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Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies

**Evaluation of selected municipal
co-operation as a factor of rural development**

Bachelor thesis

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BACHELOR THESIS TOPIC

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Guides to writing a thesis:

1. At the beginning of the thesis, the goal and research methods are defined. The bachelor thesis deals with the evaluation of the ongoing project called "Obce sobě" characterised as an inter-municipal co-operation implemented in four selected areas.
2. The literary research presents the main themes elaborating on settlement structure of the Czech Republic, municipal self-government, rural development and inter-municipal cooperation as well.
3. The practical part of the thesis provides general overview and main objectives of the project "Obce sobě", including the description of the project implementation in at least one municipality with extended competence.
4. By the end of the thesis, the evaluation of this particular inter-municipal co-operation is stated and supplemented with predictions or improvements for the future co-operation activities.

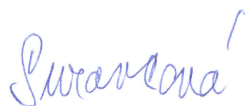
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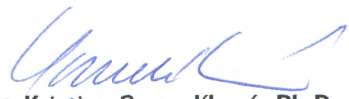
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Annotation

The thesis aims at providing the evaluation of the inter-municipal co-operation project Obce Sobě in the rural municipality with extended competence of Židlochovice, based on the qualitative research – standardised interviews with local representatives of self-government municipalities of the administrative district of Židlochovice and on results of quantitative research conducted in the unit by the project coordinator Lucie Kubalíková. The researches shows positive aspects of the inter-municipal co-operation Obce Sobě, providing the system support of the development of inter-municipal co-operation in the Czech Republic within its individual administrative districts of municipalities with extended competences, leading to develop self-governmental rural municipalities of the municipality with extended powers of Židlochovice, to make the performance of public administration more effective, to provide inhabitants with greater variety of public services of higher quality, to strengthen informal co-operation and built trust among municipalities and to eventually bring savings to local budgets through joint projects in this specific district.

Key words

Inter-municipal co-operation, Obce Sobě, municipality with extended competence, Židlochovice, rural development

Anotace

Bakalářská práce hodnotí projekt meziobecní spolupráce Obce Sobě v rámci obce s rozšířenou působností Židlochovice na základě vlastního kvalitativního šetření řešeného formou řízených rozhovorů s hlavními představiteli jednotlivých obcí, doplněného o výsledky kvantitativní výzkumu provedeného za dané ORP koordinátorkou projektu Lucií Kubalíkovou. Jednotlivá šetření ukázala, že daná forma meziobecní spolupráce, realizovaná prostřednictvím projektu Systémové podpory rozvoje meziobecní spolupráce v ČR v rámci území správních obvodů obcí s rozšířenou působností známého jako Obce Sobě, vede k rozvoji samosprávných obcí venkovského charakteru v daném územním administrativním celku ORP Židlochovice, podporuje efektivnější výkon veřejné správy, poskytuje svým občanům rozmanitější a kvalitnější veřejné služby, posiluje neformální spolupráci a buduje důvěru mezi jednotlivými obcemi a současně také může přinášet finanční úspory skrze sdílené projekty v daném správním obvodu.

Klíčová slova

Meziobecní spolupráce, Obce Sobě, obec s rozšířenou působností, Židlochovice, venkovský rozvoj

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List of abbreviations

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
CAP	Common Agriculture policy
CLLD	Community-led Local Development
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
CZSO	Czech Statistical Office
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EU	European Union
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund
GIZ	Cross-border impulse centre
HCCZ	Czech Healthy Cities Association
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LAG	Local Action Group
LAU 2	Local administrative unit level 2
LDS	Local Development Strategies
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions pour le Développement de l'Économie Rurale
MMR CR	Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic
MPE	Municipality with extended powers (competence)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP HRE	Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment
IROP	Integrated Regional Operational Programme
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SMO CR	Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
WHO	World Health Organisation

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1 Introduction

In the context of European Union the local self-governance plays an integral part in carrying out the social policy and providing well-being for the society that manages an enormous amount of public funds which are (as other resources) limited.

In order to provide citizens with the basic infrastructure and services of the best quality possible while expending reasonable financial resources local self-governments join forces by way of various types of co-operative projects and activities which promise a greater and very often faster development, therefore its effectiveness is very crucial. With a well working inter-municipal co-operation municipalities could achieve much more significant outcomes than if they do on their own and could take much wider development steps that would be very difficult and very often impossible for them to do on their own as well in view of their low population density, scarcity of financial resources or geographical remoteness.

The inter-municipal co-operation has its long tradition and works across the whole Europe, across the whole world. A steadily deepening European integration reduces barriers of inter-municipal co-operation and in fact even strives to build the co-operation of cross-border basis. However, some barriers, especially those evolving for centuries, such as settlement structure, administrative reforms or model of self-governance, are not so easy to change and call for overall, radical, sometimes unpopular solutions of the government of a particular country.

2 Objectives and methodology

2.1 Objectives

The main aim of the thesis is to deliver a comprehensive evaluation of the selected municipal co-operation called *Obce Sobě*, serving as a factor of rural development in the municipality with extended competence of Židlochovice, on the basis of interviews with the representatives of self-government municipalities of the administrative district of the selected municipality with extended powers (MEP). In addition, the thesis formulates future trends of inter-municipal co-operation and provides suggestions for the future improvements of the co-operation.

Based on the aim of the thesis, the main research question and its sub-questions were formulated as follows:

- **Main research questions:**

How the inter-municipal co-operation could influence the rural development of one selected municipality with extended competence in the Czech fragmented settlement structure?

- **Sub-questions of the research:**

- 1) What are the outcomes of co-operative process?
- 2) What are the key factors which negatively or positively affect the process of co-operation and further development of municipalities?
- 3) Does the inter-municipal co-operation “*Obce Sobě*” meet its expectations of effectively executed tasks of public administration at local level?
- 4) What could the Czech Republic learn from foreign countries?
- 5) What are trends or improvements of future inter-municipal co-operation?

2.2 Materials and Methods

The first part of the thesis deals with the literary research of both Czech and international origin in paper as well as online forms listed by the end of the thesis which briefly presents the main themes of the work, elaborating on:

- a) fragmented settlement structure of the Czech Republic taking its historical evolution in time into account,
- b) municipal self-government emphasizing on its official bodies,
- c) inter-municipal co-operation and its different forms, and
- d) rural development of the Czech Republic in context of the European Union.

Within the second (practical) part of the thesis, the research of exploratory character, combining qualitative (personal semi-standardised and unstructured interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) researches, was evaluated.

The semi-standardised interviews involved 19 municipalities in total. The interviews with the principal local representatives took physically place in 18 out of 24 self-governmental municipalities (Blučina, Holasice, Ledce, Medlov, Měnin, Moutnice, Nesvačilka, Nosislav, Otmarov, Popovice, Přisnotice, Rajhradice, Sobotovice, Syrovice, Unkovice, Vojkovice, Žatčany and Židlochovice) during the month of November 2014. The other municipal mayors from Bratčice, Hrušovany u Brna, Opatovice, Rajhrad and Žabčice were not willing to meet for the reason of lack of interest in the Project, lack of information or time. However, 1 mayor and 1 vice mayor of those who did not want to arrange a meeting (Bratčice, Hrušovany u Brna) answered some of the questions through phone conversations, and the mayor of Moutnice gave also his point of view on inter-municipal co-operation activities for Těšany where he was a mayor in the previous electoral period finishing in October 2014. The interviews were based on a list of 13 main queries regarding settlement structure, administrative division of the country, inter-municipal co-operation and municipal merging (i.e. their preference, current municipal co-operation activities they are part of, trends in municipal co-operation, advantages/disadvantages, current problems making co-operation impossible), quality of life in municipalities and development tendencies in municipalities in connection with the Project. The queries were set in accordance with the main objectives of the thesis, giving answers for the main research question.

The unstructured interview was realised in the city of Židlochovice, in the centre of the Project. Besides general overview on the Project, the project co-ordinator Ms. Kubalíková provided invaluable data, results of two questionnaires filled in by all 24 local representatives of the district and 5 voluntary associations of municipalities. Based on the results, the last area (pro-family policy) of a free choice of the inter-municipal co-operation was selected.

As for the quantitative research, it was carried out in the whole administrative district of the MEP Židlochovice and in 5 voluntary associations of municipalities (associating municipalities of the MEP) by the project co-ordinator RNDr. Lucie Kubalíková, Ph.D. who provided me with the outcomes of the research which were later on used within the practical part of the thesis.

All the maps and pictures used in the work are listed at the beginning and are properly quoted.

3 Settlement structure of the Czech Republic

Settlements, as we know them today, represent a complex system where every single settlement is linked with the other ones through many ways, such as customer-supplier chains, networks of technical infrastructure, migration of inhabitants or transmission of information and innovations.

The settlement system is a relatively dynamic system developing according to its local geographical and climatic environment, historical context, demographic factors or economic situation. However, the further development of particular areas also depends on activities of human beings, such as people's concentration into settlements, and characteristic economical activities in agriculture, industry or services.

The settlement system has been evolving since the earlier formed settlement structures dating back hundred, thousand years ago. The first official settlement dates back to Palaeolithic era, primarily dependent on accessibility and natural-resources richness of the locality (Kadeřábková et al., 1996:7).

In the Czech settlement history, there are two most important epochs which affected today's settlement structure the most. One of them goes back to the 13th century, to the reign of the Přemyslid dynasty, when the establishment of new towns and cities subordinated to already set principles. Towns were, in particular, set up according to the monarch's power, strategic as well as economic targets, holding the functions of business, craft-industry, administrative and cultural centres until the 15th century. The second most important breaking point dates back to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) when almost one-third of all settlements were destroyed and the rest of them experienced a massive population migration from those vanished towns.

During the following eras, trends in the settlement development had been slowly changing as a result of a continuous progress in comprehension, economic and social development, considerably supported by different points of view on a position of a state and centralised power, boosted during the reign of Habsburg monarchy, especially under Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II, who are considered as founders of a very first basic public administration in the country. Besides new land regulations, having a great impact on the development of settlements around the whole country, so-called "raabizace" was launched. The reform positively contributed to a foundation of new villages predominantly in agricultural regions, boosting an agricultural productivity.

Other significant development was also noticed during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, first reflecting on setting up manufactures and later on factories in cities, towns and villages, resulting in a preservation of small medieval towns and villages.

In the time of Czechoslovakia (1918), the settlement structure and its development was highly affected by the economic situation all over the Europe. The growth of cities remained almost same, although, besides the secondary sector, the tertiary sector of the economy was more and more involving into the economic structure of the state in the form of administrative institutions at national, regional and local level, educational or cultural institutions.

After the Second World War, most of European countries were struggling from devastating consequences of the war. Despite large damages in Central-European countries, Czech towns and villages were almost untouched by the war, however, were more likely affected by the inner migration of people, especially by the frontier settlement, when the inhabitants left their inland homes and moved into villages on the frontier.

In next ten years, the settlement policy reflected, more or less, military strategic planning and economic targets, including greater (financial) support to towns with the raw material extraction, heavy industry or arm industry. Moreover, the country focused on balancing diverse economic levels of regions, seemed to have higher unemployment rate and lower development potential than before the World War II. The centralised power of the state enabled to manage some production activities towards small poor settlements in undeveloped regions, and thereby preserved their existence.

Since 1950s, the settlement preservation, stagnancy or decline has been very dependent on technical, economic and social progress and changes, for example, collectivisation and its effects agricultural production in former Czechoslovakia (Kadeřábková et al., 2001:12-14).

Today's Czech settlement structure is characterised as a dense network of settlements of various sizes, population density taken into account, where the administrative system plays an important role. This dense network is typical of a great number of settlements' density and its regular spread around the country, high frequency of small rural settlements and, in reverse, relatively low number of big cities with the city of Prague in the lead (Vajdová et al., 2006:15). While rural areas more likely reflect historical development and preserve traditional culture of a particular nation, the urban ones rather reflect administrative needs of the city (Kadeřábková et al., 2001:12-14).

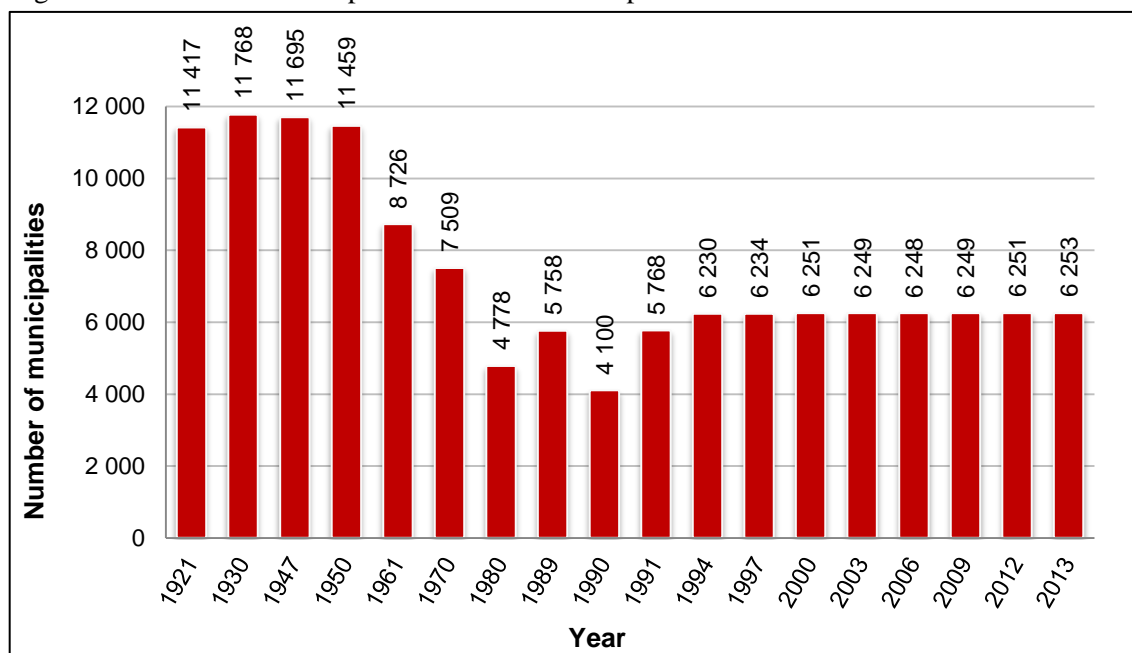
The current administrative structure is regarded as a quite fragmented one (the average distance from one municipality to the other one is lower than 2 km) (Galvasová et al., 2007a:20), represented by a great number of relatively small municipalities, taking over 57 % of whole Czech land. On 1st January 2013, the Czech Republic were consisting of 4 856 municipalities of less than 1 thousand inhabitants, representing more

than 77 %, where only 17 % inhabitants out of 10,5 million lived in small municipalities (Small lexicon of municipalities 2013, Czech Statistical Office).

Looking back to the pre-war Czechoslovakia (1918-1938), over 9 thousand municipalities with maximum 1 000 inhabitants were monitored and shortly after the World War II even 89 % of municipalities amounting to less than 1 000 inhabitants existed. Until 1989 the number of municipalities was consistently reducing as a result of an administrative integrative process. Nevertheless, the trend of lowering number of municipalities did not last for long.

In the early 90s, when Act No. 367/1990 Coll., on Municipalities (Municipal Establishment) came into force, the Czech Republic experienced a massive disintegrative process, leading to the creation of more than 2 000 new administrative self-governing units during the 3 years period. The reason for such an increase in number of municipalities was caused by the legislative imperfections. The Act did not determine any limits to the population size of municipalities (Galvasová et al., 2007a:12). Therefore very small municipalities were established. After passing the Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities (the Municipal Order), amending the previous act, the process of disintegration, more or less, stopped as a result of setting up the minimum number for a new municipal establishment in the range of 1 000 inhabitants (Svobodová et al., 2011:12-13). Under these circumstances, at the beginning of 2013 The Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic registered 6 253 municipalities in total, which represents the rise of 2 153 municipalities in comparison with the number of municipalities 23 years ago.

Figure 3: Number of municipalities in the Czech Republic 1921-2013



Source: CZSO, 2012 & 2014 (date of quotation 22. 3. 2015); Historická ročenka ČSSR (1985) in Vajdová et al., 2006:17

Measured on a population density, most of the municipalities of the Czech Republic are considered as small ones (Vajdová et al., 2006:17), where 77 per cent of these municipal units have less than 1000 inhabitants and 23 per cent has not reached even the number of 200 inhabitants (Small lexicon of municipalities 2013, CZSO). Only 5 cities, specifically Prague, Brno, Ostrava, Plzeň and Oloumouc, of the Czech Republic have exceeded the number of 100 000 inhabitants (Wokoun et al., 2008:376).

The municipal mean size comes around 1634 inhabitants; the median size is only about 382 inhabitants (Vajdová et al., 2006:17). Having said that, over one half of all municipalities do not come even close to this number. Just to imagine, the smallest one numbers only 17 inhabitants (TÝDEN.CZ, 2015)¹. The population density differs from municipality to municipality. 21 per cent of inhabitants out of 73 per cent of those living in cities live in big cities (i.e. above 100 000 inhabitants), and only 17 per cent live in small cities with less than 1 000 inhabitants (CZSO, 2013).

