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Strategic development plan of the microregion
Diploma thesis

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Brno 2016

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the supervisor of the diploma thesis doc. Ing. Gabriela Chmelíková, Ph.D. for her patience, supervisor, valuable advice, information, comments and help during the process of writing diploma thesis. I would also like to thank my family for the support.

Abstract

The diploma thesis “Strategic development plan of the microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda - Bezovec” is focused on the strategic analysis and strategic plan of the mentioned microregion. The first part of the thesis is focused on the theoretical frame of strategic planning as well as strategic planning in Slovak republic. The second part deals with the situational and SWOT analysis of the microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda - Bezovec. In order to form the final strategic plan, the questionnaire survey among the mayors of the microregion has been conducted. The last part of the thesis consists of the strategic plan and implementation part.

Key words: microregion, strategic analysis, strategic plan, strategic management

Abstrakt

Diplomová práca na tému “Strategic development plan of the microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda - Bezovec” je zameraná na strategickú analýzu a strategický plán tohto mikroregiónu. Prvá časť práce pojednáva teoretický rámec strategického plánovania ako aj súčasný stav strategického plánovania v Slovenskej republike. Druhá časť sa zaoberá situačnou a SWOT analýzou mikroregiónu. Na zostavenie konečného strategického plánu mikroregiónu bolo vykonané dotazníkové šetrenie medzi starostami jednotlivých obcí mikroregiónu. Posledná časť práce pozostáva zo samotného strategického plánu a implementačnej časti.

Kľúčové slová: mikroregión, strategická analýza, strategický plán, strategický manažment

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1 Introduction

There are 2927 municipalities in the Slovak republic and most of them have size up to 1000 residents. These municipalities often struggle with the lack of financial resources to ensure their future development. To solve this issue, municipalities should look for various solutions and creating a microregion could be one of them.

The main objective of the microregion establishment is usually the joint development of the involved municipalities. However, this potential of the joint development is not utilized to its fullest in the Slovak republic. The main reason is that most of the microregions do not have the development document of the microregion. Even though some microregions do have the development documents elaborated, they are either not up-to-date or do not reflect the current development of the microregion. Another issue within the microregions is the communication between the mayors of the microregion municipalities and communication between the citizens and municipalities.

Therefore, the elaboration of the well-prepared strategic document is the key measure to increase the potential of the microregions and their future development. However, to make this work all stakeholders should be involved which means the mutual cooperation between the municipalities, residents and as well as local entrepreneurs.

Microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda – Bezovec was chosen for the elaboration of the strategic document as the topic of this diploma thesis. The microregion consists of eleven municipalities: Beckov, Hôrka nad Váhom, Hrádok, Kálnica, Kočovce, Lúka, Modrová, Modrovka, Nová Lehota, Nová Ves nad Váhom and Stará Lehota. The reason to have chosen this microregion was that the author lives near the microregion area.

The thesis is divided into theoretical part and own work. Theoretical part is focused on the strategic planning process as well as the strategic planning in the Slovak republic. Own work consists of situational and SWOT analysis which are the basis for the elaboration of the strategic plan. The questionnaire survey among the municipalities mayors has been conducted and the results will be taken into account while elaborating the strategic plan.

2 Aim and methodology of the thesis

The main aim of the thesis is to elaborate a strategic document of the microregion Beckov - Zelená Voda - Bezovec as there is only a strategic document from the year 2007 which is obviously not up-to-date.

Methodology of the thesis is based on the study of the literature and other sources to better embrace the selected topic. The thesis will be divided into two main parts – theoretical part and own work consisting of the situational analysis, SWOT analysis, results of the questionnaire survey and implementation part.

Theoretical part will focus on the topics of the strategic planning and the microregion, as well as the strategic planning in the Slovak republic. The main sources of the information will be books and various electronic sources.

Important source of the information for the situational analysis will be mostly the data from the Statistical office of the Slovak republic, regional office of Trenčín region and municipalities websites. The SWOT analysis will be based on the findings of the situational analysis. To eliminate the subjective aspect of the SWOT analysis, the questionnaire survey will be conducted among the mayors of the microregion municipalities. It will be sent out in an electronic form via emails to the individual municipalities representatives. The results of the questionnaire survey will be evaluated as graphs with a verbal description.

The last part will focus on the implementation of the strategic plan which consists of an action plan. Several projects will be chosen in an action plan with a detailed description, as well as timeframe and estimated costs.

3 Theoretical part

3.1 Regional development

Regional development can be understood in two basic approaches - practical and academic approach. Practical approach is focused on a higher utilization and increasing the potential of the defined area by the use of natural resources and spatial optimization of socio-economic activities. Academic approach defines regional development as an application of sciences (economics, geography and sociology), which deal with the processes and relationships of a defined area which is affected by the natural, geographic, social and economic conditions in the region. Practical approach of the regional development uses the knowledge created by the regional policy of academic approach to regional development (Wokoun et al., 2008).

3.2 Strategic management

Strategic management is a complex interactive process which demands great professional and human requirements on all its actors. Process of strategic management from the planning to the implementation part covers a wide range of interconnected activities (Wokoun et al., 2008).

Strategic management can be divided into four basic phases - strategy formulation, strategy development, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation (Fotr, 2012).

- a) formulation of the strategic plan serves to define the target status and description of the process through which the status will be achieved. The next step is the analysis of the environment, which identifies factors that could affect the strategic plan.
- b) analysis of the environment is reflected in the SWOT analysis, which is one of the most and widely used tool in strategic planning. Initial letters are abbreviations derived from four core areas of analysis. Strengths and Weaknesses analyze the

internal environment of the issue. Opportunities and Threats however, inspect the external environment. This method helps to quickly gain knowledge and understanding of the area or the issue. If the SWOT analysis is used in strategic planning, it should always be accompanied by the appropriate detailed study and strategic decisions should not be based on a simplified output. The result of this phase of strategic management is the strategic intent.

- c) implementation of the strategy is carried out by operational management. The goal of the operational management is to provide suitable conditions during the performance of specified activities and respect the legislative regulations and standards. Individual processes are coordinated separately and follow up reports on the results of milestones and activities are elaborated.
- d) evaluation of the strategy is always applied in strategic management. The environment is not static and therefore, the strategies may vary during the preparation and implementation. It is necessary to monitor external and internal factors, continuously evaluate the results, propose modifications and update the document.

3.2.1 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a way to organize and manage changes and build a consensus on goals, objectives and strategies, which will consequently help to address the situation in identified areas. This is a creative process that can interconnect the activities of the public, public administration and organizations. During the process of strategic planning arise ideas what the microregion would develop and improve or what path would have to undergo to achieve the objectives (Rektořík, 1999).

According to Galvasová (2007), strategic planning is a process involving a selection of objectives and actions needed to achieve them. It is part of the conceptual development management, which leads to the creation of strategic documents, then to realization of strategic objectives and their continuous updating.

3.2.2 Strategic Plan

As Rektořík and Šelešovský reported (1999), strategic plan is a document that captures the results of strategic planning process and is the basis for the strategic management of municipalities or organization. Škrabal et al. (2006) define a strategic development plan of the microregion as a conceptual document describing key phenomena in the area, which evaluates and proposes the long-term goals and measures. These should lead to the growth of the local economy, environment protection and sustainable development and the development of socio-cultural activities.

According to Wokoun et al. (2008) strategic plans are created on a voluntary basis as a co-operation between the regional development actors. Strategic plans for microregion deal mainly with housing, economy, infrastructure, labor market, social areas and the environment.

They consist of three basic dimensions:

- Socio-political dimension defines the strategic plan as an agreement between citizens and public officials about the microregion future development
- System dimension suggests that the strategic plan is an integral part of strategic and programme documents,
- Material dimension - the strategic plan focuses on the key issues and priorities of the microregion development.

3.3 Strategic plan of the microregion

Strategic development plan for the microregion should be a key instrument of strategic management. The elected management should decide on the future orientation and development of the microregion. This privilege should not be delegated to any other entity as it often happens in practice and the strategic documents are created by specialized professional agencies. Professional consultant or advisor can be very helpful methodically, organisationally and also with their wide experience. However, the

strategic plan - its vision, goals, priorities and measures must express the decision of all actors in the region or municipality (Wokoun et al., 2008).

Strategic development plan for the region (municipality) is a basic strategic document declaring long-term objectives of the region (municipality), development defining paths to achieve them and the continuity of its founding is extended for 10-15 years, and it has a socio-political, systemic and substantive dimension. It is impossible to determine which of these dimensions is important because all of them act strictly in synergy. Their existence is interrelated and causes effects to multiply and in case of absence of either dimension the cause is restricting (Wokoun et al., 2008).

The strategic plan is a microregion development programme, which is aimed at identifying and the utilization of local resources and aims to support the activities required or missing in the region from the region sources (Perlín a Bičík, 2006). This document must meet the following criteria: longevity, orderliness, selectivity, consistency, continuity, openness and realism (Perlín and Bičík, 2002).

According to Perlín and Bičík (2006) the strategic plan for the municipality, city and microregion has to meet general conditions for the document structure and should include four basic parts:

1. analysis of the area
2. identification of key issues
3. strategies leading to achieve the final state
4. the programmes that lead to the implementation of the strategy (Perlín and Bičík, 2006)

The strategic document must be realistic, must match the possibilities and needs of a particular entity. The project must be adopted by all the staff and external stakeholders, who will participate on the implementation of the strategic plan. It is necessary to understand the plan and be able to work with the project content effectively. It is necessary to interconnect the document with financial options and plans of the entity (Fotr, 2012).

Strategic objectives are linked directly to the subject vision and they are closely linked, but they do not show interdependence between them. Objectives always express exactly what is desired to implement and a change which is desired to achieve. It is suitable to establish the measurable indicators for the objectives that enable the change and objectively evaluate the success of changes (Fotr, 2012).

Strategic development plan of the microregion should be a key tool for strategic management. Its vision, objectives, priorities and measures must be an expression of ideas of all stakeholders in the micro region and the decision of the council. Strategic plan is a document intended for more efficient use of the microregion internal resources and stimulation of local development in needed areas. Therefore, it is important to develop a strategic plan in regions which have strong social and economic potential and they can be further developed and also in regions where is a willingness of all local development actors (government, entrepreneurs and non-profit sector) to be involved in this common policy (Wokoun et al., 2008).

According to Škrabal et al. (2006), a strategic development plan for the microregion is performed because of the need to respond to the current needs of the development of the territory, which go hand in-hand with the applicable policies. At present, the strategic plan must meet the European parameters of development documents, including the principle of the sustainable development. The strategic plan must be connected with development documents on a higher level of territorial units (European, national and regional level). The strategic document in its final form should initiate long-term processes that will improve the quality of the environment and socio-economic conditions in the microregion.

According to Perlín and Bičík (2009) it is very difficult to implement strategic plan objectives for microregions, which only purpose is to obtain subsidies from the European funds or for very small microregions with insufficient population or economic power. For this reason, the strategic plan for microregions should be developed with sufficient economic and social capacity, aiming to create and implement joint development projects.

Although the strategic plan is not clearly defined in the law, it is possible to define how the structure of the strategic plan should look like. In general, the strategic plan consists of four basic parts: an analysis of the area, identification of key issues, strategies for achieving the final state and programmes leading to fulfilment of the strategy. The strategic plan is therefore a microregion development programme, which is aimed at identification and utilization of local resources to encourage the desired development activities in the microregion.

3.4 Development process of a microregion strategic plan

The strategic document of the microregion should be based mainly on local conditions and the elaboration should be adapted to the specifics of the microregion (Labounková and Půček, 2009).

In every strategic plan the following parts should be included: analysis, synthesis (SWOT analysis), strategies, programmes and monitoring. Therefore, the strategic document should be elaborated in such a way that after the assessment of its development and identification of the main problems, the solutions should be found to existing problems and they should help to identify the indicators enabling to check and update the plan (Perlín and Bičík, 2009).

According Škrabal et al. (2006), the strategic plan consists of three parts. The first part is an analytical part, which consists of a comprehensive situational analysis and SWOT analysis of the territory. The project designs of the microregion result from the second part, called proposal or strategic part. In the third, the implementation part, an action plan is created that defines specific activities and projects dedicated for implementation within a certain timeframe.

a) Analytical part

Grant (2010) states that the analytical part is a critical input into the process of strategic planning. Role of the analysis is to provide a framework for processing information and opinions. The task of the strategic analysis is not to provide solutions to the problems but to help understanding the topic. The first part of the strategic plan is divided into situational analysis and SWOT analysis of the monitored area.

- **Situational analysis**

Strategic analysis creates the reference knowledge base that enables understanding the issues of the microregion. The purpose of the strategic analysis is to describe the key impacts associated with the current and future development of the microregion and the options available in terms of the environment. Strategic analysis should be purposeful, its concept should be dynamic and problem-oriented (Wokoun et al.,2008).

The aim of the situational analysis is to assess key aspects of the territory on the basis of publicly available statistical data and other information sources (Perlín and Bičík, 2009).

Situational analysis is the main foundation for the next steps of elaborating the microregion strategic plan. The knowledge and information obtained during the processing of situational analysis of the microregion are subsequently the main basis for the SWOT analysis. The execution of situational analysis then leads to finding the characteristics of the local economy and evaluation of development trends at the regional and national level. Assessment of the microregion territory should be based on a comprehensive approach which is focused on previous development and the current situation. In terms of further use, the obtained information can be structured into the following chapters:

1. Identification of the microregion
2. Characteristics of the area:
 - a) population and settlement,
 - b) transport,
 - c) ecological situation and environmental protection,
 - d) economic situation and economy structure of the micro region,

- e) commercial services and retail trade sector,
 - f) culture and protection of cultural heritage, social and sports activities,
 - g) non-profit sector,
 - h) recreation and tourism,
 - i) craft and other small entrepreneurial activity and innovation,
 - j) social and civic amenities,
 - k) technical infrastructure,
 - l) mining and quarrying, manufacturing and construction,
 - m) the labor market,
 - n) agriculture and forestry.
3. Wider relations of the microregion:
 - a) description of the current documents in the microregion
 - b) description of the microregion external links (regional and supra-regional level)
 - c) linkage to other strategic documents
 4. Actors of the regional development in the microregion

- SWOT analysis

According to Škrabal et al. (2006), SWOT analysis is a process involving a comprehensive description and evaluation of the territory.

SWOT analysis is based on the outputs of situational analysis and is the basis for the formulation of strategic objectives, priorities and development activities of the microregion. This analysis includes a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats required for the implementation of the microregion development. Strengths include competitive advantages of the region in the context of development activities. Weaknesses limit or threaten these activities inside the microregion. The opportunities and threats are influenced by particular tools for structural and regional policy of the European Union, Slovak republic and regions. Determination of the microregion development potential lies in the correct identification of the strengths and opportunities (Labounková and Půček, 2009).

b) Design part

As reported by Škrabal et al. (2006), the design part consists of vision, development sections, priorities, measures and activities.

The main importance of the microregion strategic document is clarifying the common visions and objectives between the cooperating municipalities (Galvasová et al., 2007). Individual levels of strategic planning within the microregion should be concentrated in one document which supports the overall objectives of the strategic plan.

- Vision

Vision is a general statement of final status - how the microregion should look like after the implementation of the measures set out in the strategy (Škrabal et al., 2006).

According to Perlín (2002) vision should not be specific, but should be more general and allow maximum wide range of development. Determination of a single vision would lead to a impoverishment of the microregion on possible further development paths and the inability to capture a whole range of issues.

Vision significantly contributes to the aim of the development strategy of the microregion. The vision should be very specific and identify the target state, which the micro region would like to achieve within a certain timeframe (Labounková and Půček, 2009).

- Development objectives

Development objectives must be clearly defined. They are determined by information gained from the SWOT analysis and they are based on the vision set by the micro region. They should use strengths and opportunities and respond to threats and minimize microregion weaknesses. Objectives are seen as leading indicators for the micro region development (Labounková and Půček, 2009).

According to Škrabal et al. (2006), development objectives include various areas covering comprehensively the whole range of the microregion issues. In most cases, they just copy the areas used in the SWOT analysis.

- Priorities

In this part of the strategic plan there are several priorities identified. Priority is a preferred direction of a solution to achieve a certain goal. (Labounková and Půček, 2009).

According to Škrabal et al. (2006) priorities define only certain key development directions common to all or most of the municipalities. Part of the priorities formulation is also a formulation of long-term strategic goals determining a target state, we want to achieve for each priority. By defining the objectives, measurable indicators can be used to evaluate the success of the implementation.

Priority is the main solution to achieve specific goals. Strategic plan of the microregion can be based either on reinforcement of the microregion strengths or elimination of the weaknesses. Application of individual priorities is implemented via projects or developing activities (Perlín and Bičík, 2009).

