

Sustainable development and socio-labor welfare: appreciation of young people in the context of the European Union

Xose Picatoste
jose.picatoste@uam.es
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
Facultad de Economía y Empresa
Departamento de Estructura Económica y Economía del Desarrollo

Asunción López-Arranz
alaranz@udc.es
Univesidade da Coruña
Facultade de Ciencias do Traballo
Grupo de investigación EDaSS on Economic Development & Social Sustainability

Sustainable development is a goal proposed by most countries in the world. There is a common agreement between the scientific community and society about the need for a balance between economic, social and environmental problems. However, the articulation of these interrelationships is certainly complex and not always visible in their general complexity and, above all, many times, they have been considered far from social and labor relations. The concern for environmental preservation is shared for young people since they are fully aware, nevertheless, the concept of social sustainability in general and its relationship with the individual welfare in the work and social environment has not been found as rooted in citizenship as it is environmental. Hence the interest in seeking a causal relationship between both concepts.

The main objective of this work is to check whether the concern for environmental sustainability influences the concern for problems related to social and labor welfare, understood within the broader concept of social sustainability, both analyzed from the point of view of European youth. To this end, we have conducted a questionnaire based on the issues identified as essential in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Data have been collected among young people from different countries of the European Union. Therefore, our analysis is based on the point of view of young people in Europe. The two concepts, social and environmental sustainability, are difficult to measure, so they are based on some indicators for each type of sustainability. In this way, we obtain two variables between which we want to evaluate a possible causal relationship. That is a cause-effect relationship. To perform this analysis, we need two techniques: factor analysis and regression. That is why we resort to a model of structural equations, as a method to carry out this research since it combines the two techniques, both factorial, and regression. In

addition, it is an ideal methodology for applying to the social sciences in these cases. The indicators chose to measure environmental sustainability are access to energy for everyone, the impacts of climate change for environmental sustainability or varied environmental issues. To build this variable we also look at the problem that exists with acts of terrorism.

Regarding social sustainability, it is built around five key indicators, which are: unemployment, inequality, human rights, the values of today's society and, last but not least, the level of corruption. All these indicators are observable variables measured through the survey and aim to collect, in general terms, the feeling with the social environment perceived by the younger citizens. As regards environmental sustainability, it has been measured in relation to traditional indicators, mainly linked to general environmental issues and clean energy.

Results achieved from the proposed model indicate that there is a causal relationship and that, as expected, the awareness of environmental sustainability implies an awareness in social aspects, because it has been found that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship (with a p-value less than 0.001) among the variables that assess awareness between both types of sustainability, social and environmental, showing the interrelation between both spheres for the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development (with a standardized regression coefficient of 0.91) and an adjusted R squared of 0.83.

Keywords: labor market and sustainability, environment, European Union, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)