Figure 4: Population structure of municipalities in the Czech Republic 2013

Population size	Number of municipalities	Number of municipalities (%)	Cumulative sum of municipalities	Cumulative sum of municipalities (%)	Number of inhabitants	Number of inhabitants (%)
0 – 199	1 461	23,36	1 461	23,36	181 529	1,7
200 – 499	2 012	32,18	3 473	55,54	657 282	6,3
500 – 999	1 356	21,69	4 829	77,23	953 571	9,1
1 000 – 1 999	742	11,87	5 571	89,09	1 031 212	9,8
2 000 – 4 999	411	6,57	5 982	95,67	1 246 895	11,9
5 000 – 9 999	140	2,24	6 122	97,91	961 260	9,1
10 000 – 19 999	68	1,09	6 190	98,99	951 428	9,1
20 000 – 49 000	42	0,67	6 232	99,66	1 207 873	11,5
50 000 – 99 999	16	0,26	6 248	99,92	1 132 962	10,8
over 100 000	5	0,08	6 253	100	2 192 113	20,9
Total for country	6 253	100			10 516 125	100

Source: CZSO, 2013 (date of quotation 13. 10. 2013)

The settlement structure and its character, spatial organisation of society and economic subjects directly affect territorial development possibilities of any administration. The greater number of small municipalities, the lower capacity of financial, functional and professional development in the self-government. For this reason many countries support the idea of merging municipalities into bigger wholes, such as the Netherlands, Sweden or Germany did. However, small municipalities do not very often share the same opinion and stand against these tendencies and rather follow the path of investing money into the development of (basic) infrastructure as the linking factor among each, the base for the further inter-municipal co-operation (Kadeřábková & Khendriche Trhlínová, 2008:24-25).

¹ date of quotation: 21. 10. 2014

4 Municipal self-government in the Czech Republic

In 1990 the territorial one-level administrative management-framework went through the transformative process leading to restore the two-level administration of the territory, resulting in splitting up previously merged municipalities and shaping the fragmented territory of self-government units, as it stands, at the same time.

The Municipal Order from 2000 brings almost authentic principles, division and structure of municipal bodies of the First Republic's public administration to the current administrative system (Balík, 2009:61).

4.1 Municipality as a basic territorial unit

A municipality² is “a basic territorial self-governing community of citizens, forming a territorial unit defined by the borders of the territory of the municipality” (Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities, section 1).

The municipality is a public service corporation, having the right to own and manage its properties. Municipalities tend to procure an all-round development of its administrated area and needs of inhabitants, while maintaining the public interests (Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities in Binek at al., 2010a:8) in what we call a “mixed system” of the public administration, where each level of the territorial self-government fulfils activities and tasks in the independent and/or delegated competence (Binek et al., 2010a:8). In the Czech law the independent competence of a municipality is not further specified and so the preference of the independent competence is applied. The Municipal Order's section 8 notes that “*where a separate law regulates the competence of municipalities and does not specify that a certain competence is the delegated competence of a municipality, such competence shall be independent competence*”. Nevertheless, we could state that the delegated competence is a competence including the execution of specific tasks/services of the state administration which concerns interests of the whole society (e.g. environmental and landscape protection, supervision of construction management, transportation and road management, protection of cultural heritage, run of register office, etc.) which were passed on to a municipality by the state for its “practical” reasons – to make these services more available for citizens (Kašparová et al., 2005:7-8).

Within the independent competence, municipalities are particularly in charge of (Lacina, 2005:9):

² the Local Administrative Unit of the second level (LAU 2) according to Eurostat

- passing territorial development programmes within municipal districts and monitoring their fulfilments;
- administrating municipal properties, putting together municipal budgets and managing finances with the respect to it;
- setting up municipal legal entities and facilities;
- making decisions on municipal participations in business organisations and foundations;
- making agreements on changing municipal borders;
- voting, forming and constituting municipal bodies;
- dealing with local public order's issues;
- managing and maintaining facilities in possession of municipalities, meeting needs and interests of inhabitants;
- maintaining municipalities cleanliness;
- securing waste management and
- ensuring water supplies and wastewater treatment.

In addition, a municipality in its independent competence secures its inhabitants with economic growth, social and cultural development, environmental protection and creation of healthy lifestyle (Kašparová et al., 2005:8).

A municipality carries out three basic functions – residential, employment and service function. Each function is delivered in some extent depending on a status of the municipality in the settlement structure. Generally speaking, the greater municipality, the greater variety of functions (Binek et al., 2010a:9).

4.2 Municipal bodies

Every public corporation, including municipalities, has its own official bodies which act on its behalf. Besides the most common municipal bodies, such as municipal council, municipal board, mayor or municipal office, the municipality consists of other consultative and special bodies (established by separate Acts), such as committees, commissions or municipal police (Koudelka, 2006:56) whose list with brief description follows.

4.2.1 Municipal council

The municipal council is the collegial legislative body elected in democratic municipal elections for four year period (Peková, 2004:86).

It is regarded as the highest authority, subordinate to the other ones (Koudelka, 2001:57), performing the most important tasks within municipalities with independent competence, such as approving local development programme and territory plan as

a facilitator of the development activities (Binek et al., 2010a:28), budget and closing account, setting up and abolishing monetary funds, allowance organisations, organising bodies (e.g. municipal police) and legal persons, proposing changes to cadastral territories and approving changes to municipal boundaries and municipal merging, publishing generally binding regulations, electing mayor, vice-mayors and other municipal board's members, etc. (Act No. 128/2000, on Municipalities, section 84). With the exception of approving territorial development plans (Průcha & Schelle, 1995:61) and ordinances in case of no municipal board's establishment, the council is not empowered to make any other decision in municipalities with delegated powers (Koudelka, 2006:71).

A number of municipal council's members varies from 5 to 55 members, depending on number of inhabitants and municipal territory. The municipal council holds public meetings (based on rules of procedure) as necessary, at least once every three months. The council is quorate in case an absolute majority of all its members is present. Under the same conditions resolutions could be passed. From the council's members the municipal board is elected (Průcha & Schelle, 1995:61).

4.2.2 Municipal board

The Municipal Order defines the municipal board as *“the executive body of a municipality within the scope of independent competence, accountable to the municipal council for its activities.”* Within the scope of delegated competence the municipal board is not allowed to make decisions, unless stipulated by the Act, e.g. publishing ordinances.

The board of minimum 5 and maximum 11 members (always odd number), not exceeding one third of the council members, consist of mayor, vice-mayors and councillors. The board is established in case the council does reach at least 15 members, otherwise the board's powers are delegated on the mayor and the council (e.g. approving ordinances of the municipality, assigning competences to the municipal office, setting up and abolishing the office departments, etc.) (Koudelka, 2001:108). As in the case of the municipal council, *“the municipal board meets as necessary. Nevertheless its meeting are closed to the public. The municipal board has a quorum if a majority of its members is present; the approval of a majority of all members of the municipal board is required for a resolution or decision to be deemed valid”* (Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities, section 101).

The municipal board execute powers facilitating the municipal management, for instance it prepares the documents for municipal council's meetings, ensures the performance of resolutions approved by the council, ensures the financial management of the municipality according to the set budget, implements budgetary measures set by

the council, forms and winds up the commissions and executive bodies of the municipal office and so on (Peková, 2004:89).

4.2.3 Mayor and vice-mayors

The mayor as a statutory body with no independent power represents the municipality in external affairs (Peková, 2004:90) and is the most important figure managing the municipal development, dealing with the most matters of the municipality (Binek et al., 2010a:28). In his absence the vice-mayors hold his function (Peková, 2004:90). However, the vice-mayors may act on the mayor's behalf in case the mayor refuses to do so. The mayor and vice mayors are elected by the municipal council from its members.

Their performance is accountable to the municipal council. Every legal step of the mayor needs to be approved by the municipal council or board, without their approvals all taken steps are absolutely invalid and the mayor takes a risk of criminal law and civil responsibility (Koudelka, 2006:81).

The mayor assembles the municipal council; arranges, assembles and manages the municipal board's meetings and signs its adopted resolutions together with an authorized member of the board; is in charge of the audit of the financial management and appoints and dismisses the secretary of the municipal office with the approval of the office director. Unless the secretary is appointed, his function is carried out by the mayor (Peková, 2004:90).

4.2.4 Municipal office

Besides other public servants, the mayor, vice-mayors and secretary all together form the municipal office which performs the administratively organising functions in independent as well as delegated competence of the municipality. On the basis of the municipal board's or council's decision the municipal office may be divided into separate departments.

Within the independent competence of the municipality the municipal office fulfils the tasks assigned by the council or board and assists in activities of committees and commissions. In the municipalities with delegated or extended competence the municipal office is obliged to establish the secretary post that is accountable to the mayor for fulfilling the tasks appointed by the municipal council, board or mayor. Unless the secretary is established or assigned, his function is carried out by the mayor (Balík, 2009:77).

4.2.5 Special municipal bodies

Committees of the municipal council

The committees are the initiative and controlling bodies of the municipal council, fulfilling the tasks assigned by the council (Balík, 2009:78). In municipalities with independent competence the municipal council is free to decide whether none, some or all of committees of various fields will be set up, if not determined by the Act. Committees have minimally three members, never having even number of members, and meeting as necessary. For adopting a resolution the majority of all members has to be in favour (Koudelka, 2006:89).

- **Financial and controlling committee**

The municipal council is obligated to establish two committees – financial and controlling one, which cannot consist of the mayor, vice-mayor, secretary or other persons securing the budgetary and accounting duties at the municipal office (Balík, 2009:78).

The financial committee *“conducts inspections of the management of the property and financial assets of the municipality and carry out other tasks delegated to it by the municipal council”*. The controlling committee *“inspects the fulfilment of the resolutions of the municipal council and the municipal board, if established, inspects the observance of legal regulations by other committees and by the municipal office in the scope of independent competence and carries out other inspection tasks delegated to it by the municipal council”* (Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities).

Committees keep written records which contain a subject of an inspection, deficiencies and measures which should be taken into consideration to eliminate defects (Koudelka, 2006:90).

- **Committee for national minorities**

In a territorial district of the municipality where the Population and Housing Census registers at least 10 per cent of citizens considering themselves to have other than Czech nationality, the committee for national minorities must be established. The committee always consists of at least one half of national minorities' representatives (Balík, 2009:78).

- **Colony committee**

Usually in case of bigger cities and municipalities, the municipal council may set up the colony committee in populated municipal parts where the interests of that particular, little bit remote part of the municipality are not defended properly.

Any citizen having a permanent residential address in that part of the municipality where the committee is established could become a member of the colony committee (Koudelka, 2006:91).

The committee *“submits proposals relating to the development of the relevant part of the municipality and the municipality budget to the municipal council, municipal board and committees; expresses opinions on proposals submitted to the municipal council and municipal board for a decision and expresses opinion on the comments, suggestions, and incentives submitted to bodies of the municipality by citizens of the municipality with a permanent residential address in the relevant part of the municipality”* (Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities, section 121).

Commissions of the municipal board

As its initiative and advisory bodies the municipal board may establish commissions, being regarded as executive bodies in case the mayor, with the approval of the municipal office, authorised them to execute some tasks of delegated competence. To settle on a verdict the majority of all members has to agree with it. The commission is accountable to the municipal board, in tasks of delegated competence to the municipal office (Koudelka, 2001:123-124).

- **Infringement commission**

The mayor together with an approval of the regional office’s director may set up the infringement commission dealing with infringements. The chief of the commission is a person who obtained the law education or has appropriate qualification, proved by a special proficiency exam, to run the agenda. The commission fulfils the same task as the one termed as a special body, with the difference in founding and assigning members, which comes under the competence of the municipal board (Koudelka, 2001:93).

- **Commission for education and training**

The municipality are obligated to set up the commission for education and training if it founds at least five schools on its own. The commission works in the independent competence (Act No. 564/1990 Coll., on the State Administration and Self-administration in Education in Koudelka, 2001:124).

5 Municipal co-operation as a factor of development

The co-operation plays an important role in functioning of public administration and development of regions (Galvasová et al., 2007a:14).

According to Binek et al. (2010a:36) the co-operation is defined as an act of working together to achieve a specific goal. Municipalities are allowed to cooperate in many fields to obtain an optimal development, raise living conditions and quality of life in their managing areas, including a considerable contribution to problems of a town.

The reasons of the municipal co-operation are primarily of special-purpose characters solving common problems, which consist in merging of municipalities to ensure a fulfilment of all needs belonging to the municipal authority as the Act no. 128/2000 Coll., on municipalities, sets. The main reasons for municipal co-operation include (Binek et al., 2010a:36):

- common visions and goals, sharing same interests,
- organisational and economic savings,
- use of synergic effects.

Municipalities within their self-governance and spatial district, for example, create conditions for development of social care and for satisfying needs of their inhabitants, i.e. needs for housing, security and health development, transport and connections, needs for information, upbringing and education, overall cultural development and insurance of public order. If municipalities are not able to secure needs which go over their limits, for the reason of e.g. interconnection infrastructure (technical, social, economic) or realisation of joint projects, they get in touch with other entities with the aim to, for instance, sustain investments exceeding limits of one municipality, participate in joint projects developing region or microregions they are part of or to execute dispensations of delegated powers of the government etc. (Galvasová et al., 2007a:15).

However, a local level provides a plenty of possibilities to set up co-operation which does not always go smoothly. Binek et al. (2010:36) in the book of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic observes several factors which significantly influence the effectiveness of the development processes and co-operation between municipalities or subjects as follows:

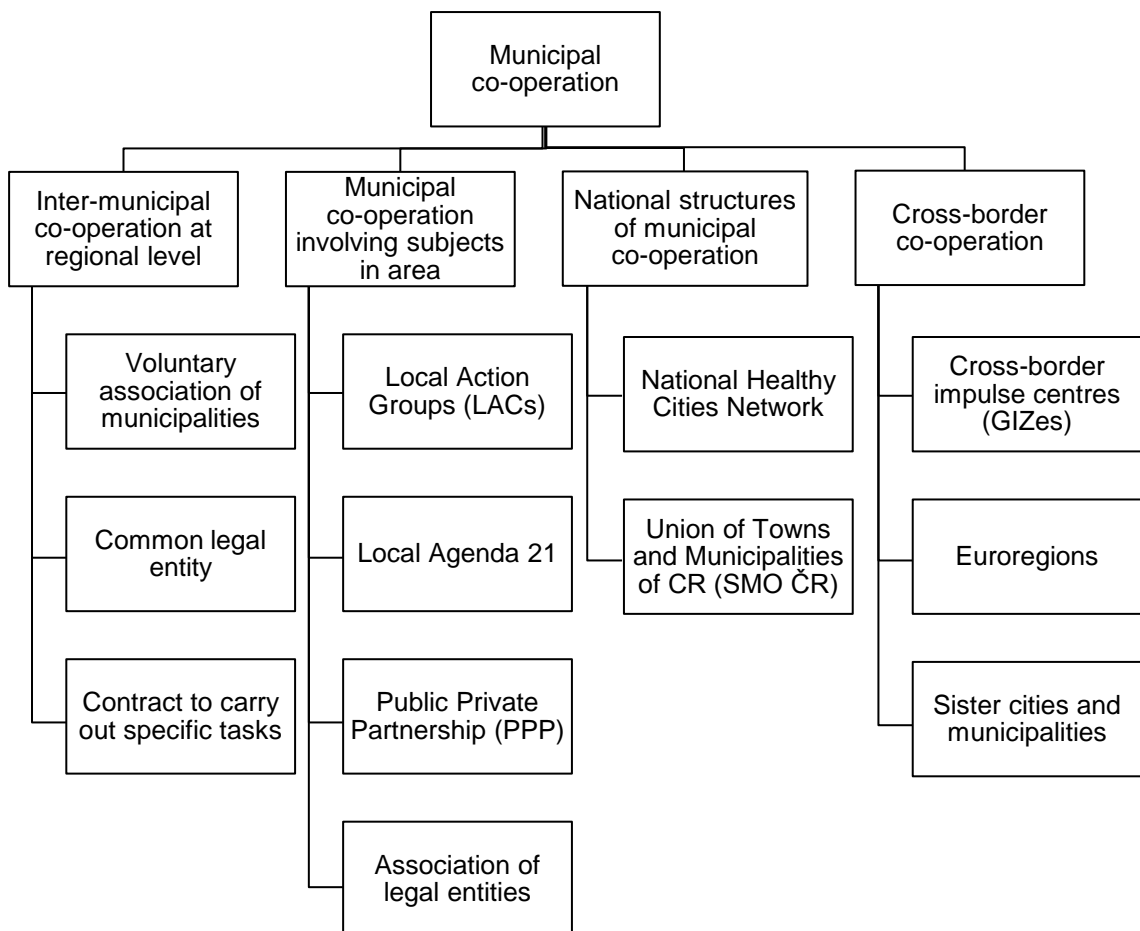
- communication,
- motivation of involved subjects (the greater motivation, the greater chance of achieving set goals),
- given weight / relevance of topic (point of view of each individual on problems differs),

- number and nature of subjects,
- relevant way of co-operation,
- willingness to cooperate,
- aim, nature and content of activities,
- way of financing activities,
- way of decision-making,
- scheduled manipulation of costs and profits.