- Measures

Škrabal et al. (2006) describe measures as individual sub-projects carried out to solve problems or to utilize the positive aspects of the micro region. Fullfilment of the strategic objectives can be achieved just by the measures which are a set of specific projects for each priority, aimed at solving the specific problem. Execution of the individual activities leads to the implementation of the measures. It is necessary for the activities to be processed as specific as possible, so the strategy becomes applicable document for anyone who would need it in the future.

- Development projects

Development projects determine how the various measures will be implemented. Developing projects are in the form of specific activities. This is an elaboration of priorities and determination of activities that will help to develop the area. The reservoir of projects is created, which is a set of concrete proposals for projects. From this reservoir are selected most necessary and most suitable projects for a shorter period of time and the action plan is then compiled (Labounková and Půček, 2009). Execution of the individual activities leads to the implementation of the measures. It is necessary for the activities to be processed as specific as possible, so the strategy becomes applicable document for anyone who would need it in the future (Škrabal et al. 2006).

c) Implementation part

The last part of the strategic plan is an action plan that defines specific activities. These activities should be executed in a period of two years from the start of implementation of the strategic plan. Time and financial demands of implementation of activities as well as responsibility for their implementation are included. Implementation part can be defined as the practical use of established methods to achieve specific objectives (Wokoun et al., 2008).

According to Škrabal et al. (2006) action plan describes the activities in detail and their financial demands. The action plan also includes the regular updates after the expiration of the time period for which it is prepared. It is usually updated annually and should include: name of priority (measure), description of activities, determining the responsibility, cooperating authorities, estimated financial demand on the implementation of activities, identifying the potential resources for implementation of activities and more conditions for the implementation of activities.

Action plan is a short document of a performing character, which specifies selected measures in the form of projects or activities and therefore it is an essential document linked with the strategy. It also contains a timetable and provides the financing of individual activities and projects (Galvasová et al., 2007).

The action plan should include (Škrabal et al., 2006):

- Name of the priority (measures) within which individual activities are carried out,
- Description of activities,
- Determining the responsibility for the implementation of activities,
- Defining entities which will collaborate on the implementation of activities
- Estimated financial costs related to the implementation of activities and also determining the potential sources of funding,
- The designation of additional assumptions or specifications for the realization of activities.

Evaluating the implementation of the strategic plan should be done in terms of goals. For evaluating the success of the realization of these goals the below mentioned indicators can be used. Monitoring of implementation should be carried out after the expiration of the current term of the action plan through the annual reports of the micro-region which is compiled once a year. An important element is to update the strategic plan, which should respond to the development trends in the microregion, whether they are positive or negative (Škrabal et al., 2006)

3.5 Approaches to the development of a strategic plan

Perlín (2002) identifies two basic approaches to the strategic plan, which differ from each other in the level of involvement of experts and local officials. Most of the documents are being prepared by a combination of the two approaches mentioned below.

There are two methods for processing strategic plan – expert and community method. Usually a combination of the two approaches is used, with the dominance of one of them (Perlín and Bičík, 2006).

- Expert method

The strategic plan is elaborated by a team of experts who may not come directly from a specific region for which the document is being prepared. The solved area is introduced

to the experts in the actual project development. Consultations with local people and organizations are held and they provide experts with regional perspective. The result of this method is a plan based on a standardized procedure and a professional guarantee for the work can be expected. By using the expert method, the strategic plan contains longer analytical part, because the experts use the analysis to get to know the area. As positive factors of this method can be considered the independence of processors on a particular region, well-prepared plan, analytically evaluated data and incidental comparison with other regions. The weaknesses of this method include the fact that the experts do not know in detail the local environment and the relationships between local actors. Public discussion or other forms of getting know the location is often only superficial and depth knowledge of the issues is missing (Perlín and Bičík, 2006).

- Community method

The strategic plan is elaborated by a team of local experts whose work is often moderated by an external expert. The method is based on recurring debates, analyzes and considerations regarding the region development with representatives of the researched area. The strategic document is created on the basis of analysis of the area key issues with focus on the future. The analytical part is not processed to such an extent as in an expert method, there is mostly a straight pass to discuss specific issues of development and subsequent possible solutions. The positive aspect of the method is the focus on specific development issues of the area and their specific solutions. The advantage is the clarity of the document and a clear correlation of strategy, as the actors already participate by creating the document and they will also implement it. Therefore, the need for frequent public hearings is not necessary. The disadvantage may be missing expertise of processors in all areas. Some approved activities may be inappropriately estimated by local experts and consequently they will not be feasible. Another negative aspect is that some topics may not be discussed at all (Perlín and Bičík, 2006). According to Galvasová (2007) expert method is a relatively closed process, which is based on the participation of prominent representatives of the micro region.

3.6 Microregion

Škrabal (2006) defines microregion as an association of municipalities with different legal form aimed at joint development of the area defined by a common cadastral territory of all member municipalities. The strategic planning and implementation of individual development projects are executed by elected micro region bodies. The optimal number of cooperating municipalities within the microregion depends on the extent of cooperation between the municipalities. Number of members of the microregion should be therefore such number at which they are able to work together and agree on common goals.

The functioning of the region is simplified in a “natural region”, which is characterized by narrow internal links between communities in the microregion (Binek, Galvasová, Svobodová, Chabičovská and Holeček, 2012).

Microregions are geographically bordered areas which have some common characteristics (natural, demographic, historical, cultural, etc.). This term is also used for a voluntary association of municipalities and towns in order to solve the common problems and to seek common development paths (Charvát, 2011).

According to Kramářeková et al. (2009), microregions represent groups of municipalities based on mutual agreement and objectives to achieve prosperity. Microregion is distinguished in two ways - as a territorial unit and as an organization.

3.6.1 Microregional associations

Concept of microregional associations, in short microregions is not defined in any law of the Slovak republic. The regional development is defined in Act No. 503/2001 Col. as follows: "The region is a geographically defined area to create and implement the regional and structural policy at the second or third level due to the classification of statistical territorial units."

Microregional associations can be registered in three ways – as a civil association, an association of municipalities or an association of legal entities. According to the Slovak Environmental Agency, microregional associations of municipalities can be registered:

1. on the Ministry of Interior under the Act No. 83/1990. on association of citizens as amended as a civic association,
2. the district offices of the individual regions - Department of Internal Affairs

All types of the associations are legal persons.

During the 1990s administrative and the institutional structure instability, numerous initiatives of towns and municipalities were created on the sub-regional level, and they were labelled as microregions. They were based on various organizational models ranging from informal cooperation to institutionalized structures in the form of an association of municipalities or civil society organizations, which are represented by natural and legal entities of various types. Microregions and their development activities are initiatives rising from below, mobilizing internal resources of the region. Their formation can be considered as a response to the mentioned deficits and are a manifestation of efforts made to overcome the fragmentation of a settlement system in the Slovak republic (Coplák, 2007).

3.6.2 Reasons to establish a microregion

The role of microregions is conceptual and executive activity of municipal self-government bodies in the area of local development, initiating their activities in the field of solutions of microregion problems, defining microregional programmes and activities, and their participation in the implementation of regional programmes. To identify the needs, determine the development directions, development activities and strategic decisions, microregions elaborate development strategies (Labounková and Půček, 2009).

Objective of municipal cooperation should not only consist of processing the development document but it should primarily focus on a real cooperation while overcoming various development obstacles (Perlín and Bičík, 2006).

According to Škrabal et al. (2006), co-operation through the establishment of microregion allows member municipalities to achieve effective results in their development, which is based on three principles: voluntariness, solidarity and purposefulness.

The voluntary cooperation of member municipalities in the microregion is based on a free political will of the municipalities representatives. Solidarity is related to the joint effort for a comprehensive development, which is based on an awareness of the needs and possibilities of the microregion. Mutual cooperation is created for a purpose, which is exactly defined at the beginning of municipalities cooperation. Joint efforts and resources, from which are development projects funded can be divided into two levels - efforts to achieve growth in microregion and efforts to achieve savings through cooperation of municipalities.

An important aspect is also the joint protection of rights and interests in negotiations with government, NGOs or entrepreneurs. Joint action is also needed in spatial and investment planning and in obtaining the information that is needed for the next microregion development and projects submission. The reason for the microregion establishment is a mutual exchange of acquired experience between the representatives of municipalities and between the microregions themselves.

Škrabal et al. (2006), also state that an important factor for the establishment of associations of municipalities is the tourism development through the joint promotion of the microregion.

- Kostrová (2014) states that microregional associations of municipalities are established mainly due to the following reasons:
- encouragement of joint efforts in the development of municipalities
- preparation of developing programmes and documents – land use plans, strategies of economic-social development, sustainable development strategies and more

- beneficiaries from the national (Village Renewal Programme), but also from European sources (EU structural funds)
- regional and environmental education for children, youth and adults
- support for cultural festivals of regional and supra-regional importance
- support for cultural and sporting events
- restoration and preservation of traditions and traditional crafts in the region
- promoting voluntary activities of citizens and NGOs
- motivational competition for municipalities and residents of the region (the most beautiful village, garden or the best idea for the development of the region)

The main objective of a cooperation between municipalities can be generally described as a cooperation of municipalities to ensure a higher standard of living, satisfaction of the social, cultural, economic and environmental needs (Sirotná, 2014).

As mentioned before, the concept of a microregion is not clearly defined by legislation, the Act on Municipalities (369/1990 Coll.), in §20 defines only basic information about intermunicipal cooperation. According to Ondrušek and Matijek (2000) the association of municipalities is based on a partnership basis and equal status of each entity in the area of planning, decision-making, financing, monitoring and other management functions. Municipality representatives co-operate in some cases of the less formal activities, and therefore there is no risk of competitive tension in terms of funding and management. These informal activities are gradually building the trust towards the municipalities management.

Motivation of the microregions is different. It is essential, however, that they are formed from below, based on an internal need of mutual cooperation as well as on a common perception of a geographic entity. The reason of a microregion establishment is the need for mutual aid and the successful enforcement of support for the implementation of specific interests of the participating municipalities (Falt'an and Pašiak, 2004)

According to Rusnák (2001), reasons for microregions partnerships arise from previous cooperation or common interest like waste management, local development, planning, tourism development, rural tourism, technical infrastructure, promotion, etc.

Sopirová (2000) states that municipalities merge into microregions on the basis of:

- a) the natural characteristics of the territory (geomorphological and climatic conditions)
- b) long-term historical characteristics of the territory (economic, cultural, social, traffic)
- c) current needs of the municipalities

3.6.3 Types of microregions

According to Škrabal et al. (2006) microregions can be classified according to following aspects:

- The proportion of the sizes of the first and the second largest municipality:
 - An association of smaller municipalities surrounding the gravitational center which is in some way significant
 - An association of approximately equal size municipalities where there is no municipality, which size is double of the population of the second largest municipality
- Reasons of voluntary cooperation:
 - Microregions which incurred for a specific purpose
 - Microregions which cooperate primarily for the purpose of area development
- Legal personality / form:
 - Microregions without any legal basis, only based on a voluntary cooperation

3.6.4 Microregion and strategic plan

The problem arises when approving a strategic document at the microregion level. According to Perlín and Bičík (2006), more municipalities should participate on the preparation, creation and implementation of the proposed activities. The strategic plan is approved by each member municipality and thus, they are committed to compliance with

the proposed programme. But this is a very difficult step and therefore a document that is prepared for multiple municipalities, is approved only by just some municipalities and then formally accepted by the rest of them (Perlín and Bičík, 2006).

3.7 Current status of microregional associations in Slovakia

There is no official list of microregional associations in Slovak republic, thus it is not possible to find out the exact number of microregions. Slovak Environmental Agency attempted to find out the exact number of microregions in Slovak republic in 2004 and the results were as follows. According to Kostrová (2014), the number of micro regions in 2004 was 245, after update in 2008 the number decreased to 220. The total number of municipalities in Slovak republic is 2933, while 2181 of them are members of micro regional associations (74,36%).

Table 1: Number of microregions in the Slovak republic in 2008

| Region in Slovakia | Number of micro regions | Number of municipalities | Number of inhabitants |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bratislavský | 7 | 50 | 129 085 |
| Trnavský | 11 | 121 | 255 897 |
| Nitriansky | 26 | 233 | 301 794 |
| Trenčiansky | 25 | 203 | 247 610 |
| Banskobystrický | 55 | 543 | 477 802 |
| Žilinský | 23 | 263 | 419 710 |
| Prešovský | 34 | 371 | 247 730 |
| Košický | 39 | 397 | 416 336 |
| Total | 220 | 2181 | 2 495 964 |

Source: Kostrová (2014)

3.7.1 Management of the microregions

According to Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipalities, as amended, the bodies of association of municipalities are as follows:

- a) General Meeting of the Association
- b) The President of the association
- c) Association Council
- d) The Audit Committee Association

3.7.2 Financing of the microregions

Management of the microregion association shall be governed by generally binding regulations, principles and rules approved by the General Assembly. The basis of the association management is the budget of the association which is established for a period of one calendar year (Sirotná, 2014).

Association budget includes revenues and expenses associated with the operation of the association and how they were obtained. The revenues of the association are in particular:

- a) revenues from its own activities,
- b) income from membership fees,
- c) subsidies, grants, donations and contributions,
- d) other incomes

The Association shall keep accounts under the relevant laws of general application, principles and rules. The annual accounts of the association are audited (Sirotná, 2014).

According to Sirotná (2014), financing can be divided into two main groups:

- a) internal financing

In the case of internal financing it is mainly financing from the fund. The annual deposit (membership fee) and a single deposit are determined when the microregion is

established. Membership fee can be changed by the General Assembly or other authority. The finance raised from membership fees are the sole property of the association and may only be used for expenses related to the activities of the Association.

b) external financing

External financing includes financial resources such as subsidies from regional, national and European sources. Additional financial and other resources include heritage for the benefit of the association, the proceeds of public collections, revenue from shares, interest on funds in financial institutions, income from own economic activities and non-financial assets - tangible assets and know-how.

The funds of the association shall be kept in a separate account set up for that purpose in a financial institution.

4 Situational analysis

Mix of the two approaches to the elaboration of the strategic plan (expert and community method) was used for the situational analysis of the microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda - Bezovec.

4.1 Establishment of a microregion

Association of the municipalities in the region of Tematín has already formed in 1994 and the members were Modrovka, Modrová, Stará Lehota, Nová Lehota, Hrádok and Lúka. The reason why this association was created was the joint development strategy. The objective of the strategy was to strengthen the economy of the area by taking the advantage of the location and local resources to subsequently inhibit the development of the tourism in the area. Municipalities wanted to preserve the original structure of the country which consisted of agricultural and forest areas to promote the return to the traditions (Development programme of Kálnica 2015-2023).

Microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda - Bezovec was established on October 31st, 2003 and is registered in the Regional Office in Trenčín under the company identification number 37915801. The region consists of 11 municipalities: Beckov, Hôrka nad Váhom, Hrádok, Kálnica, Kočovce, Lúka, Modrová, Modrovka, Nová Lehota, Nová Ves nad Váhom and Stará Lehota.

The decision to establish a microregion was based on the natural and settlement similarities between the municipalities and is characterized by natural (territory and its characteristics, geographical disposition) and settlement characteristics (small differences in the size of municipalities - territorial and demographic, specialization in similar economic sectors). Another important factor in establishing the microregion was previous cooperation between the municipalities in processing the municipal waste. However, the main reason to establish the cooperation between the municipalities was to obtain the finance from the European Union funds, which is more likely possible for a microregion

itself than for an individual municipality (Programme of economic and social development, 2007).

The purpose of the association is a mutual cooperation of municipalities in tourism development, environmental protection, preservation of cultural and social traditions, mutual support, exchanging information and coordination in organizing various events.

Bodies of the microregion are: General Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Advisory Working Committee. Legal representative of the region is the chairman who acts on behalf of the Association is the Mayor of Nová Ves nad Váhom.

4.2 Geography and climate

Microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda - Bezovec is located in the western part of Slovakia, between the towns of Nové Mesto nad Váhom and Piešťany with a good transport service (highway and main railway track). From the eastern side, it is bordered by the mountains of Považský Inovec, from the western side the border is created by the river Váh. Distance east - west is about 10 km, distance north - south about 23 km. The lowest altitude is in the municipality of Modrovka (167 m.a.s.l.) and the highest peak is in the municipality of Kálnica (910 m.a.s.l.).

Microregion can be divided into three climates – warm, mildly warm and mildly cold. In the western part of the microregion the climate is slightly dry, ranging to very humid in the eastern part of the region (surroundings of Považský Inovec mountains). The average annual air temperature ranges from 4 to 10°C in the coldest parts of the region, while in the warmest parts, the average annual temperature ranges from 7 to 12 °C. The annual average rainfall in the region varies in the range from 550 to 1000 mm.

