a single information space of innovation activities in priority areas, etc. [6].

Thus, according to a number of Russian scholars, it is the state that is the main regulator, which can ensure the transition of the Russian Federation to an environmentally oriented innovative development path. To achieve this, the development and implementation of additional measures to stimulate innovative activity of economic entities is strongly required.

5. Conclusion
One of the modern global trends of sustainable development is the accelerated development of eco-innovations. In Russia, an understanding of the need for their development has appeared relatively recently. In this regard, in the past few years, a lot of strategic planning documents (federal concepts, strategies, programs and projects), offering various measures to stimulate innovative activity of environmental users, have been developed and approved in our country. However, the study showed that the main shortcomings of such documents are their “declarative” nature, as well as the insufficiency of measures provided for in them to stimulate innovative activity of environmental users. The legislative and executive authorities of the Russian Federation need to abandon this approach, develop, and introduce additional incentive measures.

Also, the concept of sustainable development requires deep rethinking in strategic planning documents. This concept has not received its full realization. The documents weakly link the problems of ecology and economic development, while economic measures should provide not only economic but also environmental benefits. Only under the condition of consistent implementation of the main ideas of the concept, in the short term, our country will be able to move to an eco-oriented way of innovative development.

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