5.1 Forms of municipal co-operation

The municipal co-operation is realised by many ways, which reflect concrete legal as well as organisational system of the co-operation, with respect to its purpose. These forms of the co-operation are distinguished from many points of view. However, the most appropriate form is seen in a combination of districts and involved subjects (Binek et al., 2010:38).

Picture 1: Division and forms of co-operation



Source: Galvasová et al., 2007a:28

5.1.1 Inter-municipal co-operation at regional level

The inter-municipal co-operation lays down foundations for other forms of co-operation. It enables municipalities to handle their problems in better way and facilitate a process of problem-solving itself. From the formal side, municipal groups may appear in different forms, whereas basic principles remain same.

Voluntary association of municipalities

The voluntary association of municipalities is one of the most widespread forms of inter-municipal co-operation in the Czech Republic, having the character of territorial self-governing unit (Binek et al., 2010a:41). The associations of municipalities, also called microregions, are usually established within one integrated area defined by natural, technical or historical boundaries and other linking elements (Svobodová et al., 2011:94), helping to decrease an administrative demandingness of municipalities having a very functional impact on municipalities of low population density (Galvasová et al., 2007a:30-31). The voluntary association of municipalities may play a crucial role in a development of rural areas. It represents an instrument of overcoming a lacking situation in personnel and qualifying security scheme of local self-government, when the some part of development activities could be ensure by a manager of a microregion, working full-time on a development of that area (Svobodová et al., 2011:94).

The associations of municipalities as legal persons may be formed only from municipalities, fulfilling the promotional and protection purposes of their common interests (the Act No 128/2000, on Municipalities, section 49). The reasons for establishing such a form of co-operation consist in procuration of activities in (the Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities, section 50, article 1 in Binek et al., 2010:41):

- **public administration**, e.g. education, health care, welfare, the arts, fire prevention, public order or animal welfare;
- **municipal visage**, e.g. to ensure cleanliness of a municipality, management of public greenery and public lighting, environmental protection etc.;
- **management of municipal properties**, e.g. management of local roads, forests, housing fund and housing stock, sports and cultural facilities and other facilities managed by municipalities;
- **tourism**, e.g. to ensure sufficient infrastructure, marketing of given territory and promotional products;
- **exploitation of natural resources**, e.g. operation of quarries, sand quarries and equipment for mining and processing mineral resources;
- **technical infrastructure**, e.g. to ensure water and gas supplies, wastewater drainage and treatment, waste management.

- **transport services**, e.g. public passenger transport within a given territory.

Common legal person

The common legal person, in a form of business company (joint-stock company, limited liability company), is established in case of building tighter bonds among municipalities accomplishing mutual goals, whose foundation as well as activities coming under the Act No. 513/1991 Coll., Commercial Code, whose provisions regulate the extent of liability of every individual form of business company. Each stakeholder (shareholder) owns a particular stake (share) representing their interest in a company and delimiting their rights and liabilities. For purposes of the Act, the stake (share) is appreciated by the rate of stakeholder (shareholder) on the net business assets of the company, which assigns to the stake (share), unless otherwise provided by law.

The common legal entity is considered to be found by a date of registration in the Commercial register. Unless it is especially designed for a fixed period, the company is established for an indefinite period and ceased by a date of removal from the Commercial Register.

This type of co-operation is very common for passenger transport companies, heating plants, residential building management, etc. (Galvasová et al., 2007a:33).

Contract to carry out specific tasks

The contract to carry out specific tasks is the second most used form of co-operation, after the voluntary association of municipalities. As well as the voluntary association of municipalities, the contract may be found only among municipalities for fixed or indefinite time period. The pursuance of specific tasks does not oblige to establish any legal entity.

The subject of the contract always deals with a performance of a specific task, within the limits of independent competence of municipalities. Generally speaking, it is very often the task of cross-border character whose mutual fulfilment may impact another one municipal or municipalities, i.e. construction of buildings for common use, collection and disposal of household waste etc. (Galvasová et al., 2007a:33).

5.1.2 Municipal co-operation involving subjects in area

Local Action Groups

First mention about Local Action Groups (LAGs) dates back to 1980s, when the European Union launched the new rural development policy (Svobodová et al., 2011:95) which “*evolved as a part of the development of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), from a policy dealing with the structural problems of the farm sector to*

a policy addressing the multiple roles of farming in society and, in particular challenges faced in its wider rural context” (European Commission, 2006:4).

Local Action Groups are “based on the principle of partnership and co-operation of public, private and NGO sectors at local level” (NN LAG Czech Republic, 2014), working on implementing area-based local development strategies, making decisions about the allocation of financial resources and their management through the bottom-up approach of Community-led Local Development (CLLD) (European Commission, 2014), boosting an internal development potential of any region (Galvasová et al., 2007a:34).

According to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic (eAgri, 2014) the roots of the first LAGs, established within the Czech territory, go back to 2002 in connection with the developing National Programme for Rural Revitalisation. Since that time, approximately 180 community-led associations have been established (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014:36).

Local Agenda 21

The Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is an international programme for institutionalising a sustainable development at local as well as regional level, evolving from the United Nations’ action plan called Agenda 21 signed at the Earth Summit held in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The key feature of the LA21 consists in the public involvement to the sustainable development planning of municipalities, cities and regions which should enhance the quality of life in the administrated area with respect of the environment.

On the basis of 21 criteria, the implementation of the programme is objectively evaluated. The evaluation interprets crucial information on how the public is involved in the process and what level the strategic sustainable development reaches within the administrative unit. Based on the results, some grants are reallocated, where the unwritten rule “the greater initiative, the greater change to succeed” could be applied. Moreover, all self-government units involved in the agenda are monitored through the official LA21’s Database which provides government departments, regions and international institutions with overall information about the quality of LA21 (Galvasová et al., 2007a:36-37).

Public-Private Partnership

The administrative bodies very often face an inability to financially provide needed public services or infrastructure to the public on their own; therefore they establish complementary relationships with the private sector (Vláčil, 2006:64). Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is other form of co-operation between private and public sector, taking advantages from both public and private sphere, which enable financing of e.g. public infrastructure, facilities and other related services (OECD, 2006:67). The

reason behind the agreement of public and private is to raise the quality as well as effectivity of public services, including the performance of public administration, and speed up the implementation of important development projects having a significant impact on the economic efficiency. All partners involved in the partnerships take only that risk which they could handle, the responsibility is divided according to the abilities of each party (Galvasová, 2007a:38).

PPP works under contract concluded between partners, natural or corporate person, franchise etc. (Vláčil in Wokoun & Mates, 2006:65).

Professional Associations of legal entities

According to the Act No. 40/1964 Coll., Civil Code as amended by later Acts the professional associations of legal entities may be founded *“for the purpose of protection of their interests or for other purpose”*.

Euroregions, LAGs, the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic or the National Healthy Cities Network could be mentioned here as concrete forms of professional associations of legal entities (Černá, 2010:16).

5.1.3 National structures of municipal co-operation

National Healthy Cities Network

National Healthy Cities Network is an international platform encouraging other cities all over the world to implement healthy cities approach following the principles of sustainable development and urban health. Generally speaking, it is an association which works on developing cities, municipalities and regions towards healthier standards of living with the assistance of inhabitants (Lafond et al., 2003:7).

The healthy cities approach was launched in 1988 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) within the WHO Healthy Cities Project. The approach was so inspiring that until 2003 over 1,300 administrative units from more than 30 European countries joined the project, including the Czech Republic since 1989. Five years later, 11 Czech active cities formed the Czech Healthy Cities Association (HCCZ), numbering more than 119 members of more than 6 million inhabitants out of 10,5 million (Národní síť Zdravých měst ČR, 2006:4).

Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic

The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO CR) is a non-governmental association of voluntary and apolitical character at national level, working as a professional association of legal entities, associating almost 2,600 municipalities and cities comprising around 76 per cent of total Czech population (Svaz měst a obcí České Republiky, 2012).

The Union aims to act in the interest and rights of its members at national and European level as well and create pleasant conditions for problems solving process (Galvasová, 2011a:40). The Union's every day activity lies in meeting their main objectives, such as

- *“to support and develop self-government democracy in public administration,*
- *to participate in drafting laws and other measures with impact on local authorities strengthening municipalities' influence in legislative area,*
- *to enhance economic autonomy of members and promote positive conditions for their development, or*
- *to enhance regional policy and support sharing of experience”.*

Moreover, the SMO CR and its members actively participate in an implementation of various international projects and supports cross-border co-operation with east and east southern European countries (Svaz měst a obcí České republiky, 2015).

5.1.4 Cross-border co-operation

Cross-border impulse centres

The European cross-border pilot project called Cross-border impulse centres (GIZ), referring to the international enterprise German Federal Enterprise for International Co-operation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH), provides cross-border regions of Lower Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary with customised solutions to complex technical and social challenges for sustainable development.

GIZ represents a supportive platform for an implementation of international projects in previously mentioned cross-border areas through which tries to activate the inhabitants for taking part in co-operation activities leading to an overall economic improvement, cultural and social life, granted with the assistance of the EU. The project actively supports small and medium-sized enterprises and brings small regional (touristic) activities to life, bringing profit to all involved subjects in the area (Galvasová, 2007a:42).

Euroregions

Euroregions, globally emerging shortly after the Second World War, are other forms of cross-border co-operation, initiated from local politicians of each border region promoting common interests (European Commission, 2012)

The interregional co-operation involves the regions with cultural and economic similarities, penetrating from one region to other ones, aiming to improve living conditions of local inhabitants. The merging of regions strives for decreasing disparities limiting further European integration, to achieve an equal economic and social development on both sides of the border (CSZO, 2012). The whole process of maintaining and developing European-wide network of cross-border regions is governed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) (AEBR, 2010).

The first functional administration units, euroregions, within the Czech territory were formed in the early 90s concerning on urban planning, improving environment as well as living conditions and infrastructure, development of tourism and cultural and interpersonal relationships.

The number of “Czech” euroregions has been slowly rising; by the end of 2004 the Czech Statistical Office (CSZO) registered 13 regions in total, out of more than 170 across the whole EU (CSZO, 2007).

Twinned towns and municipalities

The process of town twinning, developing since the beginning of the 20th century represents a unique and broad way of exchanging knowledge and experience in various scientific, technical, economic, social or cultural issues (European Commission, 2014), for instance in public administration, urban planning cultural and social co-operation and integration, exchange programmes, etc.

The twinning arrangement is opened to cities and municipalities from whatever corner of the world. Nevertheless, most of the Czech towns and municipalities prefer making links with their counterparts from other European countries, thus no wonder it is financially supported by the European Union in the form of grant activities (e.g. example conferences, seminars etc.) which go along with European objectives for integration (Galvasová, 2007a:45).

6 Rural development

Regional and local municipal development is one of the characteristic features of developed countries, pursued by their administrative units at any level through development strategies and plans following from national and regional spatial planning.

6.1 Demarcation of development

The development is a process of positive (environmental and socioeconomic) changes in many qualitative and quantitative characteristics of a specific area (Binek et al., 2009:23). The level of development depends on development factors, such as agriculture, forestry, landscape maintenance, environment, industry, and crafts, infrastructure, municipal administration, inhabitants, culture and traditions (Svobodová, 2009 in Binek et al., 2011:14) being present in the area. These factors are mutual affected with their actors and development tools (Binek et al., 2011:14). The change or development of one factor leads to change other ones.

6.2 Demarcation of rural areas

The definition of countryside itself appears in many different forms from broad, complex ones to very simple and concrete ones, taking many different indicators into account, with a national or international applicability.

The rural area is a specific, socially, economically, culturally and ecologically diverse area, including not only rural villages but also small-sized towns of central character sustaining development activities, consisting of a great number of institutions forming, developing as well managing the area with all its problems permeating through this complex system (Binek et al, 2009:7–14).

For long time, the rural areas had been regarded as regions ensuring mainly production function (Vošta, 2010:22), specific in its urban structure, architectural, social, economic, historical and size features as well as public administration (Perlín, 1999:87-104). However, years passed and the rural municipalities went through many transitional changes.

The transformation from agrarian society to industrial and post-industrial one is considered to be the greatest change in a way of living, leading to increase a spatial concentration of people, industries, services or businesses in cities. The rural areas have become a sort of residual spaces of less educated population working up to some extent in agriculture (Binek et al., 2007:13–14), facing ageing population, migration, social exclusion, lack of amenities and technical infrastructure, decreasing

job opportunities, low business diversification or poverty (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014:26–27).

6.2.1 Statistical demarcation of rural areas

Generally speaking, there are two groups of approaches to the demarcation of rural areas. The first one is more or less technical, focusing on one or two characteristic features of the area (e.g. methodology of OECD or Eurostat). The second one sees the rural area as a complex system, taking qualitative and quantitative settlement, economic, social and environmental characteristics into consideration (Binek et al., 2007:20).

The most world-wide used classification to differentiate between rural and urban regions is the one established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). OECD (2013:154) methodology defines rural areas as areas whose population density is lower than 150 inhabitants per square kilometres. On the percentage basis of people living in rural local units within a certain region three types of regions has been classified – predominantly rural regions with more than 50 % of inhabitants living in rural municipalities, intermediate regions with less than 50 % and more than 15 % of inhabitants living in rural municipalities and predominantly urban regions with less than 15 % of inhabitants living in rural local administrative units level 2 (LAU 2). A region classified as predominantly rural becomes intermediate if it includes an urban centre of more than 200 thousand people representing at least 25 % of regional population. In case that an intermediate region has an urban centre of more than 500 thousand people representing at least 25 % of regional inhabitants, the region is re-classified as predominantly urban region. When the OECD methodology is applied to the Czech territory it comes out that the whole country is considered to be rural with the only exception of the capital city of Prague (Perlín & Hupková, 2010:1). For also this reason the population density was decreased from 150 inhabitants/km² to 100 inhabitants per km² (Binek et al., 2007:20).

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, differentiate three types of regions based on population density and absolute population size - densely populated areas with at least 500 inhabitants per km² and 50 thousands inhabitants, intermediate regions of at least 100 inhabitants per km² and 50 000 inhabitants, and sparsely populated (rural) areas including other municipalities and agglomerations of municipalities which do not fulfil none of the requirements mentioned above (Binek et al., 2007:21).

The Czech legislation, the Act No. 248/2000 Coll., on Support to Regional development, defines four types of regions – structurally affected, economically weak, rural and other regions, where rural regions are regarded as *“regions with low population density, decline number of inhabitants and higher share of employment in*

agriculture, defined mainly by indicators characterising development of population, structure of its jobs and share of population in villages”.

According to the Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipalities, rural municipalities are those municipalities whose number of inhabitants stays below 3 000. As soon as the population of the municipality gets to 3 000 inhabitants, it is assigned the status of a city. Under this criterion, 80 per cent of the Czech Republic is formed by rural municipalities. However, they are populated only from 30 per cent (Perlín & Hupková, 2010:1).

In the Czech scientific literature, there is very often stated that any municipality with less than 2 000 inhabitants is considered rural (Svobodová, 2009:19). According to this criterion the Czech Republic has got 89,09 % of rural municipalities (see Fig. 2).

All these definitions have one thing in common. They are very general and do not demarcate rural areas exactly. Moreover, characteristic features of rural towns mingle with those of urban towns and vice versa. Therefore it is necessary to use other differencing tools, such as town planning structure, architectonic, socioeconomic, historical, administrative and statistical characteristics (Perlín in Malý & Viktoriová, 1999).

6.3 Development tools

In order to achieve a territorial (regional) development local self-governments have to pay a crucial attention to the appropriate use of development tools.

In association with rural policy as a complex developmental concept of synergic local development, Binek et al. (2009:60–61) developed a modified classification of conventional development tools of Wokoun and Mates³ as follows:

- administrative tools (legislation, methods, procedures, organisational norms),
- conceptual tools (strategies, programmes, plans, political declarations, spatial planning documents, land consolidation),
- institutional tools (institutions, co-operation, regional management),
- substantive tools (infrastructure, provision of space, services, material fulfilment, consultancy),
- socio-psychological tools (education, communication, motivation),
- financial tools (financial support systems, subsidies, grants).

³ Wokoun, R. & Mates, P. (2006) *Management regionální politiky a reforma veřejné správy*. Praha: Linde, p. 106–107. ISBN 978-807-2016-082.

From the tools mentioned above we could point out the conceptual tools which provide a strategic framework for an application of other tools and to which is aimed a main attention while developing an area (Binek et al., 2010:12).

In general, we distinguish three following strategic (conceptual) documents:

- **Strategy** – conceptual document of long-term, setting up a general direction (goals) of development in different spheres which we are going to achieve.
- **Programme** – medium-term conceptual document based on a strategy, setting up steps (measures) which need to be taken in order to achieve set goals.
- **Plan** – short-term document of elaborated steps (measures) in detail, setting up concrete activities and projects in time together with budget which enable to fulfil goals of a strategy (Galvasová et al., 2007a:75).

On the basis of strategies, municipalities could identify problems and find appropriate solutions for them, formulate developmental proposals and in general to harmonise the development process in their administrative unit.

Even though strategic documents are regarded as basic developmental instruments, experience shows that their ownership is more common for bigger municipalities while smaller ones have to push their development plans through associations of municipalities within collective strategic documents (Binek et al., 2010:14).