4.3 Demography

4.3.1 Population development

Total area of the microregion is 19,2 ha and total population as of 2015 is 7597 as reported in the Table 2 and the map in Attachment A. In terms of area, the biggest municipality is Beckov and the smallest municipality is Modrovka as it used to be part of the municipality Lúka in the past. Population wise, the biggest municipality is Kočovce and the municipality with the least inhabitants is Nová Lehota. Population density is quite low 39,86 population per km², and this number is below the Slovak average which is 110,84 population per km².

Table 2: Area, population and population density of the microregion municipalities in 2015

| Municipality | Area (ha) | Population | Population density (population per km ²) |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|--|
| Beckov | 2863 | 1349 | 47,12 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 1832 | 708 | 38,65 |
| Hrádok | 2414 | 681 | 28,21 |
| Kálnica | 2640 | 1040 | 39,39 |
| Kočovce | 1532 | 1463 | 95,5 |
| Lúka | 1741 | 635 | 36,47 |
| Modrová | 1167,5 | 521 | 44,63 |
| Modrovka | 316 | 209 | 66,14 |
| Nová Lehota | 1821 | 206 | 11,31 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 1211 | 556 | 45,91 |
| Stará Lehota | 1617 | 229 | 14,16 |
| Microregion | 19154,5 | 7597 | 39,66 |

Source: own work, Statistical office of the Slovak republic

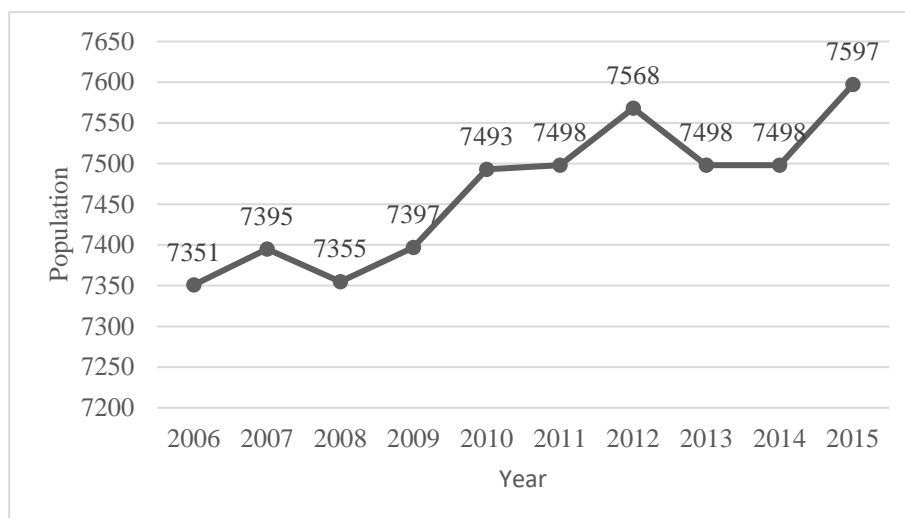
Population of the microregion has been growing steadily, especially in bigger municipalities. The reason could be because of the current trend of living in the countryside rather than in the towns as most of the municipalities are not far from the district town Nové Mesto nad Váhom. Another reason could be the convenient location near the main highway D1. However, there are some significant differences between the municipalities. Bigger municipalities which have a convenient access to the highway D1 and are close to the district town of Nové Mesto nad Váhom recorded a steady growth of population. On the other hand, smaller and more remote municipalities struggle with the population decline. Therefore, the overall population growth is distorted by the population growth of the big municipalities and does not reflect the current population growth trend properly which can be observed in the Table 3.

Table 3: Population development in the microregion

| Municipality/Year | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Beckov | 1340 | 1342 | 1291 | 1307 | 1337 | 1330 | 1353 | 1330 | 1330 | 1349 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 682 | 688 | 685 | 688 | 697 | 691 | 705 | 691 | 691 | 708 |
| Hrádok | 589 | 605 | 620 | 623 | 639 | 649 | 661 | 649 | 649 | 681 |
| Kálnica | 1041 | 1031 | 1038 | 1019 | 1014 | 1018 | 1046 | 1018 | 1018 | 1040 |
| Kočovce | 1391 | 1397 | 1395 | 1440 | 1457 | 1462 | 1457 | 1462 | 1462 | 1463 |
| Lúka | 570 | 588 | 594 | 589 | 615 | 624 | 622 | 624 | 624 | 635 |
| Modrová | 499 | 502 | 503 | 523 | 527 | 526 | 522 | 526 | 526 | 521 |
| Modrovka | 225 | 222 | 221 | 215 | 213 | 209 | 206 | 209 | 209 | 209 |
| Nová Lehota | 228 | 224 | 215 | 206 | 201 | 201 | 207 | 201 | 201 | 206 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 524 | 535 | 541 | 538 | 552 | 551 | 556 | 551 | 551 | 556 |
| Stará Lehota | 262 | 261 | 252 | 249 | 241 | 237 | 233 | 237 | 237 | 229 |
| Microregion | 7351 | 7395 | 7355 | 7397 | 7493 | 7498 | 7568 | 7498 | 7498 | 7597 |

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

Chart 1: Population development in the microregion



Source: own work, Statistical office of the Slovak republic

4.3.2 Age structure

Microregion age structure is influenced by ageing population and high ageing index which is not unusual in the countryside. The average ageing index in Slovakia as for 2011 is 141,7 and the ageing index of the microregion is below the average. However, as seen in the Table 4, the ageing index in the two most remote municipalities in terms of transport accessibility (Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota) is not so favourable, as in Nová Lehota there are twice as more people over 65 than children which could cause problems in the future.

Table 4: Overview of the age structure in the microregion and ageing index as in 2011 census

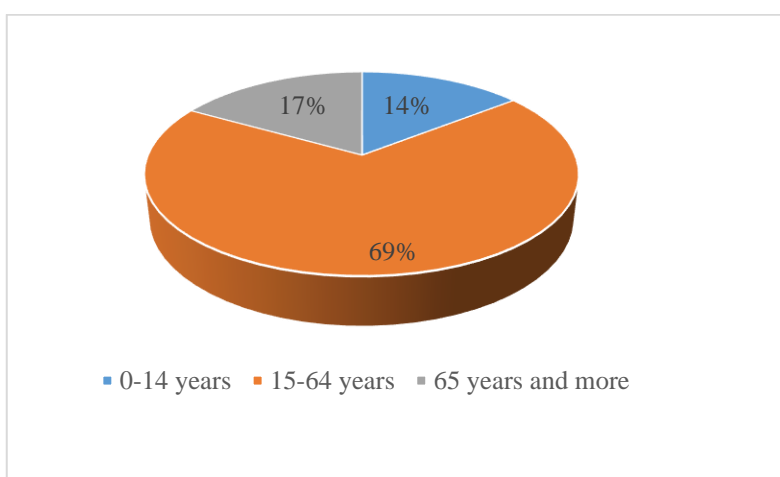
| Municipality/Age | 0-14 years | 15-64 years | 65 years and more | Ageing index |
|------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Beckov | 195 | 932 | 216 | 110,8 |
| Hrádok | 92 | 455 | 111 | 120,7 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 96 | 485 | 120 | 125,0 |
| Kálnica | 143 | 702 | 186 | 130,1 |
| Kočovce | 218 | 1 017 | 232 | 106,4 |
| Lúka | 95 | 439 | 87 | 91,6 |
| Modrová | 76 | 358 | 83 | 109,2 |
| Modrovka | 27 | 146 | 31 | 114,8 |
| Nová Lehota | 26 | 122 | 57 | 219,2 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 97 | 360 | 104 | 107,2 |
| Stará Lehota | 23 | 170 | 43 | 187,0 |
| Microregion | 1 088 | 5 186 | 1 270 | 129,3 |

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

However, the overall age structure of the microregion shows that there are still more residents in the age group of 0-14 years than in the age group of 65 years and more which again, reflects the distortion between the individual age groups between the municipalities.

Chart 2: Graphic overview of the age structure in the microregion as in 2011 census



Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

4.3.3 Migration and total increase

The positive numbers in the migration increase in the Table 5 indicate that the microregion is attractive for living. Again, the problem arises concerning the two remote municipalities (Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota) and also the municipality of Modrovka, where the migration increase has been negative in recent years. The reason of this development could be a less favourable location near the highway and transport accessibility than other municipalities have, another problem can be an insufficient quality of the road infrastructure and less developed network of civil engineering.

Table 5: Development of the migration increase in the microregion

| Migration increase | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Municipality/Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Beckov | -34 | 21 | 34 | 1 | 41 | 4 | -3 | 5 | 0 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | -3 | 5 | 6 | -4 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 27 | 13 |
| Hrádok | 13 | 0 | 18 | 6 | 2 | 24 | 9 | 15 | 15 |
| Kálnica | 9 | -10 | -3 | 4 | 18 | -1 | 4 | 5 | 14 |
| Kočovce | 4 | 43 | 22 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 24 | 23 | 12 |
| Lúka | 8 | -3 | 26 | 5 | 3 | 13 | 4 | 19 | 9 |
| Modrová | -3 | 22 | 1 | 2 | -6 | -1 | -1 | -1 | 2 |
| Modrovka | -3 | -2 | -2 | -2 | 5 | 6 | -3 | -5 | -6 |
| Nová Lehota | -6 | -5 | -2 | -2 | 4 | -3 | -7 | 0 | -1 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 4 | -6 | 14 | 2 | -2 | 3 | -7 | -6 | 1 |
| Stará Lehota | -6 | -4 | -2 | 0 | -5 | -1 | -1 | -10 | -4 |
| Microregion | -17 | 61 | 112 | 17 | 72 | 47 | 22 | 72 | 55 |

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

Regarding the total increase, the numbers are positive again, though it is obvious that the natural increase is quite low and the main reason of the growth of microregion population is migration. This means that there are less children born and consequently the population is ageing. The situation is once again the worst in the two remote municipalities (Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota) but also in the municipality of Modrovka where the total increase has been negative in last three years according to the Table 6.

Table 6: Development of the total increase in the microregion

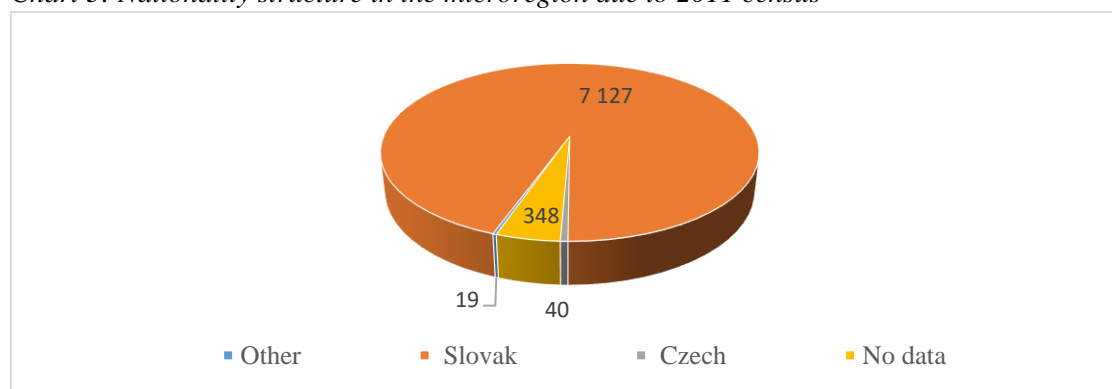
| Total increase | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Municipality/Year | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Beckov | -51 | 16 | 30 | -7 | 41 | -4 | -6 | 6 | 0 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | -3 | 3 | 9 | -6 | 14 | 3 | -5 | 29 | 16 |
| Hrádok | 15 | 3 | 16 | 10 | -1 | 20 | 9 | 21 | 19 |
| Kálnica | 7 | -19 | -5 | 4 | 23 | -6 | -4 | -3 | 5 |
| Kočovce | -2 | 45 | 17 | 5 | -5 | 6 | 21 | 17 | 9 |
| Lúka | 6 | -5 | 26 | 9 | 1 | 13 | 3 | 19 | 6 |
| Modrová | 1 | 20 | 4 | -1 | -1 | -1 | -3 | -6 | 3 |
| Modrovka | -1 | -6 | -2 | -4 | 3 | 3 | -1 | -5 | -8 |
| Nová Lehota | -9 | -9 | -5 | 0 | 4 | -1 | -7 | -1 | -5 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 6 | -3 | 14 | -1 | -3 | 0 | -11 | -3 | 1 |
| Stará Lehota | -9 | -3 | -8 | -4 | -6 | -4 | -1 | -13 | -10 |
| Microregion | -40 | 42 | 96 | 5 | 70 | 29 | -5 | 61 | 36 |

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

4.3.4 Nationality

Chart 3 shows that vast majority of the microregion residents are of Slovak nationality (95%). Category of Other includes Roma, Moravian and Hungarian nationality and accounts for less than 1% of the microregion nationality structure. About 1% of the microregion residents stated they are of the Czech nationality. Category of No data represents residents who decided not to state their nationality in census.

Chart 3: Nationality structure in the microregion due to 2011 census



Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

4.4 Educational structure

The educational structure represents all inhabitants in the microregion, therefore No education category provides distorted information as the children and elementary school pupils are included. However, this does not change the fact that the educational level in the microregion is not at a very high level as most of the citizens have finished either elementary or a secondary education without a leaving exam. In bigger municipalities, the share of the population with higher education or university degree is bigger. This trend of increasing educational level will probably continue to grow in the future because many young people study at universities nowadays.

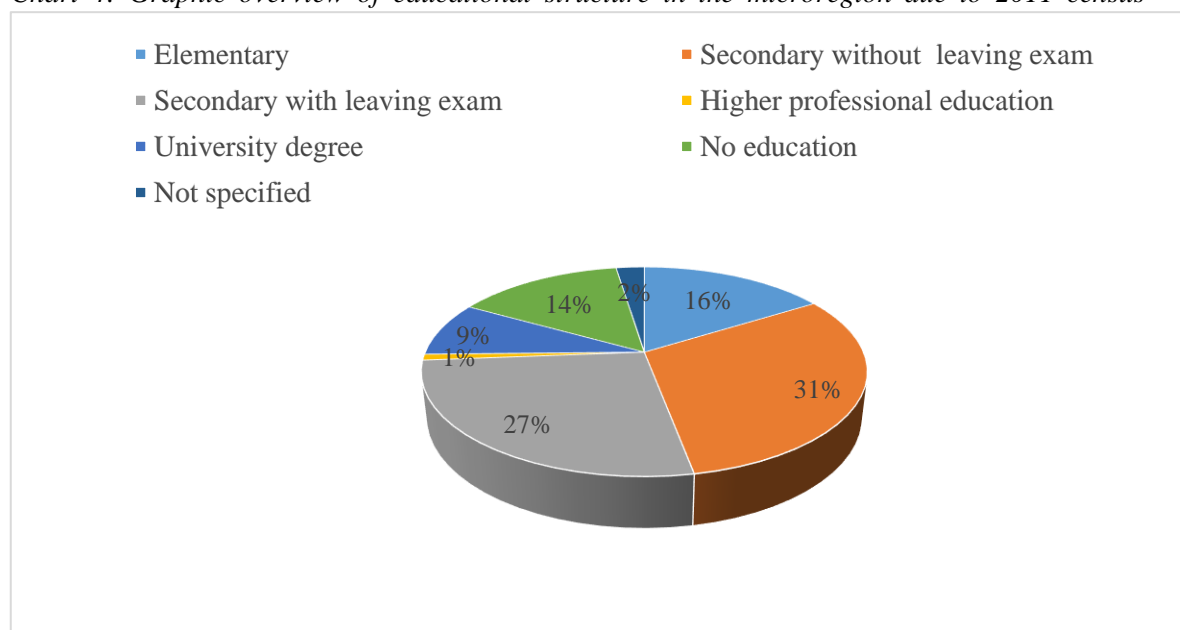
Table 7: Educational structure in the microregion

| Municipality/ Education | Elementary | Secondary without leaving exam | Secondary with leaving exam | Higher professional education | University degree | No education | Not specified | Total |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|
| Beckov | 185 | 410 | 372 | 18 | 127 | 195 | 36 | 1 343 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 103 | 211 | 208 | 7 | 57 | 96 | 19 | 701 |
| Hrádok | 118 | 213 | 179 | 4 | 44 | 92 | 8 | 658 |
| Kálnica | 151 | 336 | 282 | 7 | 81 | 143 | 31 | 1 031 |
| Kočovce | 241 | 452 | 376 | 13 | 125 | 219 | 41 | 1 467 |
| Lúka | 83 | 201 | 155 | 9 | 64 | 95 | 14 | 621 |
| Modrová | 102 | 158 | 131 | 6 | 35 | 76 | 9 | 517 |
| Modrovka | 33 | 64 | 57 | 0 | 16 | 27 | 7 | 204 |
| Nová Lehota | 69 | 54 | 39 | 1 | 7 | 26 | 9 | 205 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 81 | 154 | 158 | 4 | 62 | 97 | 5 | 561 |
| Stará Lehota | 53 | 75 | 60 | 1 | 19 | 23 | 5 | 236 |
| Microregion | 1 219 | 2 328 | 2 017 | 70 | 637 | 1 089 | 184 | 7 544 |

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

Chart 4 represents the percentage of the residents' education in each of the categories. The largest category is the secondary education without a leaving exam which accounts for 31%. Secondary education with a leaving exam is represented by 27% of residents. Higher education, consisting either of university degree or higher professional education, share is 10% of the microregion educational structure. As for no education category, either no education or no information about the education is included there and it accounts for 14% of the educational structure.

