

Implications of Economic Criminality on Economic and Energy Policy in Countries in Transition

By Jerzy Michna*

Economies in transition (first of all, the Polish economy) are entering the stage at which the losses created by the economic recession at the beginning of the transformation process are being recovered. It is reasonable to say that the main impediments experienced at first have been overcome. At present the countries in transition are striving to optimize social-economic policy so as to develop their economies in the most effective way and as fast as possible (2,3).

Some impediments that originated at the beginning of the transformation processes in Central and East European countries, still exist (3), but their diagnosis, (particularly as far as the results and methods of quantification are concerned) is more difficult than ever (1).

This is because changes in management have been introduced without (or with very little) experience; in addition there are a great number of factors to be considered and the relation between them and the changes they describe are fuzzy in nature.

For further development of the system and its transformation it is very important to be able to estimate covert activities that do not comply with the principles of moral behavior.

The observance of these principles is deemed ethical. But in each society there are individuals and organizations who do not observe ethical principles and commit wrong-doings deemed punishable and criminal.

In each country economic activities, irrespective of the degree of economic liberty, are organized by a system of laws, including: economic law, property law, enterprise law, etc.

The activities of the government and other economic institutions designed to influence the level and distribution of social products are called economic policy.

In economic policy, it is possible to distinguish four main areas:

- *Order policy*, where the main goal is to create order in the economic system; the bases for such policy are the legal standards which create the long-term framework for the economic operation of the state (or other economic institutions),
- *Business conditions policy*, which influences long-term price and employment fluctuations,
- *Distribution policy of the state*, which creates and distributes social assistance benefits.
- *Structural policy*, which is determined by a system of laws that support the development of the economy and especially civil engineering activities.

In spite of the existing systems of principles and governmental activities, economic criminality can be observed all over the world, and in very diversified forms. The reasons, although different from country to country, may be generally

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divided into: political, economic and social. In analyzing criminality in each country, the following criminal activities may be observed:

- *Corruption*, the moral decay of political life whereby public position is used to achieve profit,
- *Speculation*, operation based only on simple facts (without any consideration given to scientific research results and analyses),
- *Manipulation*, the exerting of influence or control over some individuals without them being aware of it,
- *Protection*, supporting persons or institutions by special methods and behavior (preferential rights, priorities),
- *Monopolization*, control of the market by only one producer (or one buyer) and the resulting capability of dictating prices,
- *Organized criminality*, organised groups formed to achieve (punishable) activities; they can act openly (lobby) or clandestinely (Mafia), and
- *Grey economy*, part of the economic activities for which no (or not all) taxes are paid.

All the above criminal activities are very difficult to quantify, both as to their range and the effects they produce, as there is limited access to the required information and the possibility of obtaining falsified information. Therefore, the parameters describing them are fuzzy.

Practically, in the course of research and analyses – still not very numerous – it is not possible to quantify and project the dimensions of some parts of criminal activities. The applied methods do not provide generally accepted results. Therefore, results can only be estimated as a value in a probable time interval.

Despite the fuzzy nature of the above mentioned factors, research shows (2,4) that considerable economic criminality also occurs in developed countries. But, typically, there is a wide range. For example, Prof. F. Schneider's (1994) evaluation of the percentage of GDP obtained from the "grey economy" showed the following percentages:

Italy - 23.4%, Belgium - 19.6%, Great Britain - 18.4%, Sweden - 16.7%, France - 14.2%, Netherlands - 13.9%, Germany - 13.1%, USA - 8.6% and Austria - 6.7%

It can be posited that for each country, the degree of economic criminality is influenced by problems experienced by the country. The differences between economic criminality in the developed countries and in countries undergoing a transformation from centrally-controlled to market economy result mainly from a different organization of social and economic life and the stabilization of some trends in the development of a given country. This means that there should be fewer sources of economic criminality in the transformed countries. Such a conclusion is confirmed by the results of the latest research carried out in some Central and East European countries concerning the estimation of the share of the "grey economy" in GDP (4). All results have stressed essential difficulties in obtaining data; nevertheless, the share of the "grey economy" in these countries is estimated to be in the range of 30 - 40 percent of GDP.

The economic conditions in the countries that have undergone the transformation process are influenced by the following factors (1,4):

- Level of economic efficiency. There were great differences in the level of economic efficiency between economic entities operating in the centrally-controlled economies; it must be stressed that these differences did not arise due to inefficiency of work but arose as a consequence of applying the principles of central planning methods – especially in the area of distribution of investments, innovation and renovation funds,
- Destabilization caused by the introduction of change,
- Relative low level of products and services and the subsequent unstable position on the world markets,
- Extensive replacement of elites,
- Changes in economic policy objectives,
- Changes in external policies,
- Structural and legal changes,
- Industry restructuring,
- Dynamic development of environmental protection activities,
- Privatization of state property,
- Relative low income levels,
- Big diversification of economic offerings from institutions representing the developed countries,
- Considerable decrease of economic cooperation between former Comecon countries,
- Essential changes in statistical data,
- Low efficiency of control over some state institutions such as banks, tax offices and police forces,
- Low level of telecommunication systems,
- Uncertainty of references provided by local firms and enterprises, and
- Uncertainty of references provided by foreign companies and enterprises.

The influences of the above transition period problems are also observed in the directions of these countries' energy policies. Consequently, (1,4) the observed implications of economic criminality to the energy efficiency sphere are as follows:

- Decrease of the official parameters of energy intensity of countries which transform their economies,
- Smaller state budget subsidies and fewer possibilities of supporting energy conservation activities,
- Implementation of solutions that are not most efficient and innovative,
- Development of noncompetitive companies and enterprises,
- Opening the possibilities for the operation of external companies and enterprises without the best references,
- Inefficient privatization; the main concern being given to the price that could be fetched for the privatized company,
- Smaller support of efficient changes in the structure of the home economy,
- Inefficient use of capital directed to environmental protection activities,
- Strengthened power of monopolist companies by means of energy prices and tariffs construction,

- Essential share of speculation – making profits from energy policy,
- Increase of relatively inefficient decisions at the state and municipal levels,
- Lowered efficiency of using external capital sources,
- Support of inefficient and expensive services performed by foreign companies and enterprises,
- Lowered demand for research – especially with regard to home research institutes, and
- Considerable enrichment of some institutions and individuals whose achievements in the implementation of real innovation are questionable.

The discussed studies (1,4) have also shown that, in spite of the considerable impact of economic criminality on the economic growth of the countries in the transition period, there are few recommendations on how to decrease the sphere of criminal activities. To illustrate their range the relation between the level of economic criminality and energy conservation effects may be examined. The research results have also stressed the global character of economic criminality and its tendency to grow (also in the developed countries).

Therefore, for the sake of the common good it is necessary to develop research and studies that could contribute to the reduction of this negative phenomenon that occurs in the course of the global economic development.

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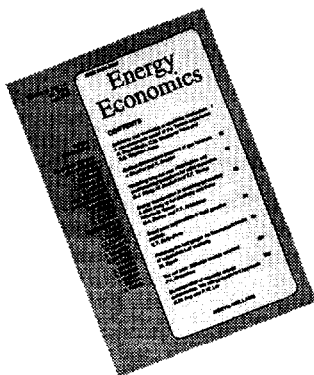
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⁵ See, *World Energy Outlook*, Chapter 1, pp. 41-45.

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