For understanding basic principles of functioning of the European Union the knowledge of basic conceptual documents of rural development is very important because any financial aids (subsidies) arise from these works. A general framework for any conceptual document of the rural development at national level is provided in the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the European Union which lays the cornerstone for functioning of agriculture, landscape maintenance and for support of rural areas (Binek et al., 2009:64).

6.4 Rural development policy of the Czech Republic in context of European Union

In the 1990s competency and responsibility enhancements of territorial administration units, empowerment of officials' decision making at regional, national and supranational level as well as the application of new measures (in context of public administration democratisation and decentralisation) and strong aspiration to get involved into European integration processes have brought new ways in approaching

tightly linked and slightly different local (rural) and regional development (Kadeřábková & Khendriche Trhlínová, 2008:13).

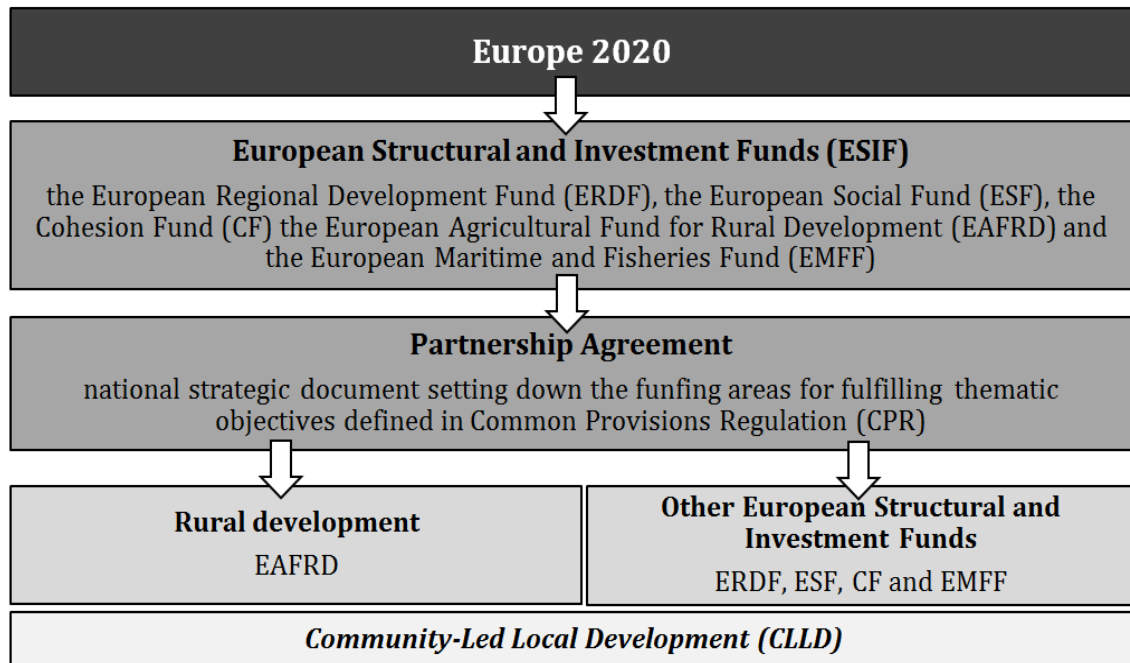
The rural development policy of the Czech Republic, as known today, has been developed as a result of its entrance to the European Union in May 2004 and link-up with the European Union's rural development policy evolving from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (European Commission, 2012:4) in the form of its second pillar helping the rural areas to meet the wide range of economic, environmental and social challenges and opportunities (European Commission, 2014).

The Czech rural development is covered in the Rural Development Programme of the Czech Republic, preceded from the National Strategic Plan of Rural Development. The Programme of the 2014–2020 programming period was prepared in accordance with the EAFRD Regulation⁴ and its related implementing regulations, and the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)⁵ (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014:10). On their basis, the national fundamental strategic document – Partnership Agreement, setting down the main funding areas and priorities of the country across the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), has been adopted. This Partnership Contract should assure the optimal use of the funds, delivering complementary and synergic effects (eAGRI, 2014), and fulfil the objectives of the EU's smart, sustainable and inclusive growth strategy Europe 2020 through the Common Strategic Framework (CSF), the programming tool for all structural funds which should help in setting clear investment priorities for the next financial planning period (European Commission, 2014) and thus to “*increase coherence between policy commitments made in the context of the Strategy and investment on the ground*” (European Commission, 2012:3).

⁴ Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.

⁵ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006.

Picture 2: Strategy Europe 2020



Source: Společný strategický rámec. *eAGRI: Dotace* [online]. © 2009-2014 [cit. 2014-11-23]. Available from: <http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/dotace/program-rozvoje-venkova-na-obdobi-2014/spolecny-strategicky-ramec>

The Rural Development Programme of the Czech Republic of around EUR 3,042 billion (eAGRI, 2014) accomplishes the key objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy through (European Commission, 2014) six common EU priorities:

- 1) *“fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas;*
- 2) *enhancing the viability and competitiveness of all kind of agriculture, and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable forest management;*
- 3) *promoting food chain organisation, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture;*
- 4) *restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry;*
- 5) *promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors; and*
- 6) *promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas”* (European Commission, 2014).

One of the most important, well proven and increasingly popular tools of Rural Development Policy is represented by the area-based and bottom-up approach LEADER which creates links between the rural economy and development actions for over 20 years (ENRD, 2012:2). From 2014 to 2020 the LEADER approach is referred to as Community-led Local Development (CLLD), a multi-funded approach from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) (European Commission, 2014).

CLLD is expected to facilitate implementing integrated approaches among the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) concerned to achieve at local level 11 thematic objectives of the Common Provisions Regulation (European Commission, 2013). This multi-funded approach enables better taking of multi-sectoral needs into account and fulfil its potential to comprehensively integrate local needs and solutions into Local Development Strategies (LDS) (European Commission, 2014) drawn up by the Local Action Groups (LAGs).

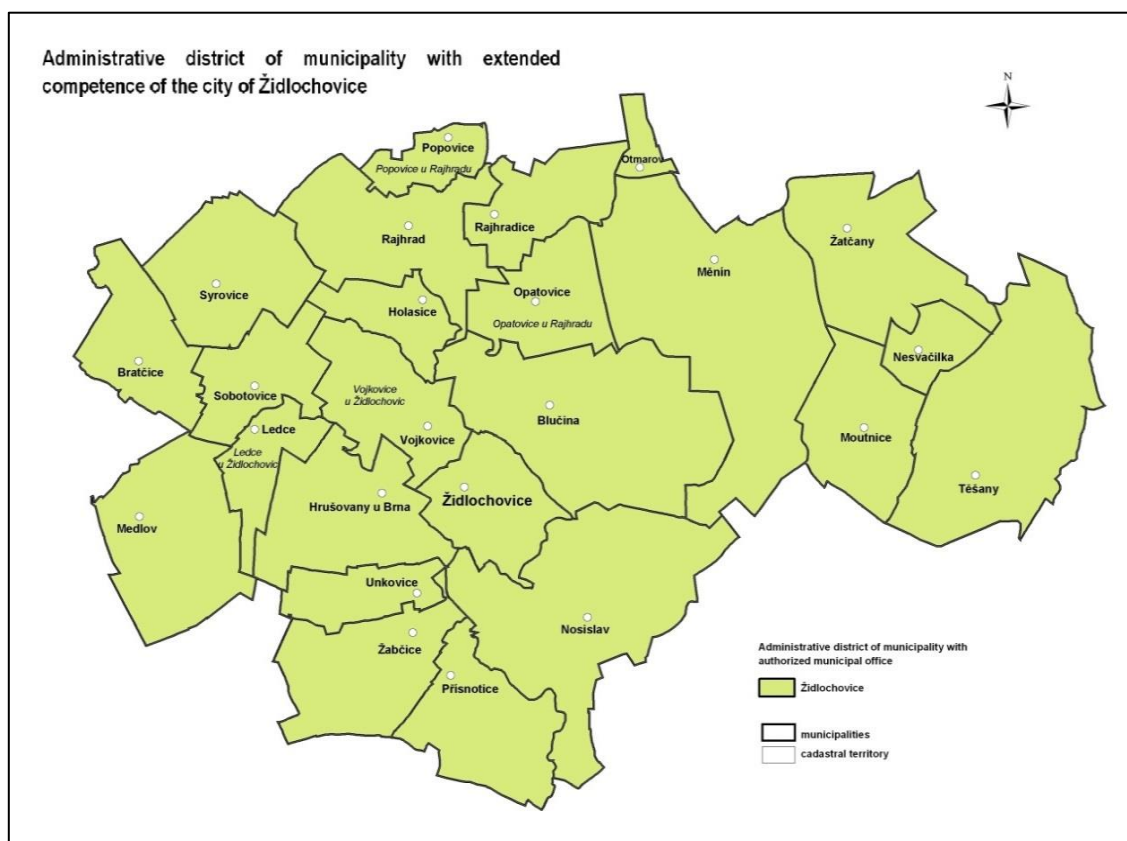
As a result of socioeconomic transitions, in the context of the EU integration process, and continuing globalisation of the world economy few trends are expected to come true, such as selectively differential process of cities' and municipalities' development as a consequence of a strict competitive environment of new investments on the market, greater importance to the location of settlements along development (Wokoun et al., 2008:379) facilitating a spread of a socioeconomic growth from a growth pole to other areas (Wokoun et al., 2008:388), greater support to voluntary co-operation among settlements and know-how transfer leading to boost larger integration and organisation of settlement structure and strengthen its functionality, greater emphasis on the environment, etc. (Wokoun et al., 2008:379).

7 Inter-municipal co-operation in municipality with extended powers of Židlochovice

The municipality with extended powers (MEP) of Židlochovice is located in one of the South Moravian Region's districts called Brno-venkov, which means the countryside of the city of Brno.

The administrative district of MEP Židlochovice contains 24 rural municipalities: Blučina, Bratčice, Holasice, Hrušovany u Brna, Ledce, Medlov, Měnín, Moutnice, Nesvačilka, Nosislav, Opatovice, Otmarov, Popovice, Přisnotice, Rajhrad, Rajhradice, Sobotovice, Syrovice, Těšany, Unkovice, Vojkovice, Žabčice, Žatčany and Židlochovice (Město Židlochovice, 2011).

Picture 3: Administrative district of MEP Židlochovice



Source: ORP Židlochovice, CZSO, 20. 11. 2014 (date of quotation 3. 12. 2014)

As well as other 185 municipalities with extended competence (Obce Sobě, 2015), MEP Židlochovice has taken part in the national project Obce Sobě⁶, officially called as *System support for development of inter-municipal co-operation in the Czech Republic within the administrative districts of municipalities with extended competence*, which works on the basis of bottom-up approach and leads to improve the quality of the public administration in accordance with local needs of individual administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers in more than a two-year period, from 1st May 2013 to 30th June 2015.

The Project is initiated by the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO CR) with the assistance of the Czech national Operational Programme Human Resources and Employment (OP HRE) of the programming period 2007 and 2013 which covers expenditures (i.e. labour costs of project teams and motivating mayors) of the Project of 596 990 254 CZK.

In general, the project Obce Sobě aims at creating suitable conditions (administrative and professional base) for long-term development of voluntary inter-municipal co-operation within the Czech territory and providing organisation, legal as well as financial support to municipalities with extended competence in order to be able to carry out the Project in their administrative districts. Moreover, the Project of inter-municipal co-operation strives to eliminate the mistrust of municipalities towards a mutual inter-municipal co-operation which has been carrying over for several years.

The main goals of the Project are:

- 1) to provide necessary organisational and technical capacities for the development of inter-municipal co-operation in administrative districts of MEP (especially in agendas of their independent competence),
- 2) to map these districts in terms of municipal problems which municipalities have been facing in selected areas (agendas) carried out in their independent competence,
- 3) to draw up strategies providing municipalities within their administrative districts with solutions to their mutual problems,
- 4) to set up effective communication mechanisms in order to ensure collaboration among municipalities and coordination of agendas in their independent competence,
- 5) to strengthen the belief in positive effects of inter-municipal co-operation in development of local areas through the exchange of experience (also from abroad) of successful stories of inter-municipal co-operation

⁶ freely translated to English as Municipalities themselves or Municipality to Municipality

- 6) to prepare and adjust the Czech legal environment and conditions for institutionalisation of inter-municipal co-operation (ESF, 2013).

In four selected areas⁷ (pre-school and primary education, social services, waste management and another one individually chosen area by each municipality of the III. level⁸) the project will try to prove that an inter-municipal co-operation established among municipalities brings long-term benefits for all participants in economic terms (i.e. savings resulting from joint projects, purchases, etc.), in terms of improving the quality of public administration (e.g. joint administration of public tenders, joint administration of collection of local charges, provision of professional platform of legal services or accountancy), and in terms of improving the quality of public services in, for example, tourism, primary education or social services). However, it is important to point out that the evidence whether the inter-municipal co-operation brings benefits to its participant will be given only theoretically on papers. Factual results of the Project will be seen after its implementation (after the implementation of strategies) in interval of few years. But unfortunately the implementation of strategies is not included in the Project and municipalities will need to manage enough resources to accomplish their goals set in strategies.

For almost two years, small project teams with the support of so-called motivating mayors and methodological assistance of the Union have been analysing topics for establishing inter-municipal co-operation in all four areas, elaborating on developmental strategies and action plans for each specific administrative territory of municipalities with extended competence involved in the Project. These documents drawn up within the Project will provide municipal representatives with collective solutions to various problems they have been facing in selected areas. Therefore, it provides local authorities with a great opportunity to deal with problems on their own, with no interferences of state government (SMO CR, 2013).

7.1 Research on inter-municipal co-operation in MEP Židlochovice

The following sub-heading provides with results of the research, evaluating the project of inter-municipal co-operation Obce Sobě implemented across the Czech Republic, focused on a selected municipality with extended competence of the city of Židlochovice. To be able to do such a research work it was necessary to collect opinions on co-operation process (in connection with the Project) within the

⁷ Mainly based on the legal provision of basic services by self-governments as defined in the Act on Municipalities.

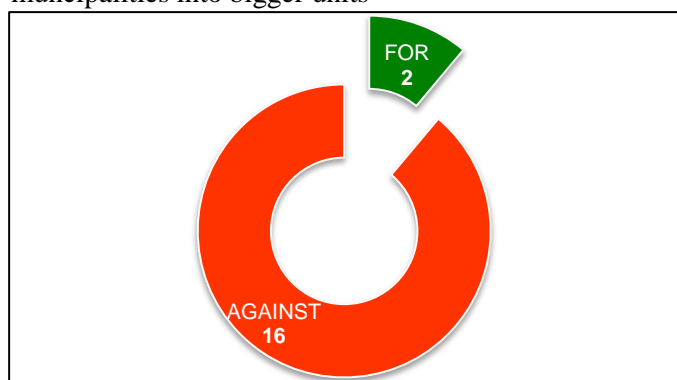
⁸ MEP Židlochovice has chosen the area of the pro-family policy in order to also handle the process of suburbanization.

MEP of Židlochovice from municipal representatives who committed to participate and other white-collars, especially members of a project team, involved in the Project. The data was gathered via semi-standardised interviews with municipal mayors and vice mayors, representing individual self-governmental municipalities, and via unstandardized interview with a project co-ordinator Lucie Kubalíková, who provided invaluable information – results of quantitative research in form of questionnaires returned from all 24 municipalities 5 voluntary associations of municipalities – regarding the Project and its process of implementing in the MEP. The interviews with local authorities took place in 18 out of 24 municipalities (Blučina, Holasice, Ledce, Medlov, Měnin, Moutnice, Nesvačilka, Nosislav, Otmarov, Popovice, Přisnotice, Rajhradice, Sobotovice, Syrovice, Unkovice, Vojkovice, Žatčany and Židlochovice) during the month of November of 2014. The rest of 6 local representatives from Bratčice, Hrušovany u Brna, Opatovice, Rajhrad, Těšany, Žabčice, who were addressed via emails and phone calls, were not willing to meet for the reason of lack of interest in the Project and inter-municipal co-operation itself or lack of information or time. However, one of the two representatives from those municipalities (Bratčice, Hrušovany u Brna) which did not want to arrange a meeting answered some of the questions via phone conversations and another one mayor of Moutnice gave also his point of view on co-operation activities among municipalities for Těšany where he was a mayor in the previous electoral period finishing in October 2014.

7.1.1 Co-operation process in MEP Židlochovice up to date

At the beginning of the interview a question regarding the fragmented settlement structure was posed. All mayors regard the Czech fragmented settlement structure and its administrative division as parts of the country’s history, that are very difficult to change and that are not needed to be changed. In fact, they consider self-governance of each municipality is hugely important and advantageous because it provides municipalities with self-governance within their administrative territory. Nonetheless, two mayors out of 18 expressed their opinion in favour of merging very small municipalities (under 100-200 inhabitants) into greater units in order to save money and execute agendas more effectively under the management of more professional staff.