Chart 4: Graphic overview of educational structure in the microregion due to 2011 census



Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

4.5 Employment

4.5.1 Unemployment

Unfortunately, there are not any annual data available for the unemployment rate nor economically active population at the level of municipalities in the Slovak republic. The only data available on a yearly basis is the number of unemployed in the municipalities.

Table 8 shows the development of number of the unemployed in the recent years. The influence of the global crisis in 2009 is obvious as the number of unemployed has doubled in 2009. Since then the situation has improved and number of unemployed has been decreasing slowly over the years.

Table 8: Development of the number of unemployed in the microregion

| Municipality | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Beckov | 22 | 25 | 57 | 57 | 64 | 63 | 66 | 54 | 48 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 11 | 13 | 30 | 27 | 23 | 30 | 57 | 30 | 27 |
| Hrádok | 10 | 17 | 36 | 22 | 31 | 30 | 43 | 35 | 27 |
| Kálnica | 21 | 22 | 50 | 37 | 34 | 40 | 36 | 36 | 31 |
| Kočovce | 38 | 33 | 77 | 73 | 74 | 89 | 86 | 79 | 68 |
| Lúka | 21 | 15 | 31 | 28 | 26 | 37 | 42 | 34 | 34 |
| Modrová | 11 | 18 | 40 | 29 | 31 | 30 | 41 | 26 | 33 |
| Modrovka | 4 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Nová Lehota | 4 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 14 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 19 | 15 | 34 | 17 | 16 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Stará Lehota | 10 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Microregion | 171 | 179 | 387 | 300 | 327 | 358 | 397 | 316 | 293 |

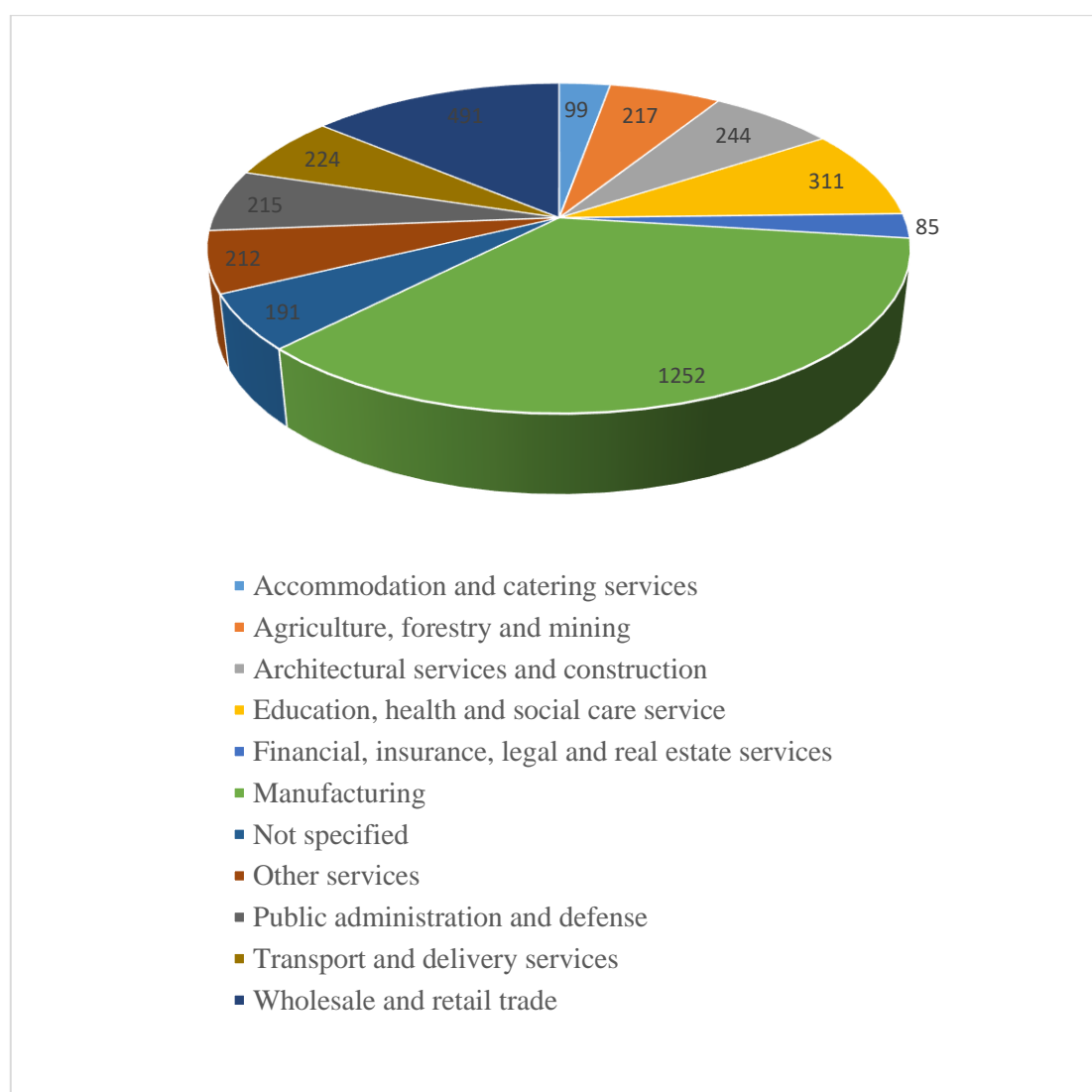
Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

4.5.2 Employment structure

The highest number of the employed is in the manufacturing sector (35% of the total number of the employed in the microregion) and the wholesale and retail trade (14% of the total number of the employed in the microregion). Table 9 shows the reason of this situation as the two biggest employers in the microregion are manufacturer of electric lighting Hella Slovakia Front-Lighting s.r.o. and C & A Mode s.r.o. which is a distribution centre for the C & A retail chain of clothing. Quite high percentage (9%) of the employed work in the education and health care services which reflects the fact that three of the

elementary schools which are also connected with kindergartens still belong to one of the biggest employers in the microregion. Almost 7% of employed work in architectural and construction services, most likely as natural persons. As two of the municipalities (Kálnica and Kočovce) belong to the biggest employers in the microregion, this fact has also reflected in the employment structure and 6% of the employed work in the public administration which is quite a high number.

Chart 5: Overview of the employment structure according to sectors, 2011



Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

Table 9: Overview of the biggest employers in the microregion as for the year 2016

| Name of the company | Municipality | Nr. of employees | Sector |
|---|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Hella Slovakia Front-Lighting s.r.o. | Kočovce | 500 - 999 | Manufacture of electric lighting |
| C & A Mode s.r.o. | Kočovce | 250 - 499 | Retail sale of clothing |
| Senior Modrová, n.o. | Modrová | 25 - 49 | Other residential care services |
| Základná škola s materskou školou J. M. Hurbana, Beckov | Beckov | 25 - 49 | Elementary education |
| Základná škola s materskou školou, Kočovce | Kočovce | 25 - 49 | Elementary education |
| Základná škola s materskou školou, Lúka | Lúka | 25 - 49 | Elementary education |
| ADAJA spol. s r.o. | Nová Ves nad Váhom | 25 - 49 | Cargo transportation |
| Municipality of Kočovce | Kočovce | 25 - 49 | Public administration |
| Municipality of Beckov | Beckov | 25 - 49 | Public administration |

Source: *finstat.sk*, own work

4.6 Housing

Most of the housing units in the microregion were constructed between the years 1946 and 1990 which shows that most of the housing units are quite old nowadays. However, as it can be seen in the Table 10, there are significant differences in the construction of the housing units after the year 1990. It could be noticed that in the bigger municipalities with a good location near the highway and the district town of Nové Mesto nad Váhom (Beckov, Kočovce), the construction of the housing units has been in progress in recent years. However, the construction of the housing units in the small and more remote

municipalities (Modrovka, Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota) ranges from one to three which could be considered as almost none.

Table 10: Overview of housing units according to their construction period due to the 2011 census

| Municipality | Before 1945 | 1946-1990 | 1991-2005 | After 2006 | Not specified |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Beckov | 69 | 228 | 48 | 51 | 95 |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 46 | 123 | 21 | 2 | 67 |
| Hrádok | 45 | 132 | 13 | 23 | 88 |
| Kálnica | 62 | 220 | 18 | 14 | 103 |
| Kočovce | 54 | 312 | 39 | 40 | 64 |
| Lúka | 17 | 130 | 34 | 14 | 47 |
| Modrová | 21 | 93 | 21 | 11 | 36 |
| Modrovka | 4 | 48 | 5 | 2 | 18 |
| Nová Lehota | 16 | 44 | 0 | 1 | 69 |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 49 | 117 | 16 | 14 | 30 |
| Stará Lehota | 14 | 63 | 3 | 0 | 62 |
| Microregion | 397 | 1510 | 218 | 172 | 679 |

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic, own work

4.7 Civic amenities

4.7.1 Educational facilities

There are a few kindergartens and elementary schools in the microregion. While elementary schools can be found only in bigger municipalities (Beckov, Kálnica, Kočovce and Lúka), kindergartens are located in every municipality except the smallest ones (Nová Ves nad Váhom, Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota). There are no high schools

nor art schools in the microregion. The nearest high schools, secondary grammar schools and art schools are located in the proximity of a district town of Nové Mesto nad Váhom.

4.7.2 Health care and social services

Regarding the health care, there are a few small health care centres in the microregion and again, they are concentrated in bigger municipalities. The biggest health centre is located in Beckov – there is a dentist, a paediatrician and a general practitioner. General practitioner from Beckov also has an office in Kálnica but her office hours are only on Tuesday afternoons and Thursdays. Another health centre is in Hôrka nad Váhom and it serves to residents of the nearby villages. There is a children doctor and general practitioner in this health centre. In the municipality of Modrová, there is a general practitioner, but the office hours are on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Friday afternoons.

Pharmacies can be found in Beckov, Hôrka nad Váhom, Hrádok and Modrová. There is only one old people's home in the microregion, in the municipality of Modrová.

The social care service can be found in the municipality of Kočovce and Kálnica. There is an old people house in Modrová, which has a capacity of 48 rooms and 105 beds. This facility is also suitable for immobile persons and persons with disabilities.

4.7.3 Accommodation and catering facilities

Most of the accommodation facilities are usually located near the sightseeings (Beckov and Kočovce) or near the recreational centers (ski centres in Kálnica, ski centre Bezovec located near Modrová and Nová Lehota). Type of the accommodation facilities varies from guest houses and hotels to cottages and shared rooms in the family houses (these can be found primarily in the municipality of Modrová and Kálnica). As for the Beckov municipality, the facility Kúria Beckov has a capacity of 42 beds and also offers catering services as there is also a restaurant. Municipality of Kálnica offers accommodation services in the guesthouse Chata Kálnica and it has a capacity of 38 beds. Bezovec area offers accommodation in one hotel and two guesthouses. Hotel Inovec has a capacity of

69 beds and there is also a wellness centre with a swimming pool and sauna. Guesthouse Bezovec offers 46 beds and guesthouse Športchata 22 beds. However, Športchata is designed for the less demanding visitors.

Pub or a restaurant is located in every municipality of the microregion.

Grocery stores are in every municipality except the smallest ones (Modrovka, Nová Lehota, Stará Lehota). These usually offer more than just groceries but also drugs, cleaning supplies and simple kitchenware.

4.7.4 Cultural and sports facilities

Libraries can be found in all of the municipalities except the municipality of Modrovka. Most of them are open only a few days in the week, those in smaller municipalities only a few days in the month.

Post offices are located again, in all municipalities but the smallest ones. Registry offices are located only in bigger municipalities (Beckov, Hrádok, Kálnica, Kočovce, Lúka and Modrová).

Museum is located in the biggest municipality which has the most valuable sightseeings – Beckov. It has expositions of traditional folklore and various artefacts from different historical times. In front of the castle rock, there is a private museum called Miniskanzen which is dedicated to the Beckov castle and its history. Another small museum, so called ethnographic room is in the municipality of Kálnica which shows the history of the municipality of Kálnica.

Community centers can be found in Beckov, Hrádok, Kálnica, Modrová and Nová Lehota.

Regarding the sports facilities, almost all bigger municipalities have a football pitch, as football as a sport is very popular in the microregion. Some of the municipalities also have a tennis pitch or gyms (Beckov, Kočovce, Kálnica and Nová Ves nad Váhom).

Table 11: Overview of the civic amenities in the microregion

| Municipality | Beckov | Hôrka nad Váhom | Hrádok | Kálnica | Kočovce | Lúka | Modrová | Modrovka | Nová Lehota | Nová Ves nad Váhom | Stará Lehota |
|---|--------|-----------------|--------|---------|---------|------|---------|----------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Accommodation facilities | x | | | x | x | | x | | x | | |
| Community center | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | |
| Elementary school 1 st -4 th grade | x | | | x | x | x | | | | | |
| Elementary school 5 th – 9 th grade | x | | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Grocery shop | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | |
| Health center | x | x | | x | | x | x | | | | |
| Kindergarten | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | |
| Library | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x |
| Museum | x | | | x | | | | | | | |
| Pharmacy | x | x | x | | | | x | | | | |
| Post office | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | x |
| Registry office | x | | x | x | x | x | x | | | | |
| Restaurants, pubs and bars | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Old people's home | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| Sports facilities | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |

Source: Ministry of education, municipalities websites, Trenčín District Office, own work

4.8 Tourism

Microregion has a great potential for the tourism development. There are plenty of natural as well as historical sightseeings in the microregion which are easily accessible either by foot or by bicycle. However, the biggest potential lies in a beautiful and unspoilt nature of Považský Inovec mountains.

There are lot of historical and cultural sightseeings in the area of the microregion. Almost every municipality has a church or a chapel. There are two castles in the microregion area – recently reconstructed Beckov castle which is also a nationa cultural sightseeing (NKP) and ruins of Tematín castle in Považský Inovec mountains in the cadastre of the municipality of Lúka. Many manor houses are located in the microregion, most of them were built in 18th century and some of them are used as accommodation facilities (Kúria Beckov).

Figure 1: Beckov castle



Source: <http://www.obec-beckov.sk/pic/picture1.jpg>

There are already two recreational centers in the microregion – in the municipality of Kálnica there is a ski centre Piesky and recreational and ski centre Bezovec, near

municipality of Nová Lehota. Kálnica is the skiing center with the lowest altitude in the Slovak republic and during summer season it is considered to be one of the most important centers for grass skiing. During summer season the center is also used for mountain biking. Bezovec ski center is in service during the winter season with its 4 ski-lifts. Night skiing is available in both ski centers during the winter season.

In the cadaster of Beckov municipality, there is an artificial water reservoir Zelená voda. It is a system of artificial lakes which are infiltrated by water from the river Váh. In summer, there are excellent conditions for swimming and water sports but also for cycling, hiking and fishing.

Recently, popular TV sitcom Horná Dolná was shot in Nová Lehota and during summer holidays the municipality attracted many curious fans. Municipality sees its potential in tourism development by taking the advantage of the sitcom.

Table 12: Overview of the historical sightseeings in the microregion

| Municipality | Sightseeings |
|-----------------|---|
| Beckov | <p>Beckov castle (13th century)</p> <p>Protestant Church (15th century)</p> <p>Church of St. Joseph the Foster Father (17th century)</p> <p>Church of St. Stephen the King (15th century)</p> <p>Fortification system</p> <p>Manor house of the Ambrov family (17th century)</p> <p>Statue of Trinity</p> <p>Monument zone</p> <p>Memorial of WWI</p> |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | <p>Church of St. Peter and Paul</p> <p>Manor house of the Szokolóczy family</p> |
| Hrádok | <p>Slavonic fort (9th century)</p> <p>Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary</p> |
| Kálnica | <p>Ruins of monastery</p> |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Kočovce | 3 manor houses (18th century) St. John Nepomucký statue Wayside shrine Memorial for Romanian soldiers of WWII Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary Rakovský family tomb |
| Lúka | Tematín castle Manor house Church of Our Lady of Sorrows |
| Modrová | Church of St. Michael Archangel (12th century) |
| Modrovka | Belfry |
| Nová Lehota | Chapel of St. Anthony Protestant church Memorial of Slovak National Uprising |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | Chapel Church of St. Martin the Bishop |
| Stará Lehota | Church of St. Nicholas the Bishop (13th century) Memorial of WWII |

Source: municipalities websites, region.nmnv.sk, own work

4.8.1 Tourist and educational trails

Microregion is connected with a network of marked tourist trails and also educational trails. The most important marked tourist trails are: Red trail 0705b Bezovec - Chata pod Inovcom, Blue trail 2419a Beckov - Panská Javorina, Blue trail 2425 Lúka - Bezovec, Blue trail 2418a Hrádok- Sedlo pod Skalinami and Yellow trail 8116 Ruin of the Tematín castle – Pod Priel'áčinou (povazsky-inovec.oma.sk).

