Regional Aspects of Integrated Development of Rural Areas

A V Kostyukov¹, O D Pritula¹ and S G Davydova¹,²

¹Novgorod Branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation, ul. Germana, 31, Veliky Novgorod, Russian Federation
²Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, ul. B. St. Petersburgskaya 41, Veliky Novgorod, Russian Federation

E-mail: sv_davidova@mail.ru

Abstract. The formation and implementation of a policy for the integrated development of rural areas are important processes that include the social, economic, and environmental components. The improvement of management activities in this direction is complicated by the presence of crisis phenomena, both in the economy and in the social sphere, similar processes are observed both at the regional level and in the context of municipalities. In this study, the authors paid considerable attention to the theoretical component of the topic, namely, substantiated the importance of the development of rural areas based on managerial decision-making within the ESG approach, gave a description of the prerequisites for developing the implementation of a comprehensive program for the development of rural areas based on a study of the totality of the needs of the ecosystem of rural territorial entities. The analytical study was based on the characteristics of the degree of satisfaction of the population with the quality of the ecosystem of rural settlements, as well as indicators of the effectiveness of the implementation of the state program “Comprehensive development of rural areas of the Novgorod region until 2025” in 2020. Particular attention was paid to the aspect associated with assessing the effectiveness of the state program in terms of the progress of the activities included in it.

1. Introduction

Every year, it becomes more and more important to analyze the causes and consequences of territorial differences in rural municipalities in terms of social, demographic, environmental and economic indicators, and characteristics. Revealing and substantiating the significance of the listed processes for the regional, municipal and city levels is relevant. The range of these areas is in the context of solving the problem of integrated and sustainable development of rural areas.

Rural territory is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It is necessary to use an integrated approach, namely, to study its vital activity in the aggregate of legal, economic, sociological, ecological-geographical and other problems to study it. This complexity of the study is supported by such a modern approach to management as ESG. The concept of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance) is environmental, social, state, and municipal governance, namely a set of management characteristics, in which the involvement of rural areas in solving environmental, social and management problems is achieved. ESG are three dimensions, according to which the integrated management of sustainable development is ensured. The practical application of such a management approach ensures a combination of individual elements of the territorial management system, which leads to an increase in the quality of life of the population.
The need to study the existing and projected socio-economic situation of rural areas, to generalize the results of the activities of local authorities was a prerequisite for the adoption by the Government of the Russian Federation of the state program “Comprehensive Development of Rural Areas” for the period up to 2025. The program structurally consists of the following blocks-directions:

– direction “Analytical, regulatory, methodological support for the integrated development of rural areas”, which involves ensuring the conduct of state monitoring of rural areas, its quality and effectiveness, as well as the collection of representative analytical information to stimulate support for the development of territories;

– direction “Creation of conditions for providing affordable and comfortable housing for the rural population”. This direction aims to ensure the construction of housing in rural areas to improve the redevelopment of households;

– direction “Development of the labor market (human resources) in rural areas” involves the implementation of a set of measures to reduce unemployment and increase employment of labor resources in rural areas;

– direction “Creation and development of infrastructure in rural areas”.

Activities in this direction set themselves the task of improving the external appearance of rural areas (buildings, sites, and other infrastructure facilities), optimization and improvement of the transport and engineering infrastructure of rural settlements.

The concept of sustainable development of rural areas includes a general assessment of the formed socio-economic living conditions, favorable and not very favorable trends in the formation of territorial entities, local goals, and development trends of the municipality, as well as the mechanisms for implementing the strategy. The development of the future vision of the territory involves the formation of a system of quantitative and qualitative indicators in accordance with the goals of the formation of a municipal formation, a qualitative assessment of which makes it possible to understand the current situation.

The concept is aimed at ensuring sustainable development of rural areas. In a strict sense, sustainable development means a formation that does not in any way lead to an irreversible change in the human environment. Thus, the adoption of the program implies the adoption of measures aimed at the optimal use of the limited resources of the existing social systems, to ensure the integrity of ecosystems. In the world economy, ecology and related areas, the problem of sustainable development is firmly in the center. This is both a new and long-developed aspect in the life of society.

Analysis of literature sources shows that there are not many publications that reveal the problems and prospects of the development of rural areas from the point of view of applying the ESG approach. There are some studies devoted to individual elements of the described management concept: assessment of the impact of resource potential and development intensity [1, 2, 3, 4], differentiation of the territory [5], characterization of the state of development of rural areas of the North-West [6, 7, 8] and other regions of Russia [9, 10].

2. Research methods

Ensuring the integrated development of rural areas has been and remains the most important and one of the most difficult processes taking place in society. The object of research is the rural areas (municipalities) of Novgorod region.