Figure 3: Local representatives’ opinion on merging municipalities into bigger units



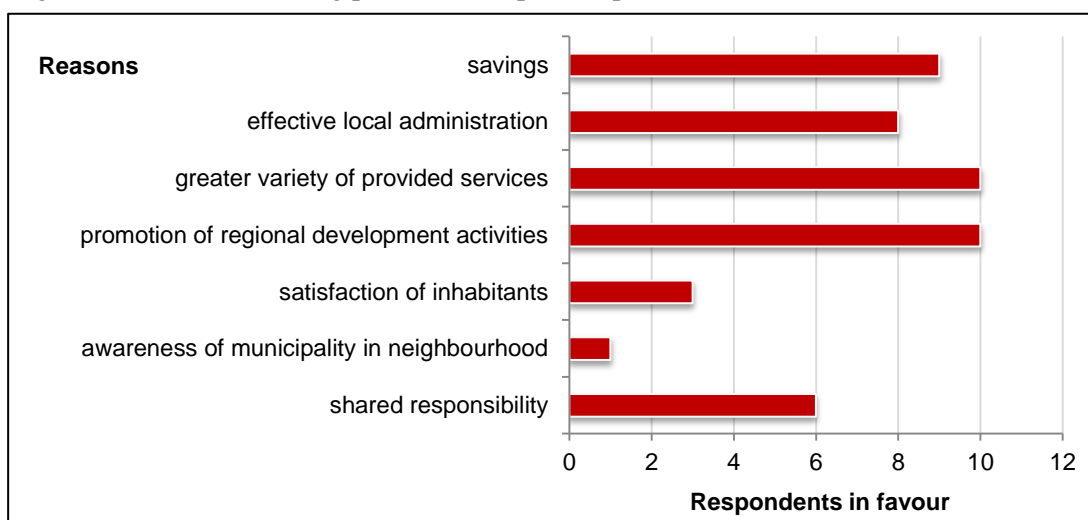
Source: personal interviews with local representatives

According to the municipal mayor of Unkovice, not only mayors but also inhabitants stand for mergers of municipal wholes. His statement is based on a public opinion survey which took place in Unkovice and Žabčice approx. 8 years ago. The survey of 99% return showed that more than a half (52 %) of all addressed households (around 600 households) expressed their opinion in favour of merging these two municipalities into one administrative unit. Unfortunately, municipalities have never merged due to an unrealized referendum for a low number of electoral supporters in municipal elections. This example of peoples' behaviour points out present-day trends of changing attitudes of inhabitants towards places they dwell. People do not want to participate in local activities, be in touch with their neighbours, be involved in decision-making or take even small responsibility for the place of living. That strong bond between place and its locals, creating a family type environment, has been slowly vanishing from the country. If the current trends will continue in such a way, there could be a situation that nobody from the village will run for municipal elections and the place of a mayor will be assigned to a village administrator, who could decide about the future of these two municipalities and merger them into one unit. In spite of advocating the idea of merging, the mayors do support co-operation activities and are willing to participate in co-operation as the rest of respondents with the exception of the mayor of Moutnice, who is very sceptical about a co-operation, especially about inter-municipal co-operations established among municipalities – there are several projects, “artificially” set up LAGs for purpose to make money, etc. which do not work towards their aims for money of participants. In addition, the conditions of receiving subsidies have been changing and those co-operations which were established under previous conditions need to be dissolved and the process of finding joint solutions begins again and again. All these facts logically influence municipalities' attitudes towards collaboration and result in antipathy and scepticism. The only co-operation which he considers suitable and practical is the co-operation based on a procurement of public services and agendas of delegated competence concluded in public-law agreements.

He added that municipalities to the east of the municipality of Židlochovice, including Měnin, Žatčany, Nesvačilka, Moutnice and Těšany, are border municipalities with the catchment area of Brno city instead of Židlochovice. Nevertheless for some (historical) reasons, they do belong to the administrative territory of MEP Židlochovice. Moreover, these municipalities do not regard Židlochovice town as their catchment area and advocate that even Židlochovice does not considered them to be equivalent parts of the administrative district of MEP Židlochovice. His statement was also confirmed by some mayors of surroundings municipalities, who stated that these border municipalities seemed to be rather excluded from the MEP than included in this nodal region with its centre in the city of Židlochovice. Also for this reason these municipalities are not members of the same LAGs, such as Podbrněnsko.

Based on respondents' answers, there are several reasons for taking part in co-operation activities. According to their responses, the most important reasons for participating are attached to things/activities which somehow improve a quality of life in municipalities, providing inhabitants with a greater variety of public services, promoting regional development activities, helping municipalities to get grants and other financial supports and which bring savings by reason of shared services (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). Municipalities maintain a position that joint forces provide with a greater ability to turn things to their advantages, especially as for negotiations with government and individual ministries or companies arranging services for them.

Figure 4: Reasons for taking part in municipal co-operation



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

Furthermore, working on same projects or being involved in co-operation activities provide participants with a room to share experience, ideas, opinions or information which give mayors new fresh ideas/view on how to handle certain problems or specific situations in more appropriate way and therefore to increase an effectiveness of local administration and provided services. In addition, it provides the platform to strengthen and further develop relationships among each other.

On a question regarding barriers obstructing co-operation activities the respondents' opinions concurred. Besides some little miscommunication, unwillingness to stay/keep in touch and maintain good relations among municipalities or participate in meetings, an agreement on a lack of financial resources was reached. Representatives also agreed that in absence of participants decisions cannot be made and the process of decision-making or getting things done is dragged out for no reason. The reasons for communication problems or twisted relationships might consist in misconception

of co-operation activities or different ideas of it. This proposition is supported by the statement of Mr. Jan Vitula, a mayor of Židlochovice municipality and one of the motivating mayors⁹ of the Project within the MEP, who said that *“in the majority of cases representatives do not know what to imagine under a concept of inter-municipal co-operation as such”* and that’s why they disseminate false information. This statement also shed light on situation when a mayor, a participant of the project Obce Sobě responds to a question regarding his participation in the Project by an answer that he does not take part in it, in spite of the fact that he was physically present in meetings concerning the project Obce Sobě. Mr. Vitula also added that there are so many projects of inter-municipal co-operation (e.g. cycle tracks, co-operations in tourism, utility co-operatives (common water supply system, wastewater treatment plant, sewerage, common waste management network etc.) going on at the same time that mayors lose track.

Besides factual obstacles already stated, there were also expressed opinions on the present-day legal order, determining scopes of activities executed by basic territorial entities in their delegated force. According to respondents, local self-governments are overburden with loads of delegated agendas/duties from upper administrative units that are continuously increasing¹⁰ and requiring a lot of paperwork, qualified labour with appropriate education in order to be able to cope with such agendas and time which is never enough and which is then missing for performing essential tasks securing a municipal everyday run. In case of unreleased representatives, who do a municipal administration in their free time, it very often presents an unimaginable encumbrance that goes beyond their abilities. From local authorities’ point of views, these steps of delegating powers to lower administrative units are considered totally unreasonable, with no understanding at all. In municipalities there is a widespread belief that no more competences should be delegated. In fact, they should be even taken back. After all, it seems that the country government does not support local representatives enough and rather trying to trip them up (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Despite difficulties, hindering from negotiations/meetings, a co-operation among neighbouring municipalities is evaluated as very good (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

In addition to the topic, local representatives would appreciate if the municipal office of MEP, having seat in Židlochovice, could point out and provide all

⁹ another motivating mayor is Pavel Frölich, the mayor of Nosislav municipality

¹⁰ For example, from 1st January 2015 each municipality of MEP Židlochovice will execute agendas of the department of social affairs in their own competence or could conclude a public-law agreement with MEP Židlochovice to do it for them for some amount of money set in a contract, even though the office have done it until now for free.

From respondents answers it is clear that these types of co-operations are working well in every areas of their implementation, for instance, systematic and overall development of the region of Židlochovice (Region of Židlochovicko), water supply and sewerage networks (Voluntary association of Water supply and Sewerage networks of Židlochovicko), regional development (Region of Cezava), cross-border co-operation supporting tourism and regional development via cycle track from Brno to Vienna (Voluntary association of Cycle track Brno – Vienna), environment protection, development of transport infrastructure and civic amenities, development of tourism and cycle tourism (Microregion of Rajhradsko) (RIS, 2014), etc.

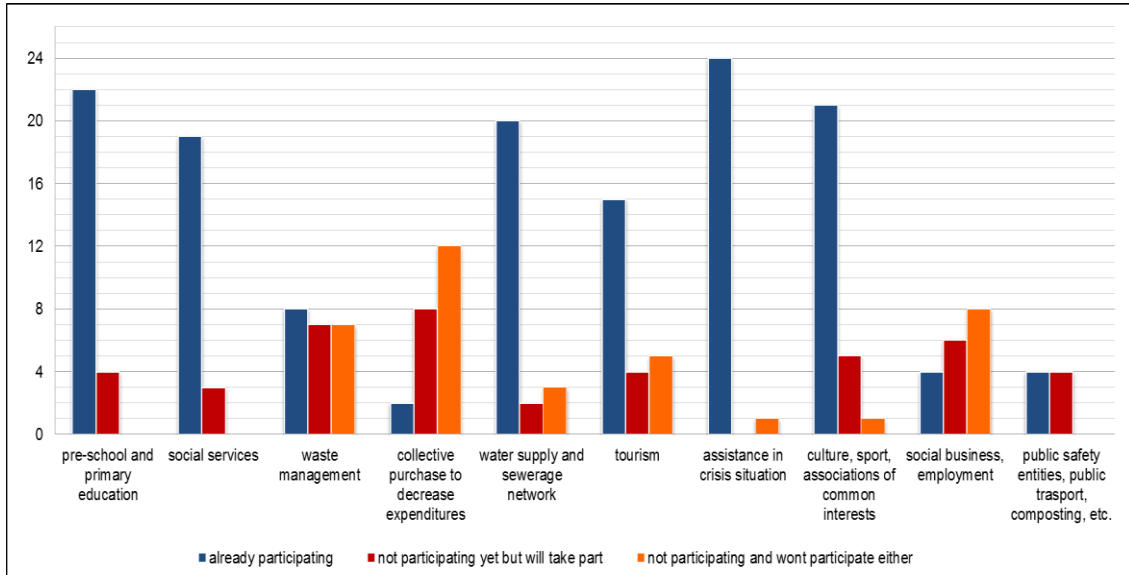
In addition to well working co-operation activities among municipalities, the questionnaire provided by the project co-ordinator Ms. Kubalíková showed other successful stories of co-operation activities realised within education, assistance in crisis situations (e.g. volunteer firefighters), culture and sport events or social services. Besides, most of the activities running in municipalities cater for the needs of the elderly, families with children and youth. On the contrary, handicapped persons, socially excluded persons or persons heading towards social exclusion and graduates are the least supported groups of people in municipalities. As for the graduates, it might be caused by the fact that they realize their potentials in bigger cities that is reflected in a lower demand for work.

In reference to the education, local representatives do not have any other choice to make than to co-operate with neighbouring municipalities in order to provide children with a primary compulsory school attendance. Most of the municipalities have small schools providing pupils with education up to the fifth or sixth year of the primary education. Then pupils commute to schools around to finish their basic education ending with the 9th year at age of 15-16. So, no wonder that the co-operation in pre-school and primary education involves 22 municipalities (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). Despite the fact that almost all municipalities co-operate in the provision of primary education, mayors who cannot provide children with full primary education do not like this situation too much. In their opinions, schools are the institutions which bring life into cities and which should be naturally in every municipality for the reason that education is one of the basic services which should be provided to inhabitants in their place of living. That's why they do not want to give up and keep the primary education in their own municipality as long as possible even they do not have enough pupils in classes and money to run the place.

Other areas of co-operation activities, currently running in MEP Židlochovice, and municipals' attitudes towards them are presented in a table below. The table shows number of municipalities being involved in different areas of co-operation, number of municipalities which are not participating yet in particular areas but would

like to take part and finally municipalities which do not co-operate in co-operation activities and neither want to co-operate in the future.

Figure 5: Current participation of municipalities and their willingness for further participation in areas of co-operation



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

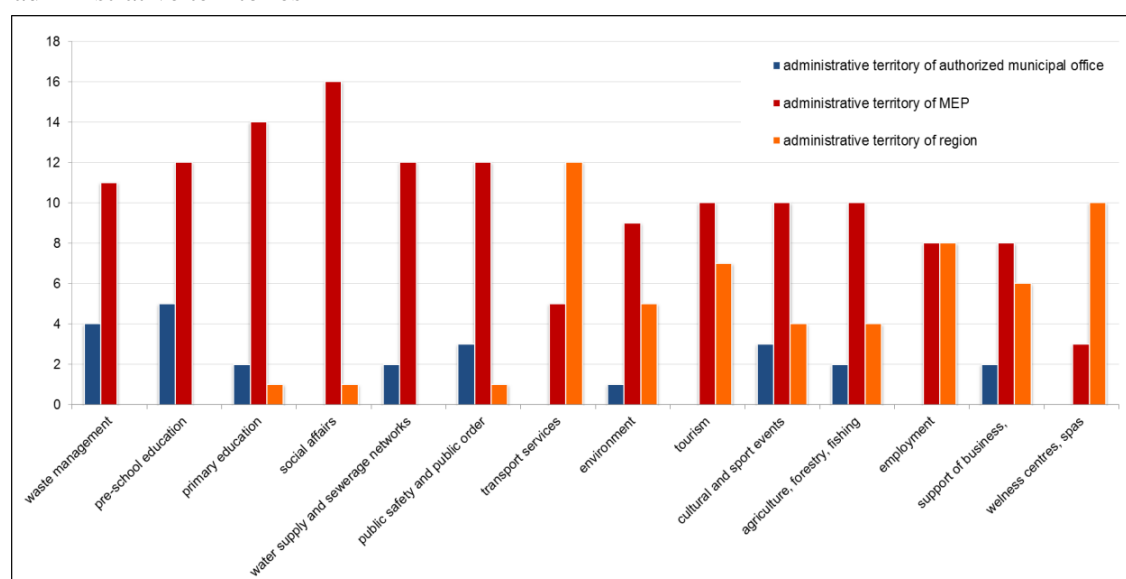
Each area of the table above was also evaluated by every municipal representatives on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 means absolutely necessary and 5 absolutely inappropriate. The co-operations which were evaluated by mayors as the most appropriate and useful are the co-operations in education of average value 1,48 and assistance in crisis situation averaging value of 1,5. On the contrary, the most inappropriate area in which a co-operation could be established is the co-operation in waste management whose value averaged 2,76 (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). Waste management is already secured in all municipalities and mayors do not have need for changing it.

In case of being involved in any new co-operation among municipalities, the representatives would most likely use the already tried and tested forms of co-operation, i.e. networks of micro-regions, informal forms of co-operation or co-operations based on contracts to carry out specific tasks or public-law agreements with other municipalities (e.g. fire brigade, town and municipal police, infringement commission). Other possibility is given to the currently running Project of inter-municipal co-operation Obce Sobě which is welcomed by a majority (18 votes out of 29) of all municipalities and representatives of voluntary associations of municipalities. The number of persons in favour of the Project could rise by another 9 votes in case that

more information is provided (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). Conversely, in the bottom of the bag they would establish a co-operation through setting up legal entities dealing with social services, education, waste management, water conduit, sewerage, etc. (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

As for the territorial applicability, most of the representatives supposed that a municipality with the extended competence is the most appropriate territory for establishing co-operation relations in almost every area, especially in those which have been chosen within the Project. On the contrary, for instance, transport services or health resorts should be unambiguously solved within the administrative territory of the South Moravian region (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). The opinion regarding transport services might be based on the already existing linkage between the local and regional public transport via the South Moravian Integrated Public Transport System (IDS JMK) which works well.

Figure 6: Representatives' opinion on applicability of co-operation within different administrative territories



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

7.1.2 Co-operation established within the Project *Obce Sobě*

On the basis of respondents' answers to queries concerning problems they have been facing in their municipalities in pre-school and primary education, social services and waste management, some goals to be accomplished within the Project have been set up. Moreover, for problems which do not fall into these three mentioned areas will be

allocated a new area of implementation, i.e. pro-family policy, which will have its own goals and solutions to problems. The goals laid down in each area will become a part of an action plan, drawn up at the end of negotiations with local authorities being involved in the Project.

Personal interviews held with local representatives did not bring almost any information about current problems in municipalities, except for problems closely related to the process of suburbanization arising out of the region location which fulfils the function of the suburban area of the city of Brno, such as problems with money scarcity in every single area of the project implementation, problems with youngsters and their wandering on streets and use of addictive substances, problems with a lack of places in kindergartens as a result of demographic structure (more and more, especially, young families have been moving in to rural villages to live more “healthy” life surrounded by nature) and baby boom of past few years or lack of pupils in primary schools although the survey led by the project co-ordinator revealed much detailed information on all areas mentioned above, which are, of course, included in the following paragraphs.