There are five educational trails in the microregion, three in the municipality of Beckov, one in the municipality of Kočovce and one in the municipality of Kálnica. The educational trails in the municipality of Beckov include the educational trail Beckovské

hradné bralo which consists of 3 stops and describes the geology and geomorphology of the area. Educational trail Sychrov consists of 3 stops. Sychrov is a natural reservation and the educational trail provides information about the pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*) in this reservation. The last educational trail is called Beckovské Skalice, consisting of 4 stops and it describes the flora and fauna in the area. In the municipality of Kálnica, there is a trail Včelársky náučný chodník Jozefa Miloslava Hurbana. It provides information about beekeeping (8 stops) as this activity is very popular in the municipality. The last educational trail is in the municipality of Kočovce. The trail is called 9 zastavení na Rakovského chodníku, it has 9 stops and its content is oriented towards history and nature sciences (krizom-krazom.eu).

4.8.2 Cycling trails

There is also a rich network of cycling trails in the microregion. The most important trails crossing the microregion include Trail 020 from Nová Bošáca to Topoľčany which length is 48 km, Trail 2301 from Piešťany to Nemšová which has 59 km and Trail 8202 from Piešťany to Modrovka which is 6 km long. The most important trail crossing the microregion is Trail 002, so called Vážska cyklomagistrála from Komárno to Žilina which has length of 162 km. This trail is also connected to the network of Czech cycling trails (tn.cykloportal.sk).

4.9 Transport accessibility and infrastructure

4.9.1 Transport accessibility

Most of the municipalities in the microregion (Beckov, Kočovce, Lúka and Hrádok) are located near the highway D1 which connects the capital Bratislava with the northern and eastern part of Slovakia and they have direct connection. There are only roads of second

and third class in the microregion as can be seen in the Table 13. Only the smallest municipalities (Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota) are accessible by the roads of third class. Most of them are not in the good condition and construction works are needed to improve the situation.

Table 13: Overview of the road network in the microregion

| Roads of second class | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| II/507 | Gabčíkovo - Žilina |
| II/515 | Nové Mesto nad Váhom |
| Roads of third class | |
| III/1232 | Modrovka - Stará Lehota - Bojná |
| III/1233 | Stará Lehota |
| III/1234 | Kálnica |
| III/1235 | Hrádok |
| III/1236 | Hôrka nad Váhom |

Source: *cdb.sk, own work*

There is no railway track in the region. The nearest train station is in the district town of Nové Mesto nad Váhom.

Therefore, the bus transportation is very important for the microregion as it connects the municipalities with district town of Nové Mesto nad Váhom and regional town of Trenčín while the municipalities of the Bezovec area (Stará Lehota, Nová Lehota, Modrová, Modrovka and Lúka) are also connected with the district town Piešťany. Bus connections are provided by Slovak bus transportation company Trenčín (SAD Trenčín) and Slovak bus transportation company Trnava (Arriva Trnava). However, the bus connections are not available in the desired frequency.

Table 14: Overview of bus transportation providers in the microregion

| Bus lines SAD Trenčín | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 304415 | Nové Mesto nad Váhom - Beckov |
| 304416 | Nové Mesto nad Váhom – Beckov - Kálnica |
| 304417 | Hôrka nad Váhom - Nové Mesto nad Váhom - Beckov - Trenčín |
| 304418 | Nové Mesto nad Váhom – Modrová - Nová Lehota |
| 309416 | Trenčín - Beckov - Kočovce, Rakoľuby - Kálnica |
| Bus lines Arriva Trnava | |
| 204408 | Piešťany – Modrová - Nová Lehota |
| 204426 | Piešťany - Lúka nad Váhom – Beckov - Trenčín |

Source: *sadtrnava.sk, sadtn.sk, own work*

4.9.2 Infrastructure

As an infrastructure are considered sewerage, water supply, gas pipelines and various sewerage and electricity facilities. All of the municipalities have access to water supply. However, only two of them are connected to the public water supply (Beckov, Modrová), other municipalities are connected to their own municipal water supplies (ruvztn.sk, 2009). Some municipal water supplies are connected together via the joint companies: Sochoň (Kočovce, Nová Ves nad Váhom and Hôrka nad Váhom) and Šáchor (Modrovka and Lúka).

The biggest weakness of the microregion is the sewerage system. Only four municipalities have built the sewerage systems so far (Beckov, Hôrka nad Váhom, Kočovce and Nová Ves nad Váhom). Some municipalities have already introduced their sewerage system projects (Kálnica, Hrádok, Lúka, Modrová, Modrovka) and the construction might start in the near future. However, smaller municipalities do not have sufficient amount of finance for the new sewerage systems. Consequently, the wastewater ends up in the streams and rivers polluting them and degrading the environment.

Majority of the municipalities has the gas pipelines, except the two smallest and most peripheral municipalities – Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota. Wood and gas cylinders are used for heating in these municipalities.

Table 15: Overview of the infrastructure in the municipalities

| Municipality | Sewerage | Water supply | Gas pipelines | Sewerage treatment |
|------------------|----------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Beckov | x | x | x | x |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | x | x | x | x |
| Hrádok | | x | x | |
| Kálnica | | x | x | |
| Kočovce | x | x | x | x |
| Lúka | | x | x | |
| Modrová | | x | x | |
| Modrovka | | x | x | |
| Nová Lehota | | x | | |
| Nová Ves n/Váhom | x | x | x | x |
| Stará Lehota | | x | | |

Source: municipalities websites, ruvztn.sk, own work

4.10 Environment and nature protection

4.10.1 NATURA 2000

There are three NATURA 2000 reservations in the microregion area:

- *Prieľačina* – this protected area is a part of the Protected landscape area (CHKO) Biele Karpaty and its area is 36,66 ha. Subject of the protection are biotops of beech – fir and linden – maple forests and from animal species it is a beetle *rosalia longicorn* (*Rosalia alpina*). *Prieľačina* belongs to the cadastre of municipalities of Hôrka nad Váhom, Hrádok and Podhradie.

- *Beckovské Skalice* – the area is also part of the CHKO Biele Karpaty and its area is 33,03 ha. Subject of the protection are animal species of greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*), eastern egg-eater (*Eriogaster catax*), Danube clouded yellow butterfly (*Colias myrmidone*) and Jersey tiger butterfly (*Callimorpha quadripunctaria*). The protected area is in the cadastre of the municipality of Beckov.

- *Tematínske vrchy* – the last and the biggest area is also part of the CHKO Biele Karpaty and its area is 2520,31 ha. Species that are subject of the protection include yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*), stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), rosalia longicorn (*Rosalia alpina*) and *Dianthus praecox subsp. Lumnitzeri*. Protected area Tematínske vrchy is part of the cadastre of the municipalities of Hrádok, Lúka, Modrová and Stará Lehota (sopsr.sk).

4.10.2 Protected areas and natural monuments

Microregion is very rich in various protected areas – there are 12 of them (5 natural monuments, 5 nature reserves, 2 national nature reserves and 4 protected trees).

In the cadastre of the municipality of Lúka, west to the ruins of Tematín castle, there is a nature reserve Tematínska steppe (60 ha), where the thermophilic species of flora and fauna are located.

Modrovská jaskyňa is the largest cave in Považský Inovec mountains. It is located in the municipality of Modrová and it was discovered in 1991. The cave is not open to the public in order to protect it. Potential visitors can only enter it while accompanied with the member of Inovec association.

In the cadastre of municipalities Hrádok, Lúka and Stará Lehota is a national nature reserve Javorníček. Its area is of 15,1 hectares and it was declared in 1982. Another nature reserve in the area, Kňazí vrch was declared in 1988. The last nature reserve in the area is Priel'ačina with an area of 35,87 hectares and it was declared in 1988 to protect the forest communities.

Natural monument Pseudoterasa Váhu which has an area of 11,82 hectares and natural monument Obtočník Váhu were declared in 1983 to protect their unique geomorphological formations. Both of these are located in the cadastre of the municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom.

Natural monument Mokvavý prameň is located 1,5 km south of the municipality of Nová Lehota. It was declared in 1983 on an area of 2,1 hectares to protect marsh flora and fauna. There are also two nature reserves in the cadastre of the municipality – Dubový vršok and Šviblov. Both were declared in 1993.

In the cadastre of the municipality of Beckov is located an interesting geomorphological formation - protected monument Skalka. It is a 20m tall limestone emerging from the river Váh. It was declared in 1983. Beckovská jaskyňa is a cave which was discovered in 1983. Again, it is not open to the public. Beckovské Skalice is a nature reserve famous for its valuable flora, especially orchids. It was declared in 2002 and is also a NATURA 2000 protected area.

Kálnická dolina is a valley famous for its rich flora – there are 14 kinds of orchids. Another valleys which are rich of fauna and flora can be found in Hrádok and Hôrka nad Váhom.

There are many streams of drinking water in the microregion, especially in the municipality of Lúka.

4.11 Culture and sports

Various social, cultural and sport events take place in the microregion during the year. Annual events include the municipality feasts (“hody”), music and cultural festivals in Beckov and sports events like table tennis or football tournaments.

Municipality feasts (in Slovak „hody“) take place annually and dates vary within the municipalities. Usually, feast is connected with a dedication of the church or a patron saint of the municipality. During the hody feast there can be held small markets with the

traditional products and food. In the evening of the feast day, there is usually a feast party with a live music. Another annual tradition is setting a maypole which is usually a coniferous tree. This event takes place on May, 1st. Among the other cultural events held in the municipalities belong various balls, welcoming the St. Nicholas or Mother's day held on second Sunday in May.

Annual music and cultural festivals in the microregion are Vidlomet and Beckovské slávnosti. Both of these events take place in the municipality of Beckov. Vidlomet festival can be described as a pitchfork throwing championship accompanied by music performances. Beckovské slávnosti is a cultural nad musical festival also with a small fair with traditional products, historical and music performances. These two events take place usually in the mid of July.

Different events are organized by various associations and organizations. Every municipality except Nová Lehota has their own football club and each of them plays in a different regional league. Some municipalities have also table tennis clubs (Beckov, Kálnica, Kočovce, Modrová and Nová Ves nad Váhom) and the annual table tennis tournaments within the microregion are organized. Every municipality has volunteer firemen and they often participate in various competitions.

Regarding the art and music, there is an amateur theatre in Kálnica, choir in Beckov, brass band in Modrová called Modrovanka and choir Modrovanky - Krojovanky.

There are several hunting associations in the microregion – in the municipalities of Beckov, Hrádok, Hôrka, Kálnica, Nová Ves nad Váhom, Kočovce, Modrová, Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota.

4.12 Microregion and municipalities budget

Table 16 shows revenues, expenditures and balance for single municipalities as for 2015. In this year, municipality of Beckov had the biggest deficit, probably because of the

finishing works on the castle reconstruction. Also Hôrka nad Váhom and Modrová have small deficits. Otherwise, the balance of the rest of the municipalities is positive.

Table 16: Overview of revenues, expenditures and final balance of the municipalities in the microregion

| Municipality | Revenues | Expenditures | Balance |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Beckov | 1 236 641 € | 1 372 443 € | -135 802 € |
| Hôrka nad Váhom | 260 234 € | 263 687 € | -3 453 € |
| Hrádok | 319 650 € | 240 260 € | +79 390 € |
| Kálnica | 614 977 € | 549 173 € | +65 804 € |
| Kočovce | 1 206 873 € | 1 050 599 € | +156 274 € |
| Lúka | 742 829 € | 714 352 € | +28 477 € |
| Modrová | 189 072 € | 162 834 € | +26 238 € |
| Modrovka | 129 419 € | 130 534 € | -1 115 € |
| Nová Lehota | 79 019 € | 76 165 € | +2 854 € |
| Nová Ves nad Váhom | 137 831 € | 103 436 € | +34 395 € |
| Stará Lehota | 74 777 € | 56 444 € | +18 333 € |

Source: hospodarenieobci.sk, own work

4.13 Wider relations of the microregion

Microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda – Bezovec is a member of a Local Action Group (Miestna akčná skupina in Slovak) MAS Beckov – Čachtice – Tematín which was established in October 2007. MAS Beckov – Čachtice – Tematín consists of 26 municipalities which are located within two districts. This group is based on a public-private partnership that works on the principles of the Leader initiative - activates local residents, establishes and coordinates cooperation within different sectors to ensure a coordinated development in the area of its competence (MAS Beckov – Čachtice – Tematín, 2016).

A few of the microregion municipalities (Beckov, Kálnica and Modrovka together with the municipality of Čachtice and regional city of Trenčín) are members of the recently established Regional Tourism Organization “Trenčín a okolie”. This organization is based on a public - private partnership which means that another members of this organization are private companies: Synot Gastro Slovakia, Orea Consulting, Kúria Dubnických, exhibition grounds Expo Center and Euro Financ. The aim of the organization is to maximize the benefits of the tourism in the region, residents and local economy by increasing the number of tourists in the region, increasing the extension of their stay in the region, increasing their satisfaction and their spending to enhance the employment in the field of tourism (oocrtn.sk).

Some of the microregion municipalities have partner municipalities in the Czech republic - municipality of Beckov has partner municipality in Slavkov, Kálnica is in a partnership with a municipality of Popovice and the municipality of Kočovce cooperates with the municipality of Nová Lhota.

Most of the microregion municipalities were also members of the Association of municipalities for the separable waste „Javorina – Bezovec“ (Beckov, Kálnica, Kočovce, Lúka, Modrovka, Modrová, Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota). However, this association was dissolved in 2010 as the prices of separated components went down after the crisis in 2008 hit and the association sank in the financial problems (kálnica.sk).

Microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda – Bezovec borders with several other microregions. In the north-west it is a Microregion Bošáčka, in the west it is a Microregion Dubová, in the north it is a Microregion Inovec, in the east it is a Microregion Pod Marhátom and in the south-west it is a Microregion Rudnay.

4.14 SWOT analysis

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing number of population • Convenient access to the highway • Natural and cultural sightseeings, ski resorts, recreational areas and cultural events • Availability of various civic amenities • High proportion of forests • Sufficient amount of surface water and groundwater • High biodiversity of the area • Cycling routes, hiking trails and educational trails | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regressive population structure • Insufficient condition of the road infrastructure and pavements • Lack of professional services in the field of tourism • Lack of awareness of the population in the protection of environment • Low educational level of the population • Lack of tourist information centers and accommodation facilities • Insufficient promotion and labelling |

| Opportunities | Threats |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable natural conditions for tourism development • Potential for renewable alternative energy sources • Support for organic farming • The migration of young residents to the microregion • Increase the support for small and medium enterprises in the tourism services • Building of tourism infrastructure (cycling, nature trails, catering and accommodation facilities) • Cooperation with surrounding municipalities, more intensive networking and partnerships • Development of leisure activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of microregion marketing and promotion • Lack of resources to protect the environment and natural heritage • Decreasing number of economically active population • The increasing ageing index • Lack of own financial sources • Complex bureaucracy in managing the assistance from EU funds • The diversity of ownership in the area of water supply • Low cooperation of citizens in the community development • Mining of uranium in Kálnica - Selec |

5 Evaluation of the quantitative research

The questionnaire survey was conducted in the end of the November and the beginning of the December. The questionnaires were created online via the platform of survio.com and were sent out via emails to the mayors of the microregion municipalities. I consider this way as an environmentally friendly as well as the least time consuming method of filling out of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted from both open and closed questions and was conducted in the Slovak language for easier understanding. However, the questionnaire survey in the Attachment B was translated into English to comply with the formal layout of the thesis. Also, the results were evaluated in English.

Out of 11 municipalities in the microregion, 10 were willing to participate in the questionnaire, except the municipality of Beckov. This way, the participation was approximately 91% which can be considered as a success.