The problematic of this study is to determine the degree of effectiveness of management decisions that determine the state and prospects for the development of rural areas in the region and substantiate the key determinants of ensuring the implementation of the tasks in the context of the development of the territories of Novgorod region.

The research methods were the following:

– comparative analysis, which made it possible to compare the state of one object with another, to clarify the importance of approaches and methods used to characterize the totality of factors in the development of rural areas.
3. Results and discussion

The analysis of regional aspects of the development of rural areas should begin with an assessment of the current situation and characteristics of the problematic issues faced by residents of rural areas in the study region – the Novgorod region – table 1.

**Table 1.** Results of surveys of the population of rural areas on the topic of satisfaction of the population with the quality of the ecosystem of rural settlements, %.

| Year | Activities of the head of the municipal district administration | Organization of transport services | Quality of highways | Housing and communal services |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2018 | 25.7                                                          | 29.7                              | 12.7                | 35.3                          |
| 2019 | 54.5                                                          | 42.0                              | 20.7                | 44.4                          |
| 2020 | 56.2                                                          | 58.4                              | 30.7                | 46.5                          |
| Absolute change, percentage points | 30.5                                                          | 28.7                              | 18.0                | 11.2                          |

The data in the table indicate that the degree of satisfaction of the population with living conditions in rural areas is growing, which is a favorable trend. The largest increase is observed in the category “satisfaction with the performance of the head of the municipal district administration” – by 30.5 percentage points, then the organization of transport services for the population (+18.0 percentage points). Let us consider the structure of the population’s assessment of such a component (the increase in satisfaction for which is the smallest – 11.2 pp) as “satisfaction with housing and communal services” in more detail – table 2.

**Table 2.** Results of surveys of the population of rural areas on the topic of satisfaction of the population with the quality of housing and communal services, %.

| Year | Level of organization of heat supply (supply of the population with fuel) | Level of organization of water supply (sewerage) | Level of organization of power supply | Level of organization of gas supply |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2018 | 43.4                                                                  | 54.8                                              | 78.7                                 | 67.9                               |
| 2019 | 47.1                                                                  | 56.0                                              | 75.9                                 | 72.2                               |
| 2020 | 44.4                                                                  | 57.8                                              | 82.1                                 | 74.7                               |
| Absolute change, percentage points | 1.0                                                                  | 3.0                                               | 3.4                                  | 6.8                                |

The presented information demonstrates the fact that the increase in the satisfaction of the population in rural areas with the quality of the provision of housing and communal services has a weak positive trend, so in the category “Level of gas supply organization” the increase was 6.8 percentage points (more than 70% of respondents are satisfied with this service, which slows down the growth of the indicator).
The smallest increase in satisfaction in the direction of “Organization of heat supply” in this category has a growth reserve since less than half of the respondents are satisfied with the level of fuel supply to the population.

Thus, the need for an integrated approach to the development of rural areas in the Novgorod region is clearly expressed. This fact proves the timeliness of the adoption and implementation of the state program “Comprehensive development of rural areas of the Novgorod region until 2025”. We will assess the main elements of this program: the amount of funding, the effectiveness of activities and an assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of the program in 2020.

Under the state program of Novgorod region “Comprehensive development of rural areas of Novgorod region until 2025” for 2020, a limit of financial resources from the federal budget in the amount of 380,313.60 thousand rubles was allocated (including financing through the Ministry of Transport and Roads of Novgorod region - 123,820.30 thousand rubles). This amount of financing was determined based on the following agreements:

– between the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation and the Government of Novgorod Region from 21.12.2019 No. 082-09-2020-305 (improvement of rural settlements and improvement of living conditions of citizens), dated 21.12.2019 No. 082-09-2020-394 (development of water supply and gas supply in rural areas), dated December 23, 2019, No. 082-09-2020-408 (implementation of projects for the integrated development of rural areas);

– between the Federal Road Agency “Rosavtodor” and the Government of Novgorod Region dated December 17, 2019, No. 108-09-2020-066 (development of a network of public roads with hard surface).

As of the end of 2020, 292,769.40 thousand rubles (77.0% of the annual limit) were received from the federal budget for the implementation of the state program, and 292,769.40 thousand rubles were spent. The limit of funds of the regional budget for 2020 is determined in the amount of 214,871.22 thousand rubles (including funding through the Ministry of Transport and Roads of the Novgorod Region - 86,293.90 thousand rubles) and at the end of 2020 153,762.96 thousand rubles were received from the regional budget for the implementation of the program (71.6% of the annual limit), 153,762.96 thousand rubles were spent. The amount of funds from local budgets for 2020 is determined in the amount of 149,156.2 thousand rubles. For the implementation of the program, 149,156.2 thousand rubles were received (100.0% of the annual limit), 149,156.2 thousand rubles were spent. Thus, the implementation of the plan for the development of budget funds within the framework of the program activities is observed, which made it possible to implement several activities and projects of the program.