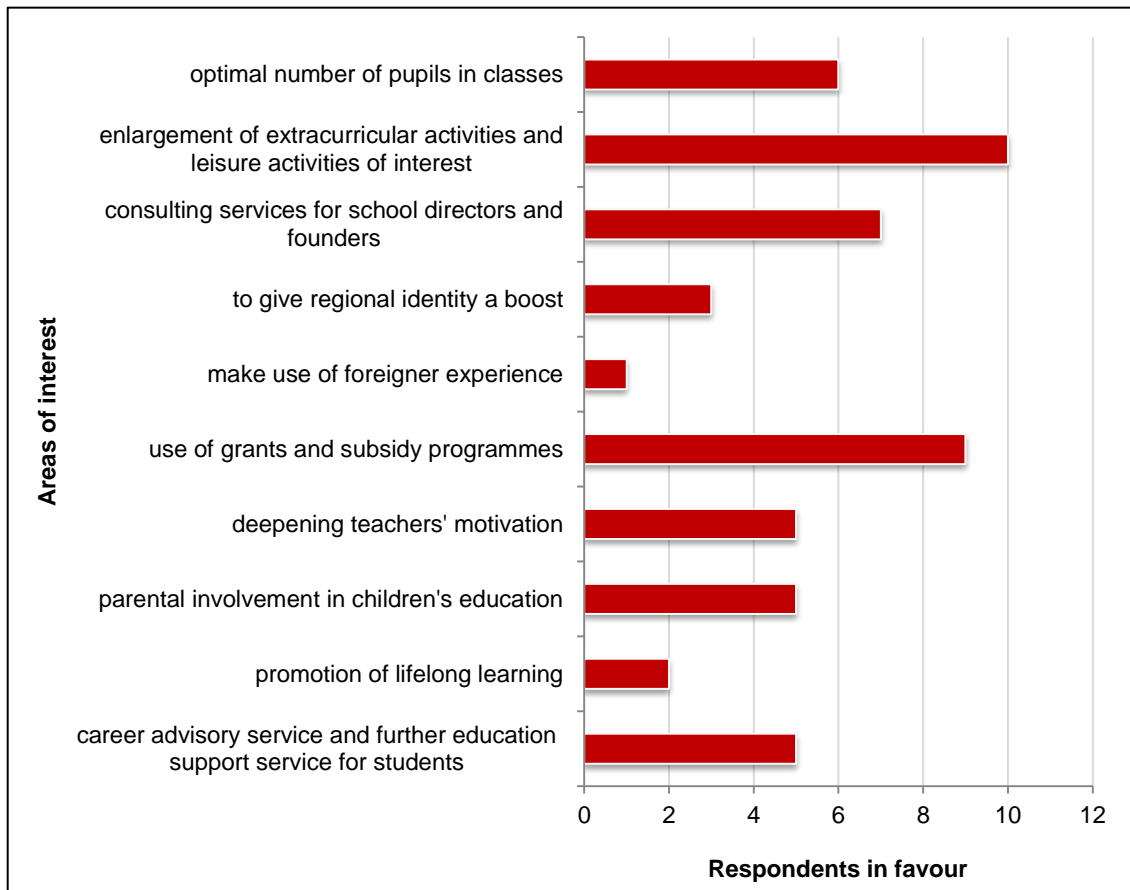
- **Pre-school and primary education**

As for education, besides some problems already being mentioned in the previous paragraph, i.e. lack of money for operation of schools, staff salaries or investments and overcrowded nursery schools, the questionnaire showed that administrative and institutional buildings decay and pose possible threats for their users and inhabitants. For also these reasons some of the respondents said no to the project of inter-municipal co-operation *Obce Sobě*. They, first of all, prefer to have all institutional buildings (e.g. schools), roads and pavements repaired and then to take part in a co-operation which involves spendings. So, at this point they see the Project as a reckless waste of money. However, participants of the Project have found common ground and set up following goals, based on their suggestions (see Figure 7), which are going to be included in the official action plan:

- a) to set up special joint classes for pupils with special educational needs to be able to provide them with appropriate education addressing their individual differences,
- b) to arrange informative meetings for parents of children with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADD, ADHD, etc. and the public to deepen awareness and knowledge about these problems,
- c) to provide directors and founders of schools with joint legal services, including a consultancy with a lawyer to handle specific situations well or room for sharing experience,

- d) to provide directors of schools with opportunities to hold informal meetings for sharing ideas, problems and solutions to problems,
- e) to introduce new modern teaching methods into schools,
- f) to work on joint projects in order to receive government or European grants (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Figure 7: Mayors' interest in establishing inter-municipal co-operation across different areas of interest within education



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

The respondents would also like to enlarge extracurricular activities and leisure activities of interests for pupils that they could fully spend their free time (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). But at this moment, these proposals haven't been included in the factual action plan yet.

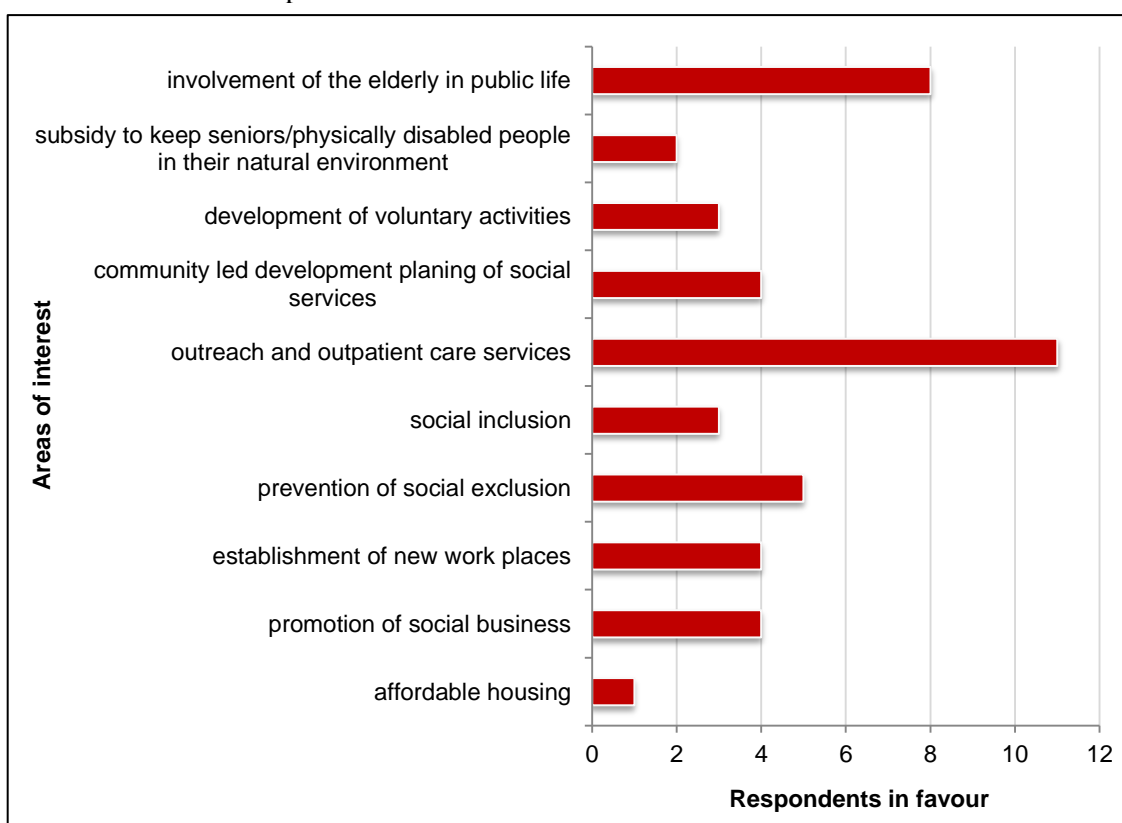
- **Social services**

The greatest problems in social services refer to the elderly and a poor provision of services for them - insufficient number of care and attention homes and day

care centres (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). As it was previously mentioned in the theoretical part, the Czech Republic as other developed countries around the world has been facing constantly increasing ageing population. Moreover, family environment has been changing as well and traditions of keeping parents and grandparents under one roof have been slowly disappearing from Western countries. Therefore, a need for these types of accommodation will be demanded in the future if trends remain the same. In contrast, in very small amount homelessness, social exclusion, lack of social care prevention services or home care services are being witnessed. Nevertheless, some demand for affordable housing is required in municipalities (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

According to respondents there are 10 themes in total which could be taking into account when drawing up the action plan. Their concrete wording and authorities' support is shown in the figure below.

Figure 8: Mayors' interest in establishing inter-municipal co-operation across different areas of interest within public service



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

On the basis of agreements received from local representatives, the project management has set up certain goals to be fulfilled within the project Obce Sobě as follows:

- a) to establish day care centres for the elderly,
- b) to provide inhabitants with social housing,
- c) to promote social entrepreneurship,
- d) to involve all municipalities of MEP Židlochovice in community-led development planning regarding social services and
- e) to coordinate voluntary work (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Other themes for establishing co-operation within the Project proposed during meetings, covering topics of social entrepreneurship addressed to inhabitants with physical disabilities, dealing with services making their mobility in towns more accessible and with protected job opportunities, haven't been supported enough and negotiations are still going on (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Getting back to some goals included in the action plan, although mayors have declared their opinions for provision of day care centres for seniors and social housing, none of them really wants to provide land for implementing such ideas. Having these types of services in a municipality means to look after and take almost full responsibility for another time and money consuming agenda requiring additional personnel capacities. And moreover, nobody knows what will happen during next municipal elections and who will serve in particular offices. In other words, things agreed/contracted (e.g. how much money involved municipalities will pay for services provided to their inhabitants, etc.) during the reign of current local authorities could be in contrast to opinions of future authorities and could pose a potential conflict area.

- **Waste management**

In the area of waste management, municipalities most often face only two problems, i.e. illegal dumps and high charges for waste collection. Out of 24 municipalities only 8 of them do have problems with unlawful disposals of waste and 4 of them deal with unreasonable amount of money charged for refuse collection (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). For an insignificant amount of problems municipalities do not feel a great need for establishing co-operation with neighbouring municipalities. However, some ideas for co-operation have arisen.

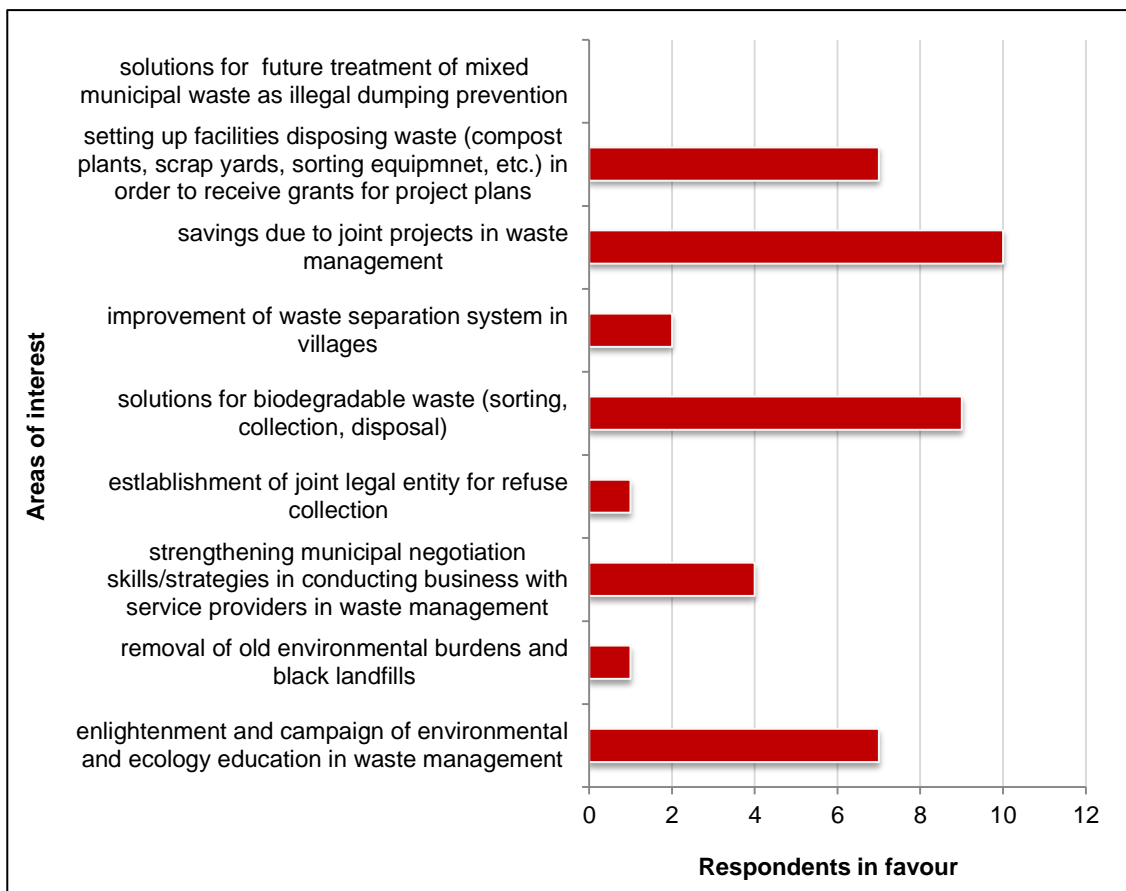
Municipalities are the most interested in establishing co-operation which brings some savings to municipal budgets thanks to joint projects, providing with solutions of disposal of biodegradable waste or facilities disposing of common, everyday municipal solid waste (e.g. compost plants, scrap yards, sorting equipment for

different types of rubbish, etc.) and in co-operation having an educational purpose in environmentally friendly and ecological way of waste disposal (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication) in order to live sustainably and preserve country heritage for other generations.

From debates serious intents for setting up co-operation have emerged. Participants have agreed on following objectives which should be implemented within the Project:

- a) to set up, modernise, extent networks built among municipalities,
- b) provision of methodological assistance to applicants of subsidy programmes by MPE Židlochovice,
- c) quality improvement of waste separation,
- d) to deal with degradable waste together via compost pants,
- e) prevention of biodegradable waste production by environmental and ecology education in waste management (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Figure 9: Mayors' interest in establishing inter-municipal co-operation across different areas of interest within waste management



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

- **Pro-family policy**

The Project of systematic support for long-term development of inter-municipal co-operation requires proactive approach from each participant (municipalities with extended powers) to come up with their own area for establishing co-operation activities. MPE Židlochovice has made a very strategic decision and picked up not so easily definite area – pro-family policy, covering all issues mentioned beyond other areas, which somehow touch all inhabitants and their families. The decision naturally arose from problematic spheres, being present in municipalities across the whole territorial administrative unit of Židlochovice. Problematic areas, which were mentioned, touch **environment** (e.g. revitalisation of sand pits, afforestation of Výchon hill with the lookout station “Acaciat tower”, flood prevention measures, greening of landscape, plantation of forest park, dry polders, etc.), **tourism** (e.g. creation of cycle tracks and hiking trails, development of agritourism, interconnection of cities via tourist attractions and tracks, etc.), **public transport** (e.g. increase in the number of parking places, infrastructure development, security of road safety, development of public transport services, transport accessibility, increase in vehicular cycling, etc.), **public safety** (criminality and delinquency prevention and prevention of pathological phenomena across all age groups, etc.), **civic and cultural amenities** and **power systems engineering** (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Based on the problematic areas, the project management of MEP Židlochovice have established following objectives to be met within the implementation process of the Project’s action plan:

- a) promotion of pro-family policy to the public,
- b) to find a person in charge of pro-family policy and volunteering in social sphere, coordinating all activities being under way the selected domains
- c) promotion of Regional tourist information centre,
- d) providing municipalities with public safety via wider city police services,
- e) or setting up community centre (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

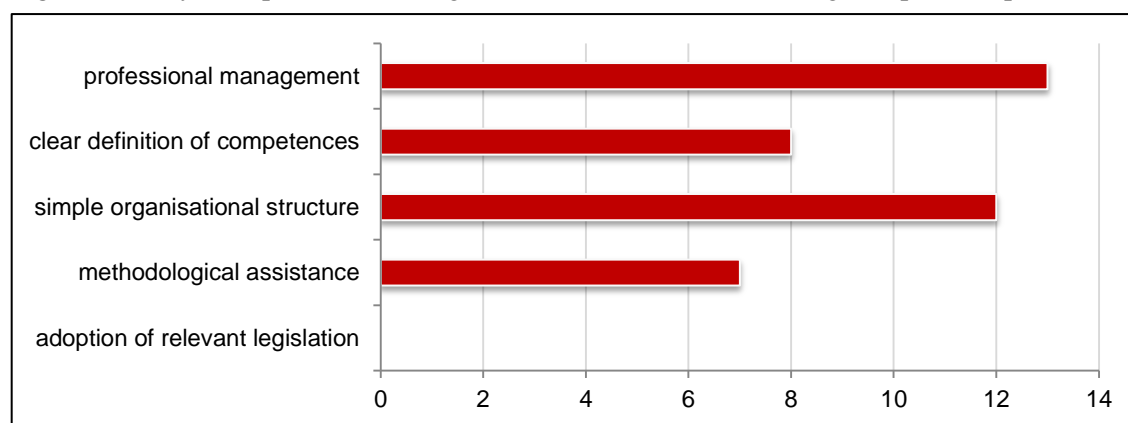
7.1.3 Project implementation of co-operation activities

Previously mentioned, the objectives set in each area will become parts of the official output document finishing up the whole Project of inter-municipal co-operation in MPE Židlochovice. Then, it will be up to the management of the project and municipalities involved to implement co-operation activities defined in the action plan in following years, from 2015 to 2023. So, there is no certainty whether they meet their goals or not. Ms. Kubalíková, the project manager herself said that there is no certainty but there is

a hope and she believes that it will boost municipalities to open themselves to other municipalities around and to take action to deal with some difficulties together. However, every activity involves money – in this case, thousands and millions, and effective organisational and institutional management which play an important role in further municipal development.