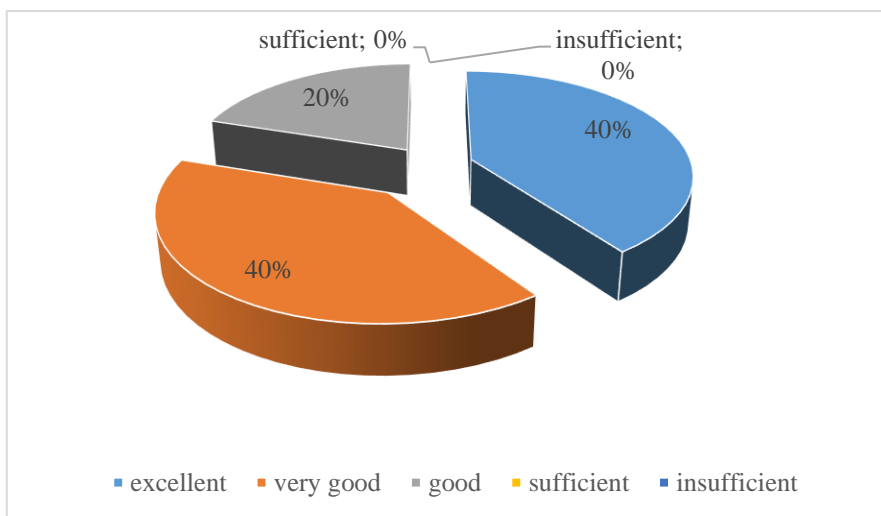
1. Please state the name of the municipality you are filling the questionnaire for.

The aim of the very first question was to find out which municipality took part in the questionnaire and therefore its evaluation is irrelevant.

2. How do you rate the cooperation between the municipalities of the microregion?

The first question was closed and it was aimed at the cooperation between the municipalities in the microregion. As it can be observed, the perception of cooperation varies from good to excellent. The most „sceptical“ municipalities were Modrová and Kálnica. However, what can be seen as a positive aspect is that none of the municipalities considers the cooperation to be insufficient.

Chart 6: Cooperation between the municipalities of the microregion

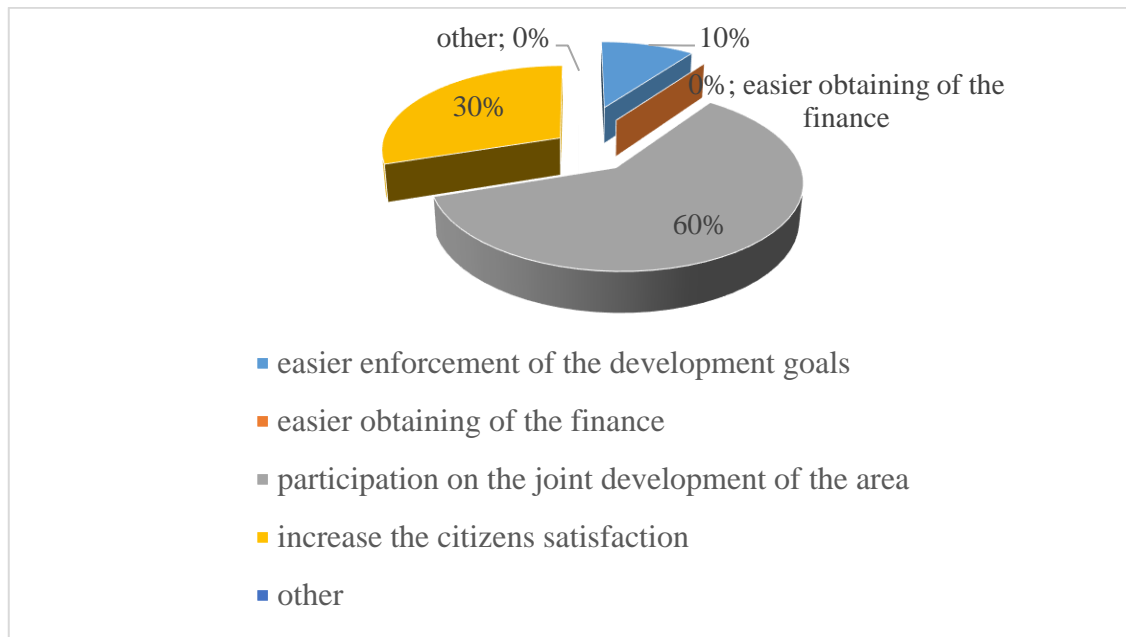


Source: own work

3. What is the biggest advantage of the cooperation between the municipalities in the microregion?

Most of the municipalities consider the biggest advantage of the cooperation in the microregion the participation on a joint development of the area. Three municipalities (Kálnica, Modrová and Kočovce) find the increase of the citizens satisfaction as the biggest advantage of the cooperation and a municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom considers the biggest advantage the easier enforcement of the development goals. None of the municipalities considers the easier obtaining of the finance as the biggest advantage.

Chart 7: Biggest advantages of the cooperation in the microregion

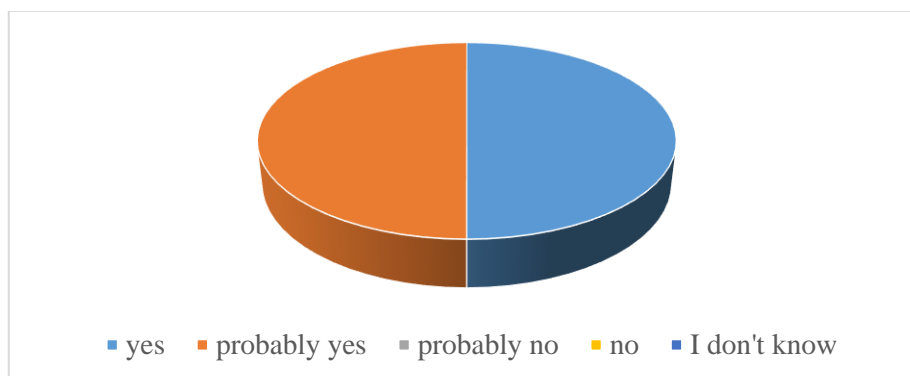


Source: own work

4. Is the membership in the microregion beneficial for your municipality?

The third question focused on the membership of the municipalities in the microregion. All 10 municipalities agreed unanimously that the membership in the microregion is beneficial for them. None of the municipalities considers the membership in the microregion useless.

Chart 8: Benefit of the membership in the microregion



Source: own work

5. If you answered yes to the previous question, what is the biggest benefit of the membership in the microregion for your municipality?

As this question was not compulsory and open, not every municipality representative decided to answer it. However, all of the municipalities except Hôrka nad Váhom and Stará Lehota stated the reason why it is beneficial for them to be part of the microregion. Municipalities of Modrová and Kočovce mentioned that the biggest benefit is the exchange of the experience between the municipalities. Municipalities of Nová Ves nad Váhom, Hrádok and Lúka consider the joint projects within the microregion as the biggest advantage within the microregion advantage. Development of the tourism is considered as the biggest benefit for the municipality of Modrovka. Municipalities of Kálnica and Nová Lehota mentioned the cooperation and consulting as the most important advantages of the membership in the microregion. Municipality of Nová Lehota also stated exchange of experience and joint solution of the microregion issues as the biggest benefits.

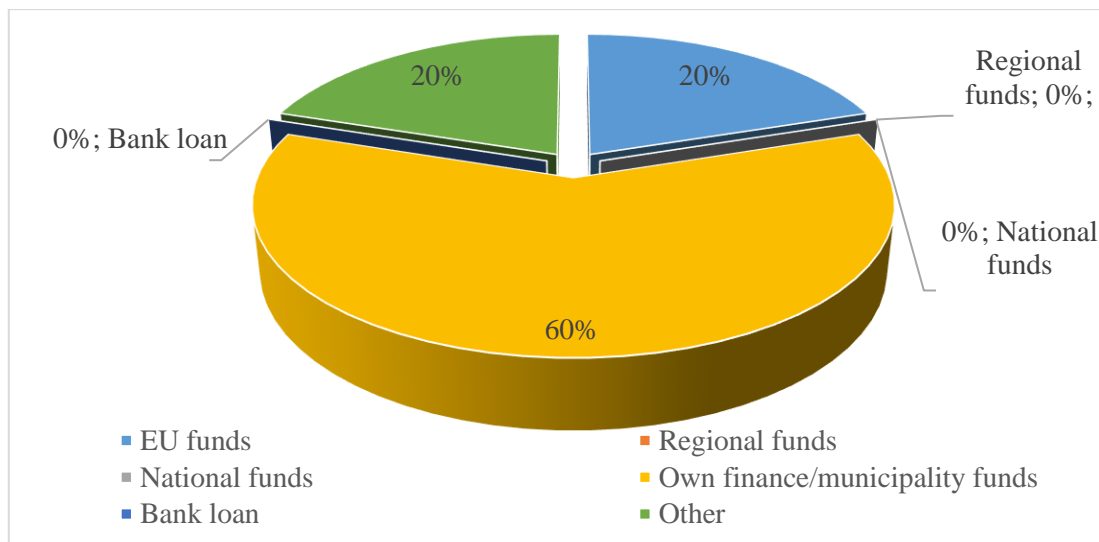
6. Which projects have been realized in the microregion recently and how was your municipality involved in the project?

This question was open too. Most of the municipalities (60%) stated that there has not been realized any project recently. On the other hand, four municipalities stated they were involved in various projects. Municipality of Lúka mentioned they were involved in the project of creating a dumpsite yard and purchasing the composters, unfortunately this project was not successful. Municipality of Nová Ves nad Váhom stated that the multifunctional playground was constructed via the microregion efforts. Another project was realized in the municipality of Modrovka, where the information boards were installed and the relaxing zone was established. Municipality of Hrádok stated that the company for the municipal waste was chosen together with other microregion municipalities.

7. What kind of possibilities are there for current and previous financing of the microregion activities?

Most of the municipalities (60%) use their own finance to fund the microregion activities. Municipalities of Nová Ves nad Váhom and Nová Lehota stated they mostly finance the activities of the microregion from EU funds. Two municipalities (Stará Lehota and Kočovce) mentioned they use no finance for the microregion activities by filling out the other option for the financing. This might reflect their result of the previous answer in which they stated they did not take part in any of the microregion projects.

Chart 9: Financing of the microregion activities



Source: own work

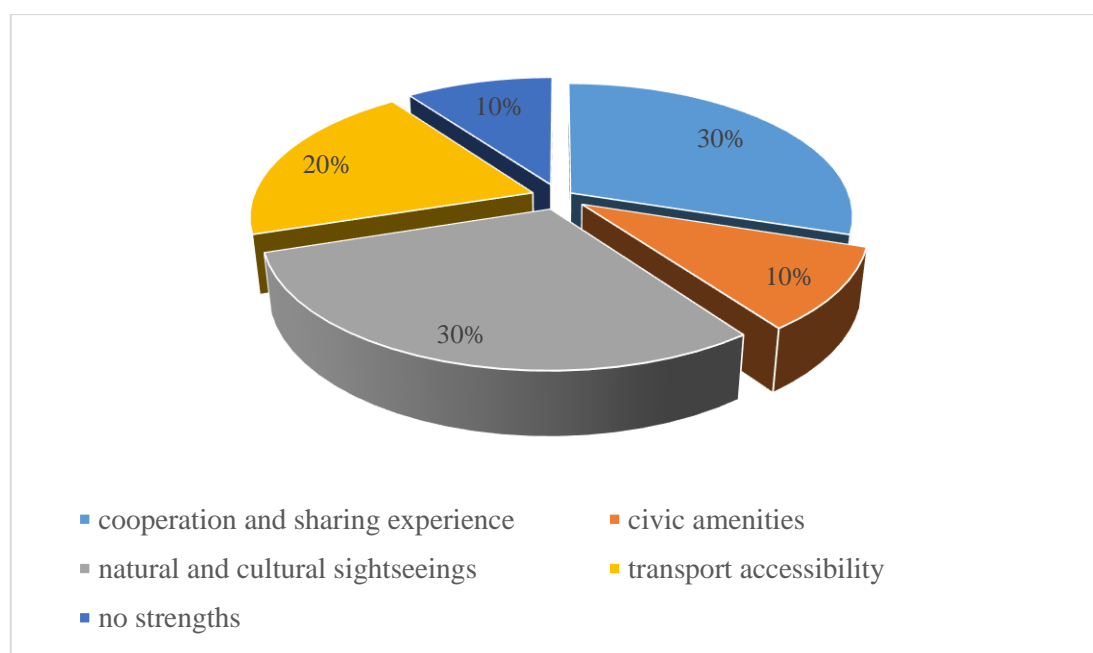
8. What do you consider that are the strengths of the microregion?

This question was asked as an open question as to the best reflection of opinions of the municipalities mayors, however some of the answers were so similar therefore it was possible to generalize and merge them into different categories.

It is clear that every municipality has a different opinion on what should be considered as a strength of microregion. Surprisingly, only 30% of municipalities (Nová Lehota, Modrovka and Nová Ves nad Váhom) consider the strength of the microregion the natural

and cultural sightseeings. Municipalities of Kálnica, Lúka and Hrádok consider the strengths of the microregion the cooperation and sharing the experience among the municipalities. Transport accessibility is considered on of the main strengths by municipalities of Kočovce and Modrová. Municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom considers the strength the quality of civic amenities in the microregion. On the other hand, municipality of Stará Lehota states that microregion has no strengths.

Chart 10: Strengths of the microregion



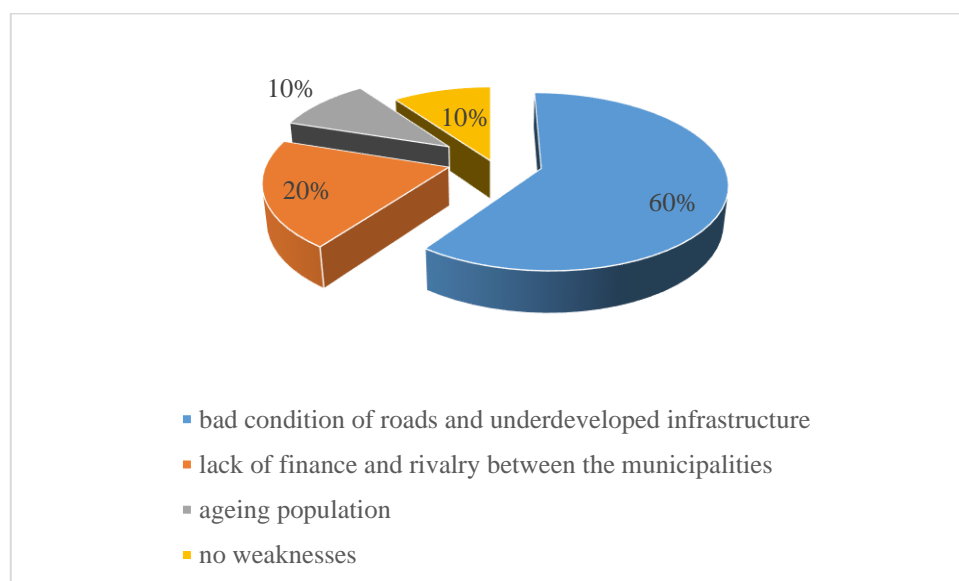
Source: own work

9. What do you consider/are the weaknesses of the microregion?

This question was once again, an open question. Most of the municipalities (60%) agreed that the biggest weakness of the microregion is the bad condition of the roads and underdeveloped infrastructure. According to municipalities of Kálnica and Modrová the rivalry and lack of finance are the biggest issue that the microregion struggles. Municipality of Kočovce finds the ageing population as the major weakness of the microregion. However, the mayor added that even though the present demographic

situation is not good, he is positive that it will change in the near future because of the demand in the construction of the housing units by younger residents. Once again, municipality of Stará Lehota stated there are no weaknesses in the microregion.

Chart 11: Weaknesses of the microregion

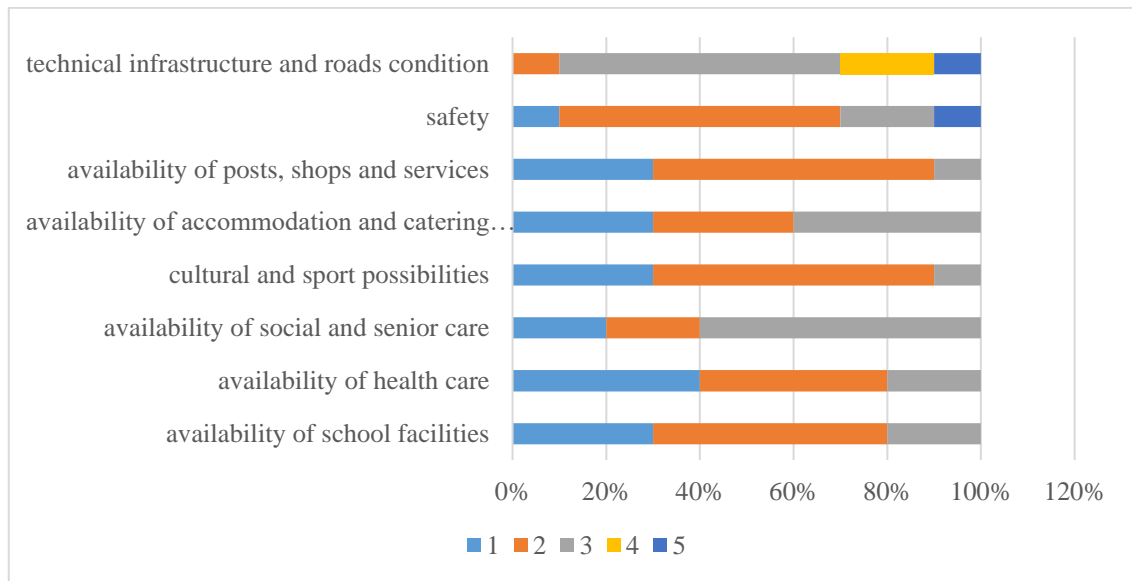


Source: own work

10. Rate the quality of civic amenities in the microregion on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best and 5 is the worst.

