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ON THE WAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE REGIONAL IMAGE OF THE SOCIAL SECTOR

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Abstract: This article analyzes regional aspects of sustainable social sector development, socio-economic disparities between regions, and their impact on public welfare. The study examines the regional characteristics of education, healthcare, social protection, and infrastructure development, and substantiates the importance of a regional approach in ensuring sustainable development. Additionally, scientific and practical recommendations have been developed for the effective use of regional potential, the improvement of local governance institutions, and the implementation of innovative mechanisms in the context of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: sustainable development, social sphere, regional development, territorial development, social infrastructure, human capital, social policy.

Sustainable development in the 21st century is one of the most important strategic tasks facing the countries of the world. Alongside economic growth, ensuring social equality, the population's quality of life, and ecological balance are considered the primary criteria for sustainable development. In particular, the level of development of the social sphere is one of the important factors determining the overall development of the country and the quality of human capital.

The concept of sustainable development was first introduced into scientific discourse in 1987 in the report of the UN Brundtland Commission, which is interpreted as the process of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Human interests are at the center of this concept [1].

The social sphere encompasses a complex of relations related to education, healthcare, culture, employment, social protection, and the quality of life. The effective functioning of these areas contributes to the development of human capital, the increase of economic activity, and the ensuring of social stability in society.

Socio-economic disparities between regions are a natural consequence of the development process. However, the excessive deepening of these disparities negatively impacts the well-being of the population and social equality [2].

Regional development policy should be formed based on the economic potential, natural resources, demographic composition, and social needs of each region [3]. At the same time, it is advisable to prioritize the following areas:

First, the modernization and digitalization of the education system by region.

Second, improving the quality of medical services in rural areas and expanding access to them.

Third, improving employment programs based on the needs of the local labor market.

Fourth, the development of social infrastructure facilities and the improvement of the quality of public utilities.

Fifth, increasing the independence of local government bodies and supporting regional initiatives.

Digital technologies are becoming an important factor in the development of the social sphere. E-education, telemedicine, digital public services, and "smart city" concepts allow for the reduction of disparities between regions [4-5].

Furthermore, the widespread use of public-private partnership mechanisms, the attraction of local investment, and increased activity of civil society institutions contribute to the sustainable development of the social sphere.

In the future, regional development policy must rely not only on economic efficiency but also on the principles of social justice and inclusivity.

Conclusion. The research results show that a regional approach plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of the social sphere. Reducing socio-economic disparities between regions, improving the quality of education and healthcare services, developing social infrastructure, and implementing innovative mechanisms are key conditions for sustainable development.

Taking into account the capabilities and needs of each region in the movement towards sustainable development, the rational use of regional potential and increasing investments in human capital will ensure the long-term socio-economic development of the country.

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