For being able to implement goals or at least some of them, proposed within the Project, the municipalities would expect state to provide them with necessary financial support in forms of grants, budgetary allocation of taxes or tax credits (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication). In case of grants, they would prefer to have ones which deal with key issues, such as pavement and road surface repairs, reconstruction of buildings, etc. A total of 3 mayors strongly expressed their opinion for abolition of all subsidy programmes and increase in municipal budgets (budgetary allocation of taxes) instead. Thus, instead of distribution of grants, the government could invest the money from programmes in country development (e.g. infrastructure, education, health care, etc.). And municipalities could handle money from budgets according to their needs without very often expensive and lengthy processes of applying for and receiving subsidies. Furthermore, to let the co-operation happen and keep it functioning, local representatives suggest simplifying the organisational structure and clearly defining competences or providing professional management and methodological assistance (Kubalíková, 2014a, verbal communication).

Figure 10: Mayors' opinions on changes in order to secure functioning co-operation processes



Source: Kubalíková, 2014b, unpublished material

7.2 Results of research

The interviews, conducted in municipalities of the administrative territory of municipality with extended competence of Židlochovice, brought many important and interesting results which could have an influential impact on the success of implementation of the project of inter-municipal co-operation Obce Sobě.

The majority of all representatives maintain a position that the current disintegrated settlement structure of over 6 250 municipalities of different population sizes, where every single (smaller or bigger) municipality has its own autonomy, is more than suitable. Only 2 respondents out of 18 said yes to merging municipalities into greater territorial units in order to govern municipal units more effectively (i.e. decrease in expenditures and more professional executions of agendas in charge).

The most important factors of bringing municipalities together to co-operate are those factors which provide inhabitants with greater variety and quality of public services, promote further development of the region, bring saving to the municipal budgets, and positively affect the efficiency of local administration in terms of sharing experience, solutions to some specific problems or sharing responsibility for taken steps resulting in more elaborated activities. Furthermore, the fact that municipalities participate in joint projects/activities enables them to share ideas, learn from each other and get inspired to new ideas, solutions, etc.

However, on the way of setting up serious co-operation, representatives must break through some obstacles in shape of scepticism, unwillingness to keep/stay in touch, lack of money, lack of time to participate in meetings, miscommunication or misconception. In addition to barriers, respondents expressed their opinion against the legal order, determining scopes of activities executed by basic territorial entities in their delegated force. According to respondents, local self-governments are overburden with too many delegated agendas which are continuously increasing and which presents an enormous administrative, financial and personnel capacity burden, especially in municipalities with unreleased mayors or vice-mayors.

Financial aspects are also related to the topic of gaining and spending money. In case of bigger investment activities (e.g. insulation of school buildings, purchase of school equipment or facilities, restoration or creation of wetlands and ponds, building of wastewater treatment networks, etc.), municipalities take advantage of regional, national or European subsidy programmes. On the other hand, expenses of small scale projects are covered by money from municipal budgets.

As for the project of inter-municipal co-operation Obce Sobě and implementation of set goals, the local authorities will most likely use grant funding opportunities of European Union and country/regional government. As suggested by 3 mayors, they would like to abolish all subsidy programmes and increase municipal budgets (budgetary allocation

of taxes) in order to let the government to invest in country development (e.g. infrastructure, education, health care, etc.) and municipalities to handle municipal money according to municipalities' needs without expensive and lengthy processes of applying for and receiving subsidies.

On the basis of good practice, to build a co-operation among municipalities, microregions/voluntary associations of municipalities would be most likely formed. Besides these two forms of co-operation, for some types of co-operation activities (e.g. assistance in crisis situations, social services, education) municipalities would choose an informal type of co-operation.

Getting back to co-operation activities, most of the municipalities participate and/or want to further develop the collaboration in assistance in crisis situations (24), pre-school and primary education (22), cultural, sport and associations of common interests (21), water supply and sewerage networks (20) and social services (19). On the other hand, municipalities do not want to participate in collective purchases (12) or activities related to social entrepreneurship and employment of especially socially excluded individuals (8) because they do not see neither many advantages of these themes, in the fact they even think it causes more difficulties (e.g. disagreements among each other leading to worsen relationships), nor regard them as issues at all. In addition to that, the latest data of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic (MMR CR) shows that MEP Židlochovice is not a municipality with extended competence which is considered to have socially excluded localities or localities being threatened by social exclusion at all (Mazal, 2015:27), so truly there is no such a need for joint investments under the Project. From co-operation activities mentioned above, assistance in crisis situations and education are seen as the most suitable activities for establishing co-operation. On contrary, the most inappropriate topic for setting up the co-operation relates to the waste management (according to the personal interviews).

Within the Project's four selected areas several objectives to be achieved have been defined by the project management of MEP Židlochovice and municipalities involved in the project Obce Sobě as follows:

1) Pre-school and primary education

- to set up special joint classes for pupils with special educational needs to be able to provide them with appropriate education addressing their individual differences,
- to arrange informative meetings for parents of children with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADD, ADHD, etc. and the public to deepen awareness and knowledge about these problems,
- to provide directors and founders of schools with joint legal services, including a consultancy with a lawyer to handle specific situations well or room for sharing experience,

- to provide directors of schools with opportunities to hold informal meetings for sharing ideas, problems and solutions to problems,
- to introduce new modern teaching methods into schools,
- to work on joint projects in order to receive government or European grants.

2) Social services

- to establish day care centres for the elderly,
- to provide inhabitants with social housing,
- to promote social entrepreneurship,
- to involve all municipalities of MEP Židlochovice in community-led development planning regarding social services and
- to coordinate voluntary work.

3) Waste management

- to found, modernise, extent networks built among municipalities,
- provision of methodological assistance to applicants of subsidy programmes by MPE Židlochovice,
- quality improvement of waste separation,
- to deal with degradable waste together via compost plants,
- prevention of biodegradable waste production by environmental and ecology education in waste management.

4) Pro-family policy

- promotion of pro-family policy to the public,
- to find a person in charge of pro-family policy and volunteering in social sphere, coordinating all activities being under way the selected domains
- promotion of Regional tourist information centre,
- providing municipalities with public safety via wider city police services,
- or setting up community centre.

7.2.1 Discussion of results

As pointed out in the second paragraph of the previous chapter, a substantial majority of respondents concurred in the preservation of present-day number of self-governing municipalities, giving them free hands to deal with municipalities' future on their own while keeping local needs in mind. According to the final report of GaREP¹¹ in collaboration with Centre for Regional development of Masaryk University, published on the official website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (Galvasová et al., 2007b:10), the dislike of administrative

¹¹ the company for regional economic consultancy

integration among municipal representatives of small-sized municipalities, resulting from negative experience during the totalitarian regime (Bačová, 1997 in Galvasová et al., 2007b:10), is generally very well-known across the country and whatever radical steps (i.e. reforms) taken against small municipalities may increase this backlash and turn it into something bigger. Maybe that is also why the government prefers much peaceful ways of dealing with the great fragmented settlement structure that do not affect the autonomy of municipalities and supports the functional integration of municipalities through the development of inter-municipal co-operation in the manner of France (Galvasová et. al., 2007b:10) whose settlement structure corresponds with the one in the Czech Republic (Hampl & Müller, 1998:10). From the report, it is clearly evident that the position maintained by the respondents is natural and concurs with the rest municipal representatives of the Czech Republic.

Although most of the municipalities face lack of money, surprisingly they do not consider savings the most deciding factor for taking part in a co-operation but instead they prefer to get together for the reason to provide inhabitants with a higher level of satisfaction in sense of greater variety of services and higher quality of life, and to support the overall development of the region. These preferences, especially the one concerning the provision of greater variety of public services, may result from the political point of view. The more satisfied inhabitants a municipality dwell, the wider public support and the much weighty lobby in a political sphere it has (in context of a population size). And generally, it is much easier to make decisions or negotiate with other authorities when people are standing by someone's steps. The regional development undoubtedly relates to investments. In relation to money (i.e. investments), we could mention the law of attraction stating that money attracts money, and thus a conclusion of more money attracts more money could be concluded. In other words, it could mean that if municipalities together invest five times more money than they would do on their own, they could get five times more money back than they invested and so they could safely secure a sustainable development of a territory.

As for the effective public administration, the inter-municipal co-operation seems to be too small for such a thing. The increase of efficiency of civically-oriented public administration requires complex transformational processes, supported by a strong and continuous policy, looking at public administration as a complicated interconnected system of legislation, organisation, citizens, white-collars, technology and finances (Ministerstvo vnitra České Republiky, 2010:55). However, talking and sharing experience, methods, and procedures among each other provide municipalities with an informal way of co-operation, a room to learn from each other and get inspired in different areas (e.g. waste management, drawing up project plans to receive grants, etc.) which, more or less, help to increase the effectiveness of public administration

execution. But this cannot be referred to municipalities located to the east of the centre of MEP which feel quite isolated from the rest.

Despite the fact that the co-operation provides local representatives with the platform to strengthen relationships among each other and mutually share their knowledge, not all of them really appreciate this chance for some certain reasons.

One of the most mentioned aspects, having negative impact on the success of co-operation, were, of course, lack of money and lack of time. Municipal representatives feel swamped with work which has been continuously increasing. Moreover, agendas of state administration executed in delegated competence, beyond the independent competence, very often requires qualified staff with very good knowledge in law which is frequently missing at municipalities. In case that a municipality does not have personnel to perform such a competence, it could conclude a public-law agreement with other municipalities (also executing a delegated competence) from the same administrative district of MEP to delegate the execution of such agenda for them. However, the delegation of competences is not always so convenient and municipalities often spend more money on them than in case they execute these agendas on their own. This could lead to the situation when these agendas are not executed at all for the sake of money (Galvasová et al., 2007b:21). Lack of time also relates to the fact that mayors get lost in projects. They do not have proper time to look at/study all documents, reports, etc. related to particular projects of co-operation.

As for lack of money, bigger investments in education, landscape, environment protection, etc. are partly covered by grants of all kinds. The rest of investment activities are covered by municipal budget. In the long run, the issues of financing, budgeting of activities or decreasing costs of public administration execution have been discussed under many projects, reforms, strategies (e.g. *Reform and modernization of the central government, Strategy to promote accessibility and quality of public services, Improving the quality of governance, funding and good governance in the offices of the local public administration*, etc.) however none of them has brought “epoch-making” results yet (Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky, 2010:55).

When establishing co-operation, voluntary associations of municipalities or microregion are the most frequently used forms of co-operation which have been serving to their members very well. In economic terms, it is very easy to run in comparison to other forms. These wholes are subsidised by the government and many subsidy programmes support them by other funding opportunities. Moreover, they receive money from each member through membership subscription.

Nowadays, municipalities most often co-operate in education (pre-school or primary), in social services, in cultural and sport events or associations of common interests, in procurement of water supply and sewerage networks, or in situations arising from the particular acts, such as assistance in crisis situations (the Act No. 240/2000

Coll., on Crisis Management and on amendments of certain acts (Crisis Act). When looking at the areas of co-operation, it is quite clear why they do co-operate in them. These areas, except public events, are the ones of the basic public services which should be provided to citizens and no wonder that mayors themselves consider them the most necessary areas for establishing co-operation. The most inappropriate area to co-operate is waste management – waste management services (collection, disposal, etc.) are already provided by hired companies.

The co-operation activities established in previously mentioned areas are followed up with the project *Obce Sobě*, which provides municipalities with further development in each area through proposed goals. These goals reflect factual needs of municipalities and focus on the most essential topics in pre-school and primary education, waste management, social services and pro-family policy. All chosen areas are quite acceptable for setting up the co-operation, except the waste management where the need is not so much required from municipalities' points of view. It is important to point out that these areas, excluding pro-family policy, were selected by bodies at national level, of course after open discussions and negotiations with local governments across the country. Nevertheless, the final decision about these areas of co-operation were taken only by the national government, thus some areas might seem to be chosen quite inappropriately even though municipalities have established some objectives in them.

8 Conclusion

The main aim of the thesis was to deliver a comprehensive evaluation of selected municipal co-operation, serving as a factor of rural development, running within one selected municipality with extended competence. For the thesis purpose, the project of inter-municipal co-operation Obce sobě and the municipality with extended powers of Židlochovice were selected. According to the need of the research, the literature dealing with general framework of the thesis (settlement structure of the Czech Republic, municipal self-government, inter-municipal co-operation and rural development) was chosen.

The main topic of the thesis concerns remaining problems (e.g. inefficient performance of public sector, inefficient use of financial resource, etc.) of the heavily fragmented settlement structure of 6 253 municipalities of different sizes, ranging from the largest one of 1 252 202 (CZSO, 2014) inhabitants to the smallest one of 17 inhabitants (TÝDEN.CZ, 2015), and solutions (in forms of inter-municipal co-operation) increasing efficiency of public administration.

To be able to draw up a general conclusion of inter-municipal co-operation in the selected MEP with the seat in Židlochovice town, it was necessary to carry out personal interviews with the principle representatives of municipalities of a total number of 18 (19), located within the administrative district of municipality with extended powers of Židlochovice. However, for better insight, the results of questionnaires filled in by mayors and some voluntary associations of municipalities, provided by the project coordinator of this specific inter-municipal co-operation in MEP Židlochovice, Ms. Kubalíková, were used.

On the basis of results of research and discussion, it could be stated that the project of inter-municipal co-operation Obce Sobě will lead to enhance the efficiency of public administration and the quality and variety of public services provided to inhabitants in MEP Židlochovice. Furthermore, the Project of system support for development of inter-municipal co-operation has a positive impact on the overall development of the administrative territory of MEP Židlochovice, resulting in the higher quality of life of its inhabitants. It helps to recreate a friendly environment and strengthen relationships among municipalities and to further develop the informal co-operation, providing the room to learn and get inspired from each other. By the generalisation of these statements, we get the answer for the main research question *“How the inter-municipal co-operation could influence the rural development of one selected municipality with extended competence in the Czech fragmented settlement structure?”*.

8.1 Answers to sub-questions of the research

In the previous paragraph the answer for the main research was given. Nonetheless, the sub-questions of the research stated in the Chapter 2 “Objectives and methodology” have remained unanswered and therefore the answers are available in this chapter.

Answers to research sub-questions:

1) What are the outcomes of co-operative process?

The Project of the inter-municipal co-operation such provides with **tangible results** (i.e. strategic document, action plan providing tangible goals) as well as **intangible results** in form of improvement of informal co-operation including recreation of friendly environment, room for sharing ideas, problems and solutions to these problems or for sharing costs, whose mix leads to positively affect the provision of public administration and further development of each local self-government.

2) What are the key factors which negatively or positively affect the process of co-operation and further development of municipalities?

On the way of achieving these results, municipalities need to confront with some difficulties affecting the process of establishing co-operation or their further development. The key negative factors which are very often present in the process of working together towards mutual goals incorporate failure to communicate adequately having a negative impact on building and maintaining (good work) relationships and friendly environment simply calling for setting up a co-operation; reluctance to participate in meetings making the process of reaching decisions impossible for the rest of participants involved in a decision-making; misconception of co-operation activities; wide range of agendas executed by local self-governments in their delegated competence which place further pressure on already overburdened municipal representatives, especially on those representatives who are unreleased and have full-time jobs besides; inaccurate qualification and competence of employees at local level; insufficient action of providing conceptual and methodological support by the state or higher local administrative units to lower ones resulting in an unified performance of the public administration and so on.

On the other hand, there are also positive aspects which facilitate the co-operation, such as a proactive approach of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (the implementer of the Project itself) defending the interests of towns and municipalities and seeking solutions to problems faced by local self-governments; European grants making the implementation of the Project of inter-municipal co-operation possible; proactive

approach of motivating mayors who took a part of responsibility for motivating, encouraging other local representatives to take part in the project Obce Sobě; or goal-oriented project management fully responsible for the project implementation and so on.

Depending on the availability and involvement, financial resources or, for instance, participation of stakeholders could be seen both positively and negatively.

3) Does the inter-municipal co-operation “Obce Sobě” meet its expectations of effectively executed tasks of public administration at local level?

Since the outcomes of the project Obce Sobě are only theoretical (i.e. proposals of strategic and action plans) and have not been implemented yet in the practice, we could say that the Project is going to meet its expectation in the next few years rather than it meets its expectations in present time. However, based on the result it is quite clear that the Project runs according to the plan and most probably will fulfil its aim of making the execution of public administration and services more effective than before (in sense of money and time spent or effort put on the performance).

4) What could the Czech Republic learn from foreign countries?

The Czech Republic as a country influenced by communism, (economically) lagging behind the most developed countries of Europe, such as Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany or Denmark, has enough space to learn from the mistakes of others and to get inspired from others.