The quality of civic amenities in the microregion was rated between the 1 and 3 except the technical infrastructure and roads condition which was rated by 60% of municipalities with the grade 3. Municipalities of Nová and Stará Lehota rated this aspect with grade 4 which actually reflects the situation in the municipalities. Municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom rated the technical infrastructure and roads condition with the grade 5. On the other hand, the only municipality which rated this aspect over grade 3 was municipality of Modrová, giving it a grade 2.

Chart 12: Quality of civic amenities in the microregion

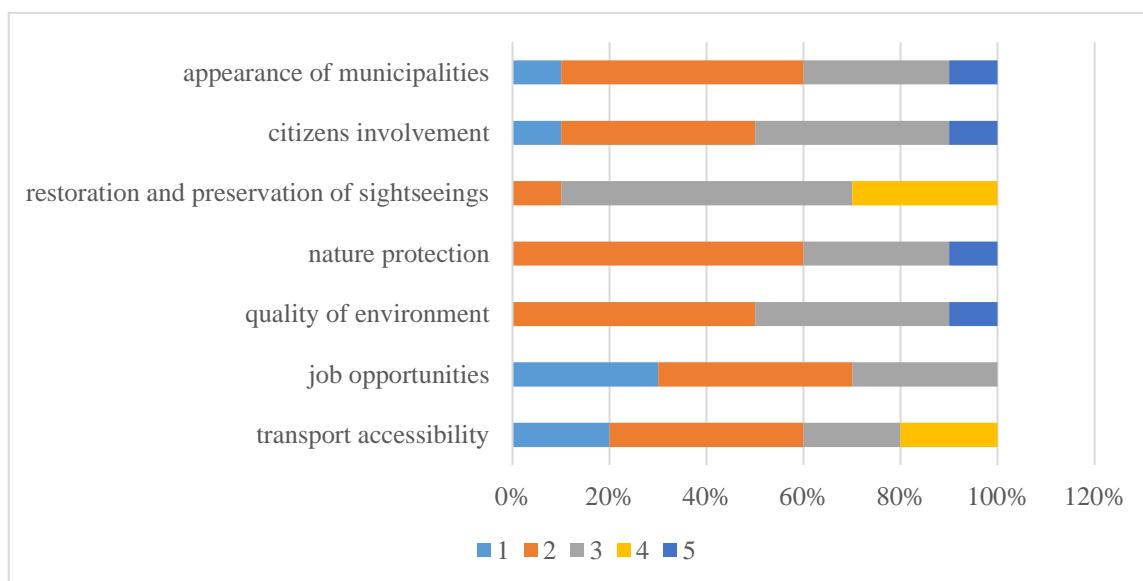


Source: own work

11. Rate another factors of civic amenities in the microregion on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best and 5 is the worst.

Question number 10 was aimed at another aspects of civic amenities in the microregion. Once again, the results reflected the reality as nature protection and quality of environment got grades between 2 and 4. What comes to surprise is the final grade of the restoration and preservation of the sightseeings as there have been some recent restorations of the castles and manor houses recently. Transport accessibility got grade from 1 to 3 by 80% of municipalities. Municipalities of Nová an Stará Lehota graded their transport accessibility with grade 4 which is understandable considering the condition of their road infrastructure as well as the frequency of the public transport connections. Again, municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom was critical and rated some of the aspect with grade 5.

Chart 13: Quality of civic amenities in the microregion

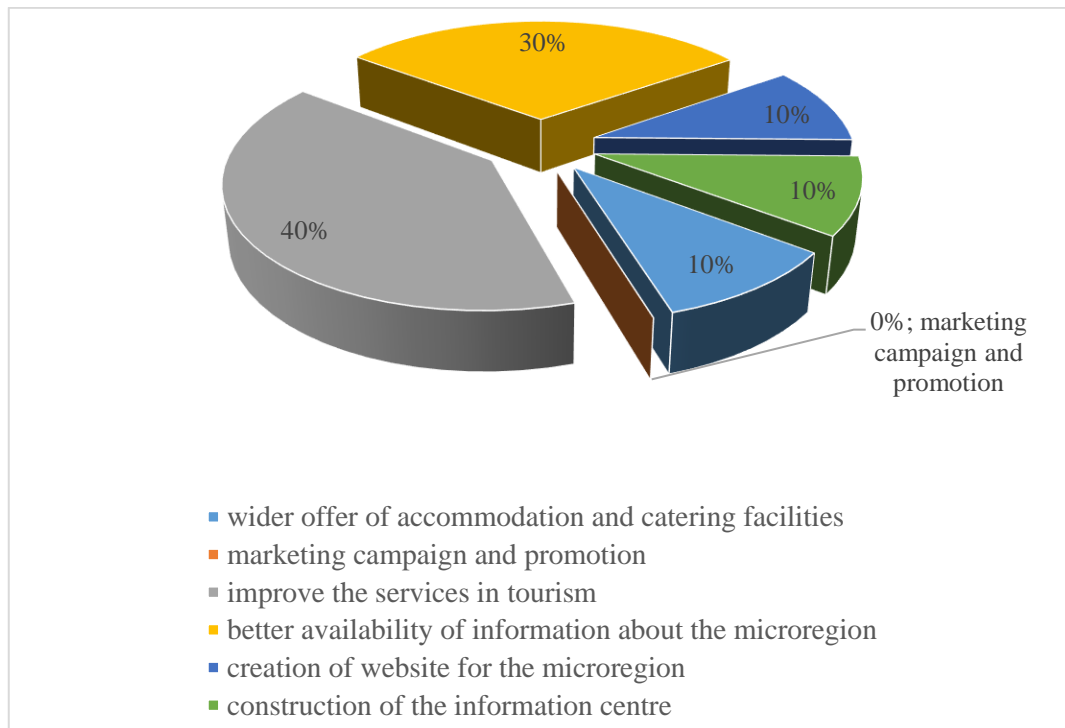


Source: own work

12. Which measure should be taken to make microregion more attractive for tourists?

40% of the municipalities (Kálnica, Kočovce, Lúka and Stará Lehota) consider improvement of the services in tourism as the most important measure to be taken for making the microregion attractive for tourists. Better availability of information about the microregion is the most important measure for the 30% of the municipalities (Nová Lehota and Nová Ves nad Váhom). Municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom considers construction of the information centre as the best solution for attracting the tourists to the microregion. However, this solution is complicated as there should be a decision in which municipality the information centre should be built or whether it should be built in every municipality. Creation of the website for the microregion was proposed by the municipality of Hrádok. Municipality of Modrová suggests to offer more accommodation and catering facilities to attract more tourists to the microregion.

Chart 14: Measures to make microregion more attractive

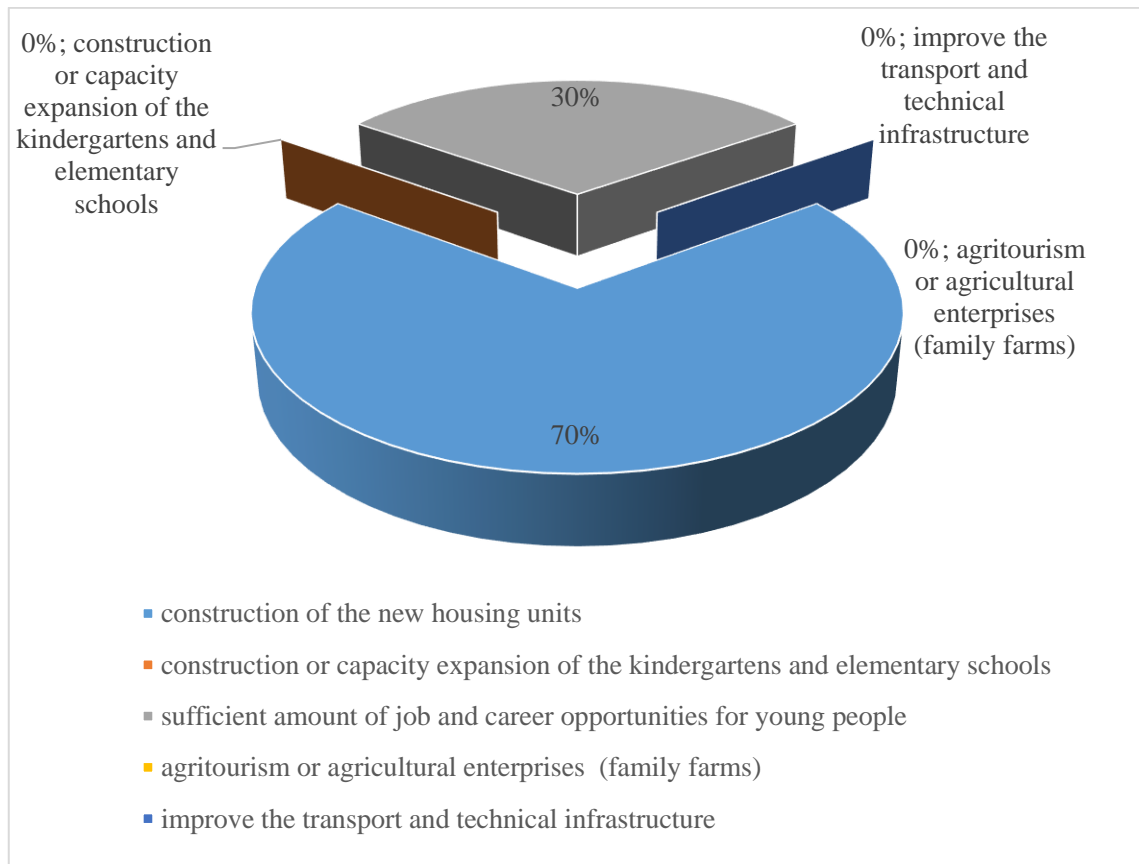


Source: own work

13. Which measure should be taken to revive the demographic development of the microregion?

Most of the municipalities (Hrádok, Kálnica, Kočovce, Lúka, Modrová, Modrovka and Nová Ves nad Váhom) consider the construction of the new housing units as the most important measure to revive the demographic development of the microregion. The rest of the municipalities mentioned the sufficient amount of job and career opportunities for young people as the most important measure to revive the demographic development of the microregion.

Chart 15: Measures to revive the demographic development in the microregion

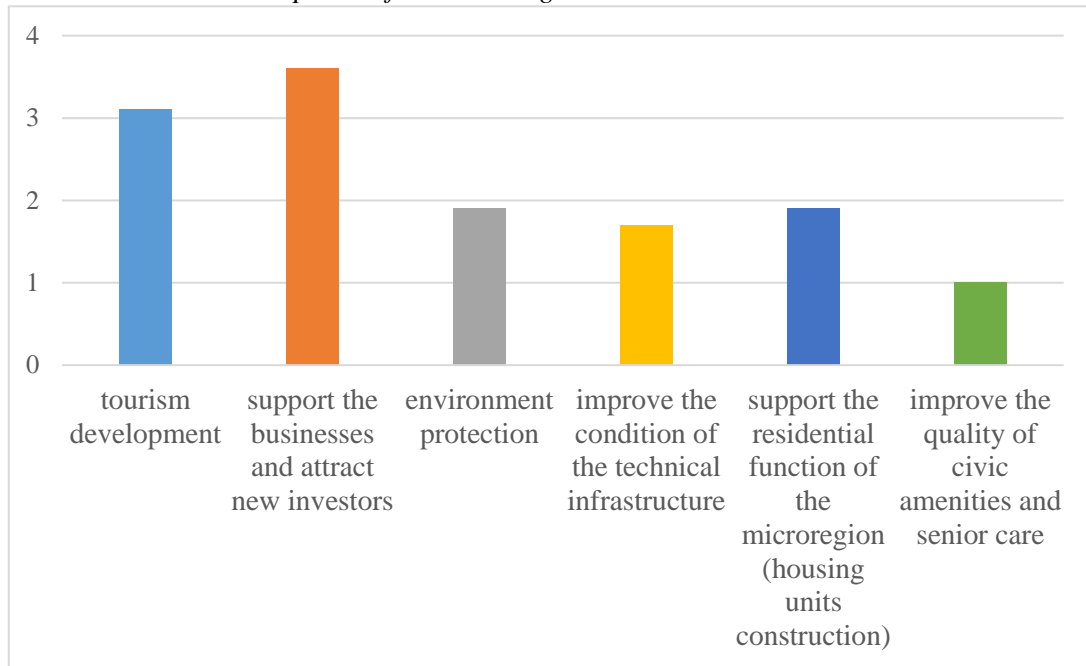


Source: own work

**14. What should be considered as a future development of the microregion?
(rank from most important to least important)**

The most important areas of the future development of the microregion were considered the support of the current businesses and to attract the new investors together with the tourist development which got a 3,6 respectively 3,1 rank out of 6. As mentioned in the question number 12, support of the residential function of the microregion is considered quite important as a tool for attracting potential residents to the microregion obtaining the 1,9 rank together with environment protection. Surprisingly, improvement of the condition of the technical infrastructure was considered as the second least important.

Chart 16: Future development of the microregion



Source: own work

6 Strategic part

This part of the diploma thesis is focused on the proposal of the strategic development plan of the microregion Beckov - Zelená Voda - Bezovec. Strategic plan is based on the conducted situation analysis and SWOT analysis, results of the questionnaire survey among the mayors of the microregion municipalities and also own experience while collecting the data. The strategic plan is designed for the timeframe 2017 - 2027.

6.1 Vision of the microregion

Strategic vision of the microregion influences the development of the microregion in case it was defined right. Therefore, it should be specific and describe a state, the microregion would like to achieve in the given timeframe of years.

Attractive microregion utilizing its potential in tourism with a good environment and completed infrastructure for the sustainable development which makes it an attractive place for living.

6.2 Strategic development objectives

Vision of the microregion should be related to the strategic objectives of the microregion which are based on the findings of the SWOT analysis and the conducted survey. Objectives should eliminate the weaknesses and focus on opportunities.

Three strategic development objectives for the microregion have been set.

Table 17: Overview of the development objectives of the microregion

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Development objective A | Housing and development of the infrastructure |
| Development objective B | Quality of environment and life |
| Development objective C | Tourism and culture |

Source: own work

6.3 Priorities and measures

Priorities and measures are based on the strategic development objectives and they are a key part of the strategy. Every priority is specified by a set of activities which will help to fulfill the strategic development objectives.

Table 18: Overview of the priorities and measures of the microregion

| Priority | Measure |
|---|--|
| A 1 Housing | A 1.1 Construction of the driveways and providing the civil engineering A 1.2 Construction of the housing units |
| A 2 Development of the technical and road infrastructure | A 2.1 Build the sewerage A 2.2 Wastewater treatment A 2.3 Reconstruction of the roads and pavements |
| B 1 Improve the quality of environment | B 1.1 Environment protection education, workshops and events B 1.2 Waste sorting and dumpsites |
| B 2 Improve the quality of life and civic amenities | B 2.1 Build the old people houses B 2.2 Improve the health and social care |
| C 1 Increase the attractiveness and visit rate of the microregion | C 1.1 Design a website for the microregion C 1.2 Establish a tourist information centre |
| C 2 Development of the tourism in the microregion | C 2.1 Improve the condition of the tourism infrastructure and sightseeings C 2.2 Improve the quality of services in the tourism |

Source: own work

Objective A Housing and development of the infrastructure

The first objective is aimed at the housing and the development of the infrastructure in the microregion, whether it is a technical infrastructure or a road infrastructure. Good condition of the infrastructure is essential for the future development of the microregion as well as to attract the potential investors.

It is also necessary to improve the living conditions of the current as well as future residents of the microregion. The housing solutions might solve the issue of the ageing population and attract young residents to the microregion.

Priority A 1 Housing

The first priority is focused on the development and improvement of the housing facilities quality. According to the results of the questionnaire, construction of the new housing units is seen as the main priority to attract the younger residents to live in the microregion. Therefore, there is a need to provide land for potential housing units together with the construction of driveways and civil engineering.