As of the end of 2020, under the state program:

– 4 projects for the integrated development of rural areas have been implemented: these are projects for the integrated development of the Khvoinaya working village (overhaul of a kindergarten, construction of a sports and recreation center), Kresttsy working village (reconstruction of a cultural and leisure center, overhaul of a school), Savinsky rural settlement (overhaul of a school, major overhaul of the House of Culture) and Trubichinsky rural settlement (construction of a flat sports facility, overhaul of the school, overhaul of the Folklore and Leisure Center). Currently, 42 thousand people will be able to use the listed facilities;

– certificates were issued on the provision of social benefits for the improvement of housing conditions to 25 families in rural areas;

– 2.24 thousand square meters of housing were commissioned by citizens living in rural areas (120.1% of the plan for 2020);

– 5.27 km of gas networks were built in Borovichsky and 3.15 km - in Lyubytinsky districts of the region (100.0% of the plan for 2020);

– 1.16 km of water supply networks were built in Borovichi district (100.0% of the plan for 2020);

– on the initiative of citizens, 39 projects were implemented to improve recreation areas in rural settlements (including 15 playgrounds, 17 sports grounds and 7 recreation areas in 14 districts of the region). These projects are implemented on the terms of co-financing from the budget of the settlement and from the citizens, which allows creating objects that people really need;
– 230 families took advantage of the Rural Mortgage program. The largest number of soft loans was issued in Novgorodsky (124), Krestetsky (25), Borovichsky (17), Starorussky (13), Valdai (10) and Khvoininsky (9) districts. Rural mortgages can be taken for up to 25 years for up to 3 million rubles. The down payment is only 10%. In terms of the volume of loans issued for rural mortgages, the Novgorod region ranks 55th out of 75.

Next, we will assess the effectiveness of the analyzed program – table 3.

Table 3. Integral assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of the program “Comprehensive development of rural areas of the Novgorod region until 2025” based on the results of 2020.

| Indicator                                                      | Plan for 2020 | Fact for 2020 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Number of program events, units                               | 9             | 8             |
| Number of target indicators in the reporting year, units      | 7             | 6             |
| The amount of financing of the state program from the regional and federal budgets, thousand rubles | 595184.82     | 446532.36     |

Thus, the integral assessment of the effectiveness of the program implementation at the end of 2020 makes 89.2 points. Hence, the program is effective. A highly effectiveness of the program was prevented by the fact that the target for the reconstruction of the public highway of intermunicipal importance Novaya – Zamosctye in the Malovishersky district in the amount of 6.58 km was not met. As of 12/31/2020, the construction readiness of the facility is 35 percent. Construction was not completed due to violation of the terms of work by the contractor.

4. Conclusion

The complexity of the development of territories, including rural ones in modern conditions, allows for a relatively new approach – ESG management, which is based on increasing the degree of involvement of rural areas in solving emerging environmental, social and management problems.

A study of the ecosystem of rural settlements in Novgorod region and the needs affected by it showed that in the studied dynamics of 2018–2020, the degree of satisfaction of the population with the results of decisions made in the context of socio-economic issues is growing. It should be noted that only in such segments as the activities of the head of the administration of the municipality and the organization of transport services, satisfaction is observed above 50% of survey participants.

As a result of the study, it was found that Novgorod region started implementing the program “Comprehensive development of rural areas of Novgorod region until 2025”, which is relevant for the population of rural settlements in the region.

Within the framework of the village development program for 2017–2020, the following was built:
– 12.6 thousand sq. m. of housing;
– 11.3 km of water supply networks;
– 10 km of gas pipelines;
– 5.8 km of highways;
– 106 projects are implemented for the improvement of rural areas.

As of the end of 2020, within the framework of the state program, 4 projects for the integrated development of rural areas have been implemented.
– complex development of the village of Podberez’e and the village of Chechulino of Trubichinsky village settlement of Novgorod region;
– complex development of Savino village of Savinsky village settlement of Novgorod region;
– integrated development of the region settlement Kresttsy of Krestetsky town settlement of Krestetsky district;
– integrated development of the region settlement Khvoynaya of Khvoyninsky town settlement of Khvoyninsky district.
As part of the implementation of the projects, a sports and recreation center was built in the region settlement Khvoynaya and flat sports facility in the village of Podberez’e. The reconstruction of the cultural and leisure center in the region settlement Kresttsy, as well as major renovation of three schools, a kindergarten and two houses of culture.

Thus, during the study, the main directions of the implementation of the state program and the process associated with it in the region were identified and described.

Improving approaches to the integrated development of territories and the management system, considering the modern needs of territorial entities, will contribute to the sustainable development of municipalities of the Novgorod region and the region from the point of view of the three management components of ESG.

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