On the basis of documents of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (2010) and the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (2013), proposing good practices in an inter-municipal co-operation in Europe, the new, alternative forms of inter-municipal co-operation increasing the economic and human resources efficiency of the public administration are suggested:

- a) Voluntary merging of municipalities (based on their priorities) into greater units under the condition that the autonomy of each municipality would be maintained. Municipalities would get the status of merged municipalities allowing them to have their own self-government bodies.
- b) Statutory merging of municipalities which do not cross the limit of 1 000 inhabitants, the minimum amount of inhabitants for being able to establish a new municipal unit since 2000 (according to the Act No. 128/2000 Coll., on Municipal Order).
- c) Establishment of so-called Communities of municipalities, public law corporations leading to increase the self-governance of local municipalities and

supporting socio-economic development of microregion of member municipalities. The community will work towards achieving specific goals set in the agreement. The Community will be something like sub-body of member municipalities executing specific agendas of independent as well as delegated competence. The community will have its own budget and will also receive money from tax revenues. Before establishing such a form of co-operation, the law needs to be developed. The idea is based on the French practice Communautés de communes.

- d) Establishment of so-called school municipalities which municipalities are obliged to join in order to secure the primary and secondary education for their pupils.

5) What are trends or improvements of future inter-municipal co-operation?

The Czech inter-municipal co-operation seems to be still in its embryo and slowly heading towards its heyday. In my point of view, the Czech Republic should not come up with new and the most revolutionary ideas but should take over already existing, successfully working ideas of other countries and adjust them to the Czech (legal) environment. Moreover, decision-makers should pay more attention to the implication of bottom-up approach, providing participants with a greater opportunity to decide whether they want to establish co-operation in this area or in that area, to eliminate situations of not so suitably chosen areas for taking part in.

9 Recommendations

To make the inter-municipal co-operation or whatever co-operation possible, the government should introduce new ways of financing, budgeting administrative units and new ways of performing local administration in effective way. Since 2007 the government has been striving to turn the local administration into an effective, pro-civically oriented service working in favour of citizens and not vice versa, fulfilling the principles of good governance, through the Strategy of Smart Administration. If the meeting of goals go smoothly, the Czech local administration could achieve a success and get closer to effective governance. More efficient administration is also supported by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic by its new amendment No. 40/2015 Coll. to the Act No. 137/2006 Coll., on Public Procurement, increasing the efficiency of putting out a contract to tender and decreasing administrative, time and financial demands for all participants (ParlamentniListy.cz, 2014)¹², which came into force on 6th March 2015 (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj ČR, 2015)¹³.

In addition to effectiveness of public sector, the government should provide mayors with methodological support (illustrative documents of generally binding ordinances, town regulations, etc.). Most of new mayors do not have any experience of drawing up such documents and must ask professional companies to do it for them. Moreover, the government should take the removal of some delegated powers into consideration and delegate them further to higher administrative units, where most of these competences are performed anyway (on the basis of public-law agreements).

The government should more carefully listen to the needs of local municipalities and go towards them while drawing up subsidy programmes. Grant opportunities have been more and more emphasising the need for the development of business environment or environment protection than for the development of rural villages and rural areas itself. However, the new programme period of 2014–2020 funded by the European Union’s funds is quite generous to municipalities and their further development. According to the latest information, majority the strategic goals (i.e. joint classes for pupils with special educational needs, introduction of new modern teaching methods, community centre, social housing, social entrepreneurship, community-led development, quality improvements of waste management, biological waste handling) of MEP Židlochovice set up within the project Obce Sobě could be accomplished through calls of two individual operational programmes – Operational programme Environment and Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) or through the “Integrated Development Strategy of Brno Metropolitan Area for implementation of the ITI tool” which integrates all operational programmes of 2014-2020 (Mazal, 2015;

¹² date of quotation: 4. 1. 2015

¹³ date of quotation: 14. 4. 2015

Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic, 2015) . For the rest of the goals which cannot be realised from the EU funds, municipalities could make the most of national grants or grants of the South Moravian Region focusing on pro-family policy at local level, rural development, community work, crime prevention, etc.

In context of subsidy programmes, the government should also provide the lower administrative units with a methodological assistance to be able to process applications on their own. Furthermore, municipalities could set up a legal entity in order to radically reduce money spent on the procurement of process of obtaining grants which is secured by hired advisory company, asking unreasonable amount of money for such a service.

When launching similar projects to project Obce Sobě, the initiators of projects (e.g. European Union, governments, the Union of Towns and Municipalities, etc.) should pay more attention to the implication of bottom-up approach, providing participants with a greater opportunity to decide whether they want to establish co-operation in this area or in that area, to eliminate situations of not so suitably chosen areas for taking part in.

Assumed that the administrative division of the current settlement structure will not change and so, the municipality with extended competence of Židlochovice should integrate all municipalities into its administrative district and create “peaceful” environment for projects of future co-operations. From the outer point of view, the current situation slowly breaks the trust built in MEP and could later maybe lead to situation when other municipalities, nowadays strongly integrated, turn their backs on the MEP.

As the project is still ongoing and project managements are still working on drawing up action plans of particular goals within their administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers, it would be interesting and appropriate if the research done here would be followed up in the future and would provide with information whether goals of plans have been achieved/implemented or not.

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Appendix A: List of local representatives contacted via emails and phone

List of contacts				
Municipality with extended competence of Židlochovice				
Municipality	Address	Mayors and others	Tel. number	Email
Blučina	nám. Svobody 119, 664 56 Blučina	Josef Srnec	547 235 306, 547 235 221	starosta@blucina.cz
Bratčice	Bratčice 36, 664 67 Syrovice	Petr Haramach, MBA (previous mayor)	724 066 784	bratcice@obecbratcice.cz
Holasice	Václavská 29, 664 61 Rajhrad	Mgr. Lenka Ungrová	547 229 362, 547 220 120	starosta@holasice.cz
Hrušovany u Brna	Masarykova 17, 664 62 Hrušovany u Brna	Miroslav Rožnovský	602 766 388	starosta@ouhrušovany.cz
Ledce	Ledce 1, 664 52 Hrušovany u Brna	Vondráček Jiří	547 236 463	obec@ledceobec.cz
Medlov	Medlov 52, 664 66 Němčičky u Židlochovic	Roman Zabil	546 421 959, 724 541 049	starosta@mestysmedlov.cz
Měnín	Měnín 34, 664 57 Měnín	Oldřich Odrážka	544 22 45 21, 723 120 982	obecni.urad@menin.cz
Moutnice	Moutnice 227, 664 55 Moutnice	Ing. Pavel Dražanský	544 248 511, 544 248 580, 602 205 839	starosta@oumoutnice.cz
Nesvačilka	Nesvačilka 100, 664 54 Těšany	Milan Vrbra	544 248 245, 602 938 819	starosta@nesvacilka.cz
Nosislav	Městečko 68, 691 64 Nosislav	Pavel Fröhlich	724 185 254	starosta@nosislav.cz
Opatovice	Velké dráhy 152, 664 61 Rajhrad	Vlastimil Paleček	547 232 433	starosta.opatovice@seznam.cz
Otmarov	Otmarov č.p. 56, 664 57 Měnín	Florian Jan	547 229 360	otmarov.obec@seznam.cz
Popovice	Popovice č.p. 2, 664 61 Rajhrad	Ing. Jiří Bednář	547 232 155	ou.popovice@volny.cz
Přisnotice	Přisnotice 75, 664 63 Žabčice	Ing. Zdeněk Mahovský	725 009 120	starosta@prisnotice.cz
Rajhrad	Masarykova 32, 664 61 Rajhrad	Mgr. František Ondráček	547426813, 606 611 656	frantisek.ondracek@rajhrad.cz
Rajhradice	Krátká 379, 664 61 Rajhradice	Luboš Přichystal	547 229 830, 739 426 358	starosta@rajhradice.cz
Sobotovice	Sobotovice č.p. 176, 664 67 Sobotovice	Jitka Rychnovská	547 236 440, 724 185 245	sobotovice@volny.cz
Syrovice	Syrovice č.p. 298, 664 67 Syrovice	Pavel Bauer	724 186 570	starosta@syrovice.cz
Těšany	Těšany 141, 664 54 Těšany	Ing. Antonín Vymazal	544 248 626	starosta@outesany.cz
Unkovice	Unkovice 28, 664 63 Žabčice	Zdeněk Pospíšil	602 542 314	obecunkovice@volny.cz
Vojkovice	Hrušovanská 214, 667 01 Vojkovice	Karel Klein	547 231 121, 602 506 677	starosta.vojkovice@volny.cz
Žabčice	Kopeček 4, 664 63 Žabčice	Mgr. Vladimír Šmerda	602 765 489	starosta@zabcice.cz
Žatčany	Žatčany č.p. 125, 664 53 Žatčany	Ing. František Poláček	724 186 304	starosta@obeczatcany.cz
Židlochovice	Masarykova 100, 667 01 Židlochovice	Helma Vlastimil	604 290 320	helma@zidlochovice.cz
		Gabriela Motlíčková (secretary)	547 426 011	motlickova@zidlochovice.cz
		Ing. Jana Richterová (project manager)	547 426 013, 604 290 408	richterova@zidlochovice.cz
		Lucie Kubalíková (coordinator of the project Obce Sobě)	734 352 329	KubalikovaL@Zidlochovice.cz

Answer Sheet

Semi-standardised interview with municipal representative

.....
(name of municipality)

1) What is your opinion on the Czech fragmented settlement structure?

.....
.....
.....

2) What do you prefer?

- a) inter-municipal co-operation
- b) municipal mergers

3) What do you consider the greatest advantage(s) of the inter-municipal co-operation? What are the positive impacts of it? (*savings, effective public administration execution, greater services' variety, greater influence, etc.*)

.....
.....
.....

4) What are the barriers for establishing co-operation activities among each other? (*lack of finances, legislation, communication, lack of time, delegated competences, etc.*)

.....
.....
.....

5) Do the voluntary associations of municipalities (set in the territory) manage the area well? Is it the appropriate form of co-operation for establishing co-operation activities, for example, in the areas which have been selected within the project Obce Sobě?

.....
.....
.....

6) In financial terms, is the inter-municipal co-operation secured well? If not, what do you consider the most suitable way of financing?

.....

.....
.....
7) What administrative territory (municipality, MEP, region, others) is the most appropriate for establishing the inter-municipal co-operation to secure the provision of public services?
(in case of education, waste management, social services, water supply system, sewerage system, public safety, tourism, culture/sport events, environment, (social) business, and others)

.....
.....
.....
8) How do you finance the development activities in the municipality? What is the most common way of covering municipal expenditure regarding to the development of municipality?
(municipal budget, EU funds, various subsidy programmes)

.....
.....
.....
9) On what group of inhabitants (youngsters, families, seniors) do you pay attention in the municipality? What is the most “problem” group?

.....
.....
.....
10) In what area – education, waste management, social services, or pro-family policy – do you struggle the most? What are the current problems in each area? Where do you see the possibility to establish the co-operation within the Project?

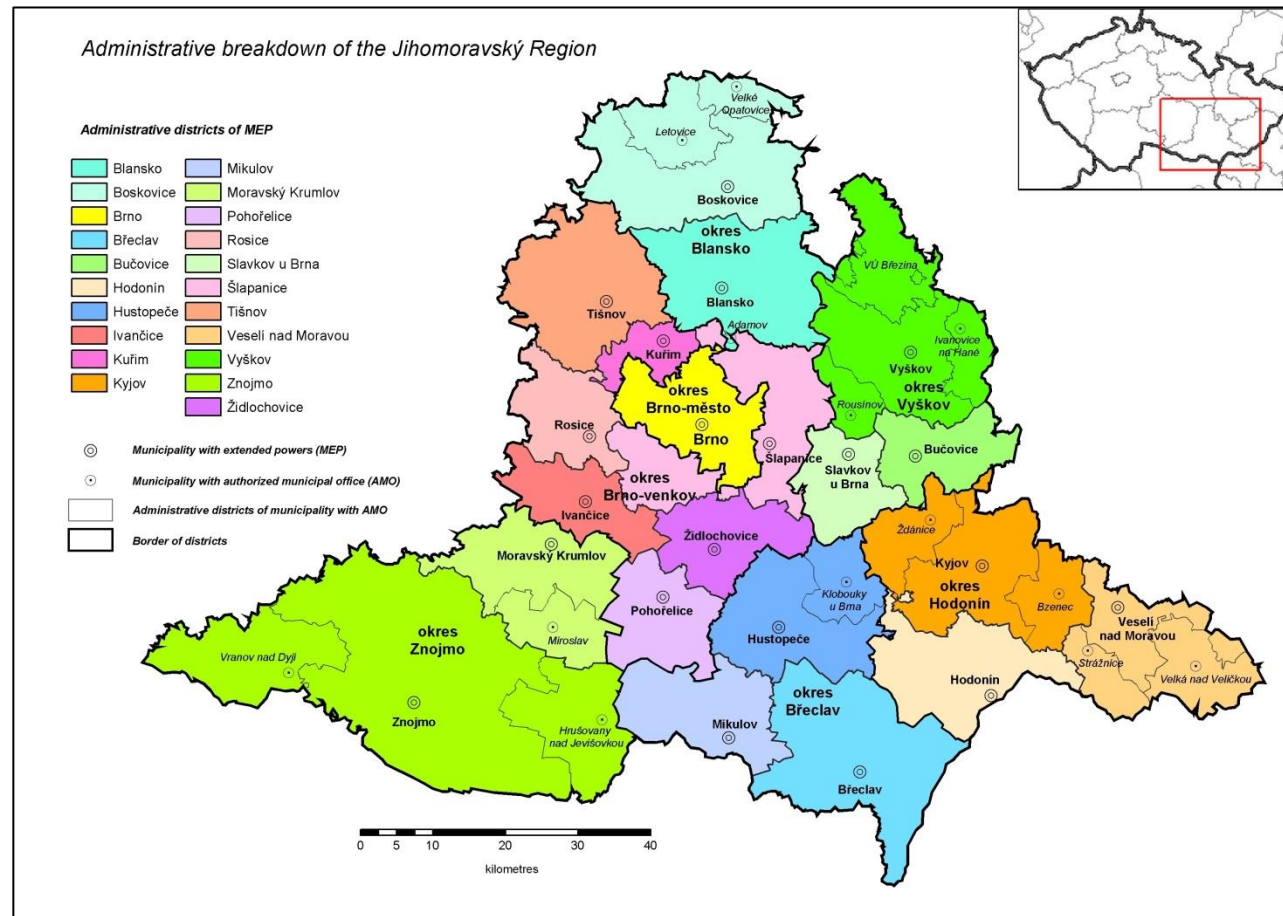
.....
.....
.....
12) Do you attend the meeting regarding the currently running Project?

- a) yes
- b) no *(mention the reason)*

.....
.....
.....
14) Would you like to add something that haven't been mentioned yet and should be mentioned?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix C: Administrative breakdown of the South Moravian (Jihomoravský) Region



Source: Administrative breakdown of the Jihomoravský Region. Small Lexicon of Municipalities of the Czech Republic 2013 [online]. 16. 12. 2013 [cit. 2015-01-10]. Available from: [http://www.czso.cz/xb/redakce.nsf/i/administrativni_cleneni_jihomoravskeho_kraje/\\$File/Admin_cleneni_2011.jpg](http://www.czso.cz/xb/redakce.nsf/i/administrativni_cleneni_jihomoravskeho_kraje/$File/Admin_cleneni_2011.jpg)

Appendix D: Demographic yearbook of administrative territory of MEP Židlochovice

Demographic yearbook of administrative territory of MEP Židlochovice											
Year		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of municipalities		24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Size of municipality	0 - 199	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	200 - 499	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
	500 - 999	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	8	6	6
	1 000 - 4 999	11	11	11	12	12	12	12	12	14	14
	5 000 - 19 999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	20 000 - 49 999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	50 000 and over	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Population development											
Number of inhabitants	Total	27 805	27 860	28 039	28 826	29 167	29 608	29 958	30 501	31 050	31 415
	Males	13 690	13 714	13 801	14 232	14 414	14 656	14 853	15 091	15 408	15 598
	Females	14 115	14 146	14 238	14 594	14 753	14 952	15 105	15 410	15 642	15 817
Age structure											
Age	0-14 years	4 306	4 220	4 151	4 251	4 293	4 454	4 658	4 892	5 118	5 273
	15-64 years	19 778	19 819	19 989	20 568	20 795	20 954	21 001	21 106	21 249	21 283
	65 years and over	3 721	3 821	3 899	4 007	4 079	4 200	4 299	4 503	4 683	4 859
Average age		37,7	38	38,1	38,1	38,10	38,20	38,30	38,4	38,4	38,5
Index of ageing (65+ / 0-14 v %)		64,4	67,7	69,7	69,9	70,7	71,3	70,5	72,1	70,8	72,6

Source: Demographic Yearbook of Administrative territories of Municipalities with Extended Powers (2004-2013). CZSO [online]. 17. 10. 2014 [cit. 2015-03-21]. Available from: http://www.czso.cz/csu/2014edicniplan.nsf/engkapitola/130054-14-eng_r_2014-10000

Appendix E: Migration of population in administrative district of MEP
Židlochovice

Migration of population in administrative district of MEP Židlochovice										
Population development	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total increase	299	55	179	787	341	441	350	585	549	365
Natural increase	28	-19	9	57	24	81	67	120	77	91
Net migration	271	74	170	730	317	360	283	465	472	274

Source: Demographic Yearbook of Administrative territories of Municipalities with Extended Powers (2004-2013). CZSO [online]. 17. 10. 2014 [cit. 2015-03-21]. Available from: http://www.czso.cz/csu/2014edicniplan.nsf/engkapitola/130054-14-eng_r_2014-10000