Measure A 1.1 Construction of the driveways and providing the civil engineering

Measure A 1.2 Construction of the housing units

Priority A 2 Development of the technical and road infrastructure

Current condition of the technical infrastructure in some municipalities of the microregion is not satisfying at all. The main issue is the sewerage as most of the municipalities do not have enough finance to build an effective and environmentally friendly sewerage system. Similar problem is with the waste water treatment as only three municipalities have their own wastewater treatment facility. Again, construction of the wastewater treatment facility would require an extensive investment for the municipalities.

Microregion has a good transport accessibility as most of the municipalities are located near the highway D1, some of them even have direct exits to the highway. However, the issue is the bad condition of the roads, especially the roads of the third class in Nová and Stará Lehota.

Another problem are the pavements. Most of them are again, not in a satisfying condition, in some municipalities there are even no pavements. Building and reconstruction of the pavements would significantly increase the safety of the pedestrians, especially elderly people and children.

Measure A 2.1 Build the sewerage

Measure A 2.2 Wastewater treatment

Measure A 2.3 Reconstruction of the roads and pavements

Objective B Improve the quality of environment and life

According to the conducted survey, the quality of the environment and life seems a very important aspect for the microregion future development. It is most likely connected with the issue of the ageing population and maintaining the clean environment to attract young residents to move to the microregion.

Priority B 1 Improve the quality of environment

The overall quality of the environment in the microregion is satisfying, however it is necessary to maintain this condition. Most of the microregion residents are not motivated enough to sort the municipal waste so education in this field is inevitable. Also, the overall environment protection knowledge is not at a high level. Therefore, some workshops or events for residents, whether the younger or older should be organized, for example annual cleaning of the illegal dumpsites connected with waste sorting and education.

Another issue is that the microregion does not have its own waste collection site which poses a problem. Municipality of Nová Ves nad Váhom proposed to find a suitable place for storing the municipal waste, in other words to construct a legal dumpsite.

Measure B 1.1 Environment protection education, workshops and events

Measure B 1.2 Waste sorting and dumpsites

Priority B 2 Improve the quality of life and civic amenities

The level of civic amenities provision in the microregion can be considered as a key aspect of the microregion attractiveness. Due to the ageing population issue, the microregion should focus on the improvement of the health and social care. This means to increase the number of doctors and social care workers in the microregion. As there is only a one old people house in the microregion it should be considered to build more old people houses in quiet areas in bigger municipalities.

Measure B 2.1 Build the old people houses

Measure B 2.2 Improve the health and social care

Objective C Tourism and culture

Microregion is rich in the cultural and natural sightseeings as well as ski resorts, trails and cycling trails. Therefore, this potential should be utilized for the future microregion development. However, this cannot be done without the promotion.

Priority C 1 Increase the attractiveness and visit rate of the microregion

As there is no website for the microregion, the simplest solution is to design a website for the microregion which would represent all the attractive and interesting places in the microregion. The next solution how to increase the attractiveness and visit rate of the microregion could be in promotion of the microregion in the social media, creating a website for the microregion or distributing the newsletter of the microregion.

Another solution could be a cooperation with tourist information websites which could provide information about the microregion as well as the experience of the previous tourists. Municipality of Hôrka nad Váhom suggested to establish a tourist information centre but then there arises a question where this centre should be established. The best solution would be to establish it in every municipality but this is not a very economically viable solution. I would propose to build the centre in the municipality of Kočovce as it is the “entrance” whether to the municipalities of Beckov and Kálnica on one side and Bezovec region municipalities on the other side.

Measure C 1.1 Design a website for the microregion

Measure C 1.2 Establish a tourist information centre

Priority C 2 Development of the tourism in the microregion

Results of the questionnaire survey showed that more attention should be given to the maintenance and restoration of the cultural and historical sightseeings. If the microregion wants to focus on the tourism development in the future, more finance should be invested in the maintenance and restoration of the sightseeings, especially those in more remote municipalities. Especially Tematín castle gives visitor a beautiful view of the river Váh valley but the condition of the castle is not satisfying as the ruin is surrounded by excess amount of vegetation which makes it difficult to move freely there.

Quality of the tourism infrastructure and services is an important factor for the tourists to decide whether they visit the microregion. Therefore, it is necessary to offer the visitors the rich variety of accommodation and catering facilities with excellent service.

Measure C 2.1 Improve the condition of the tourism infrastructure and sightseeings

Measure C 2.2 Improve the quality of services in the tourism

7 Implementation part

For the implementation part, the project reservoir has been designed. Overview of the proposed projects can be seen in the Attachment C. The implementation part is planned for the timeframe 2017 – 2027.

7.1 Action plan

The aim of the action plan is to specify the strategic plan in a short-term period. Therefore, there are included projects that should be realized throughout the years 2017-2018. Five projects from each priority have been chosen for the implementation.

Table 19: Project nr. 1 - Construction of housing units phase 1

| |
|---|
| Name of the project: Construction of housing units phase 1 |
| Priority: A 1 Housing |
| Measure: A 1.2 Construction of the housing units |
| Description of the project: Construction of the 10 apartments (three 1 room apartments, four 2 room apartments, three 3 room apartments) in the chosen municipality. Modern and cheaper housing options would attract young residents to the municipality. |
| Responsibility: individual municipalities |
| Cooperating subjects: municipalities, construction company |
| Implementation timeframe: 2017-2018 |
| Estimated costs: 1 200 000 € |
| Potential financial sources: loan from the State fund of housing development (80%), municipality funds |

Source: own work

Table 20: Project nr. 2 - Construction of the sewerage phase 1

| |
|--|
| Name of the project: Construction of the sewerage phase 1 |
| Priority: A 2 Development of the technical and road infrastructure |
| Measure: A 2.1 Build the sewerage |
| Description of the project: Construction of the sewerage network in the municipality of Kálnica as there was already a project proposed to the Ministry of Environment. This would significantly improve the quality of environment as well as the quality of civil engineering in the municipality and it might attract new residents to the municipality. |
| Responsibility: municipality office of Kálnica |
| Cooperating subjects: municipality of Kálnica, construction company |
| Implementation timeframe: 2017-2018 |
| Estimated costs: 950 000 € |
| Potential financial sources: Operational Programme Environment, municipality funds |

Source: own work

Table 21: Project nr. 3 - Reconstruction of the local roads

| |
|---|
| Name of the project: Reconstruction of the local roads |
| Priority: A 2 Development of the technical and road infrastructure |
| Measure: A 2.3 Reconstruction of the roads |
| Description of the project: The roads in the microregion have not been in a good condition for years. Reconstruction of the road III/1232 from Modrovka to Bojná in the length of approximately 3 km from Stará Lehota to Nová Lehota would improve the transport accessibility of the two municipalities not only for the residents but also for the potential tourists as there is a Tematín castle nearby. The 1,3km long driveway to Športchata and guest house Inovec in the ski centre Bezovec would also be reconstructed during this phase to ensure the easier accessibility for potential tourists and visitors. |

| |
|---|
| Cooperating subjects: municipalities, company reconstructing the road |
| Responsibility: Regional office of Trenčín region, municipalities of Nová and Stará Lehota |
| Implementation timeframe: 2017 |
| Estimated costs: 300 000 € |
| Potential financial sources: regional fund, municipality funds |

Source: own work

Table 22: Project nr. 4 - Waste collection site

| |
|---|
| Name of the project: Waste collection site |
| Priority: B 1 Improve the quality of environment |
| Measure: B 1.2 Waste sorting and dumpsites |
| Description of the project: There has been an attempt in the past to construct the waste collection site in the microregion though it was not successful. However, the construction of the waste collection site is connected with several issues. Firstly, changes in the land use plan are needed to be made. Another problem is to choose the right location which would not threaten the environment in the microregion. |
| Responsibility: microregion |
| Cooperating subjects: municipalities of the microregion, waste management company |
| Implementation timeframe: 2018 |
| Estimated costs: 1 500 000 € |
| Potential financial sources: Operational programme Environment, priority axis 1: waste management, measure 1: waste management |

Source: own work

Table 23: Project nr. 5 - Design a website for the microregion

| |
|---|
| Name of the project: Design a website for the microregion |
| Priority: C 1 Increase the attractiveness and visit rate of the microregion |
| Measure: C 1.1 Design a website for the microregion |
| Description of the project: All of the municipalities have their own websites, some of them even mention the existence of the microregion. However, it would be more convenient to have all the information in one piece so it is easier to find information for the potential tourists. The website should contain information about natural and cultural sightseeings, cultural events, hiking, sport facilities, accommodation and catering facilities. It should be visually attractive with promotional photos and videos. The most important thing is that it should be mobile friendly for the easier access if the potential tourists were already in the microregion. |
| Responsibility: municipalities of the microregion |
| Cooperating subjects: municipalities, website design company |
| Implementation timeframe: 2017 |
| Estimated costs: 1000 € |
| Potential financial sources: municipalities budget |

Source: own work

8 Conclusion & recommendations

Currently, there is no up-to-date strategic plan for the microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda- Bezovec. Therefore, the strategic plan for the timeframe 2017 – 2027 has been elaborated which reflects the current development of the microregion. Most of the development activities in the action plan are designed while considering the limited financial possibilities of the microregion. These activities do not require extensive financing and their timeframe is from 2017 to 2018. Implementation of these activities will make the microregion more attractive not only for the current residents but also, for the future residents, tourists and potential investors. However, the microregion management must not forget to update the strategic plan to ensure that the microregion development is taking the right course.

As observed in the questionnaire survey, microregion should also focus on obtaining the finance for the development activities not only from the municipalities budgets but also from the regional, national or EU funds.

Number of the population in the microregion has been growing steadily in recent years. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the municipalities. Bigger municipalities which have better transport accessibility have reported the growth in recent years while the smaller and peripheral municipalities with worse transport accessibility reported decline of the population. This issue could be solved by improving the transport accessibility and road infrastructure of these municipalities which would attract potential new residents.

Last, the microregion should utilize its potential for tourism. Municipalities representatives find the core problem in underdeveloped tourism potential in insufficient quality of services in the microregion, not enough information available about the microregion but also not satisfying condition of the historical and cultural sightseeings. Therefore, the solution could be to design a microregion website or to provide education for the accommodation and catering services employees to improve their service.

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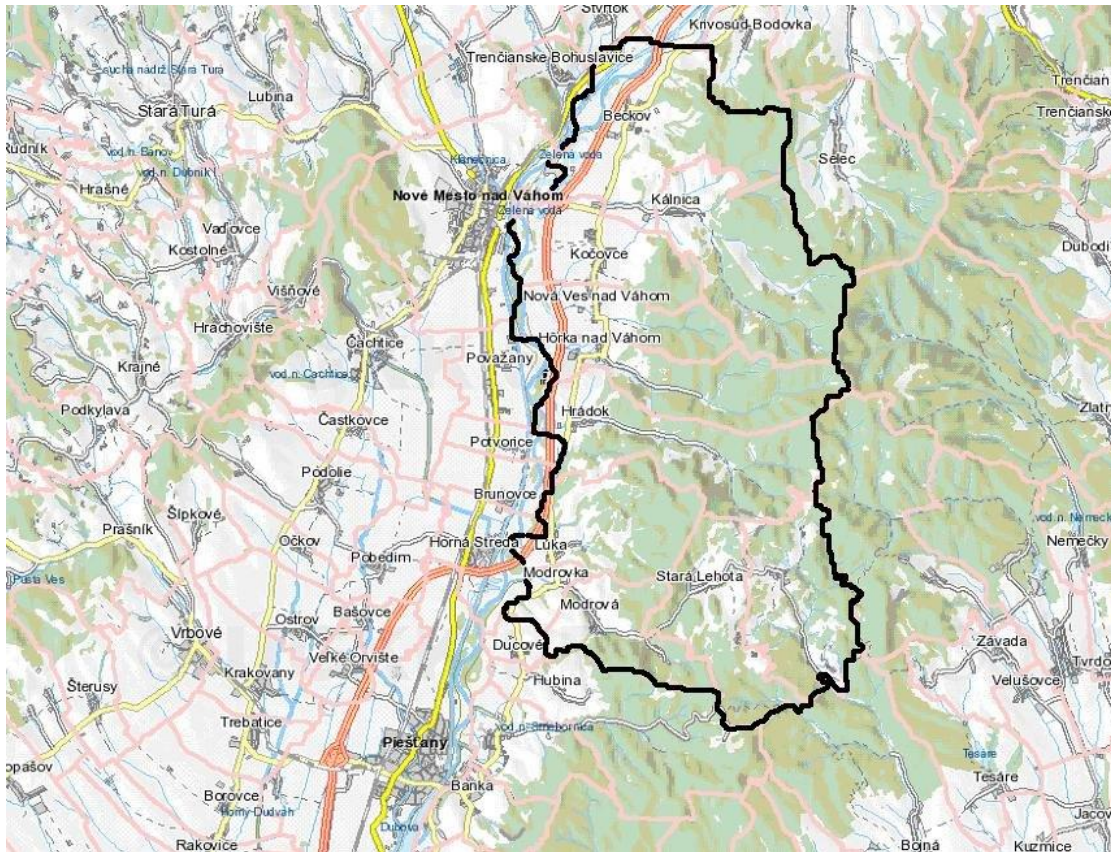
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Attachment B: Survey questionnaire for the mayors of the microregion municipalities.
Source: own work

Dear Mr. Mayor, dear Mrs. Mayor,

I am addressing you a request of taking part on my questionnaire survey, which is an inevitable part of my diploma thesis Strategic plan of the microregion Beckov – Zelená Voda – Bezovec. Filling out this questionnaire would take maximum of ten minutes of your time.

Thank you for the time spent by filling out this questionnaire which will contribute to the successful completion of my diploma thesis.

Regards

Miroslava Bačová

1) Please state the name of the municipality you are filling the questionnaire for.

2) How do you rate the cooperation between the municipalities of the microregion?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Sufficient
- Insufficient

3) What is the biggest advantage of the cooperation between the municipalities in the microregion?

- Easier enforcement of the development goals
- Easier obtaining of the finance
- Participation of the joint development of the area
- Increase the satisfaction of citizens
- Other _____

4) Is the membership in the microregion beneficial for your municipality?

- Yes
- Probably yes
- Probably no
- No
- I don't know

5) If you answered yes to the previous question, what is the biggest benefit of the membership in the microregion for your municipality?

6) Which projects have been realized in the microregion recently and how was your municipality involved in the project?

7) What kind of possibilities are there for current and previous financing of the microregion activities?

- EU funds
- Regional funds
- National funds
- Own finance
- Bank loan
- Other _____

8) What do you consider as strengths of the microregion?

9) What do you consider as weaknesses of the microregion?

10) Rate the quality of civic amenities in the microregion on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best and 5 is the worst.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Availability of school facilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of health care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of social and senior care | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cultural and sport possibilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of accommodation and catering facilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Availability of posts, shops and services | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Safety | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Technical infrastructure and roads condition | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

11) Rate the quality of more civic amenities in the microregion on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best and 5 is the worst.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Transport accessibility | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job opportunities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Quality of environment | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Nature protection | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Restoration and preservation of the sightseeings | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Citizens involvement | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Appearance of the municipalities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

12) Which measure should be taken to make microregion more attractive for the tourists?

- Wider offer of accommodation and catering facilities
- Marketing campaign and promotion
- Improve the services in the field of tourism
- Better availability of information about the microregion
- Creation of website for the microregion
- Establish the information centre

13) Which measure should be taken to revive the demographic development of the microregion?

- Construction of the new housing units
- Construction or capacity expansion of the kindergartens and elementary schools
- Sufficient amount of job and career opportunities for young people
- Establish agritourism or agricultural enterprises (family farms)
- Improve the transport and technical infrastructure

14) What should be considered as a future development of the microregion? (rank from the most important to the least important)

- Tourism development
- Support the businesses and attract new investors
- Environment protection
- Improve the condition of the technical infrastructure
- Support the residential function of the microregion (housing units construction)
- Improve the quality of civic amenities and senior care

Attachment C: Project reservoir. Source: own work

| Development project | Estimated timeframe |
|--|----------------------------|
| Construction of the housing units phase 1 | 2017 - 2018 |
| Construction of the sewerage phase 1 | 2017 - 2018 |
| Reconstruction of the local roads | 2017 |
| Waste collection site | 2018 |
| Design a website for the microregion | 2017 |
| Construction of the driveways to the newly built housing units | 2019 |
| Construction of the sewerage phase 2 | 2019 - 2022 |
| Connection of the municipalities with newly built sewerage to the network of wastewater treatment | 2023 |
| Reconstruction of the pavements in the municipalities of Hrádok and Hôrka nad Váhom | 2020 |
| Environment protection workshop | annually |
| Construction of the old people house in the municipality of Beckov | 2024 - 2026 |
| Establishment of social and senior care services in the municipalities of Nová Lehota and Stará Lehota | 2025 - 2027 |
| Establishment of the tourist information centre | 2020 |
| Reconstruction of the Tematín castle | 2023 - 2027 |
| Educational workshops for accommodation and catering facilities employees | anually |