THE COOPERATION COEFFICIENT AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO MEASURE INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

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In the article, the author proposes to consider the cooperation between local and regional entities for better use of local resources, which will increase the competitive strength of the given region against other regions, on the example of the South Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic. It is suggested a model for collaboration evaluation using the cooperation coefficient C_C. The offered assessment model involving the C_C coefficient can be also applied to other regions and administrative districts of the Czech Republic.

Key words: coefficient of cooperation (C_C), local action groups (LAG), "above-standard" forms of cooperation.

КОЕФІЦІЄНТ СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВА – ЕФЕКТИВНИЙ СПОСІБ ДЛЯ ВИМІРЮВАННЯ МІЖМУНІЦИПАЛЬНОЇ СПІВПРАЦІ

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У статті розглянуто співпрацю місцевих і регіональних суб'єктів з метою кращого використання ресурсів. Підходи до підвищення конкурентоспроможності регіонів проілюстровані на прикладі Південного регіону Чехії. Запропонована модель оцінки співпраці за допомогою коефіцієнта C_C. Створена модель оцінки з використанням коефіцієнта C_C також може бути застосована до інших регіонів і адміністративних районів в Чеській Республіці.

Ключові слова: коефіцієнт кооперації (C_C), місцева ініціативна група (МИТЬ), «високі стандарти» форми співпраці.

THE RELEVANCE OF ARTICLE. Inter-municipal cooperation is a generic term for all joint provision of public services between municipalities, who are normally but not necessarily neighbours.

One can speak of inter-municipal cooperation when two or more local governments work together to provide a public service. All gains and losses are shared between the participants of the cooperation. These cooperation spread from only coordinated behaviour up to founding a joint venture that settles the task for both participants. As the territorial consolidation often fails because of political resistance inter-municipal cooperation is a way to keep public services efficient and effective without territorial consolidation [1]. Inter-municipal cooperation can be divided into two categories: In case of a joint agreement municipals work together to operate a certain plant or share the provision of a service. The other category is called service agreement, where one town provides the service for the other town [2]. In both categories all types of cooperation can be found.

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MATERIAL AND RESEARCH RESULTS. Among other things, cooperation is also a significant feature of current institutional theories of regional development where stress is put on mutual cooperation of a whole number of local and regional players (this cooperation being based on trust). It is exactly the level of trust which, according to Granovetter (1985), is a key characteristic of economy. Trust is being created by repeated (successful) interactions. There are networks of contacts with varying levels of quality and varying levels of trust. Every entity is connected to one of the networks, the quality of which significantly influences the entity's possibilities. A low level of trust leads to additional and/or increased costs, e.g. for safeguarding that delivered goods will be paid for, debt collection etc. Regional research inspired by this approach tries to analyse the role of personal relationships, mutual trust between partners and to study contacts as a form of social integrity, as well as to define their importance from the point of view of causes leading to differences between regions. At the same time, it should be noted that the presence of networks themselves is not a positive and beneficial phenomenon (there are also parasitic networks or even mafias). Prospects and chances of individual participants (individuals, municipalities, companies) depend not only on the intensity of their connection to networks, but also on the contents which individual networks provide [3].

Looking for sense in inter-municipal cooperation in the conditions of the current Czech Republic requires above all a change of attitude from passive application of the legal possibility to cooperate to an active application in the overall context of Czech Republic's public finances. Obviously, victory of democracy in the basic conflict with effectiveness has had its economic impact – insufficiently equipped small municipalities are not able to effectively satisfy public needs of their residents (reduced quality of public goods, neglect of long-term development, increased demands for subsidies, increase in municipality debt etc.). If we want to avoid the anti-democratic solution in the form of reducing the number of municipalities, let's turn to the other possibility, i.e. inter-municipal cooperation. Active voluntary cooperation is one of the possible ways towards integration in the area of territorial cooperation and towards better effectiveness in the area of public finances. Based on economic stimuli, larger entities are created, the boundaries of which are defined by the effectiveness of activities in the given area [4].

The methodology of this contribution is in compliance with methods usually used in scientific research; it is based on the use of the latest theoretical knowledge gained from specialised literature, specialised research and studies, newspapers and materials published by individual participants in regional development. Also, the methodology is based on looking for and assessment of mutual relationships which contribute to the clarification of the problems solved and to a deduction and formulation of adequate conclusions which can be derived from such an analysis [5].

Theoretical and practical findings acquired during my work clearly confirm the significant role of inter-municipality cooperation in regional development. Municipalities are important actors in regional development – they are able to activate local

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and regional resources and thus can bring about synergic effects.

Before the actual analysis of inter-municipality cooperation, it was necessary to develop a representative data base characterizing the development of inter-municipality cooperation in the South Bohemian Region (Czech Republic). This proved to be a significant problem for several reasons. Not all forms of inter-municipality cooperation are recorded statistically and thus cannot be analysed (e.g. twin municipalities in case of international cooperation, public-private-partnerships, joint legal persons of municipalities and other entities etc.). However, despite the serious fragmentation and the high cost, it was possible to collect this data.

From the point of view of significance of individual forms of cooperation, clearly the most significant form in the South Bohemian Region is cooperation at the level of microregions and LAGs (local action groups); these two forms of cooperation represent 60 % of all forms of cooperation in the region. Other forms of cooperation are less significant since they are not as effective as cooperation in LAGs and among microregions, or because municipalities cannot participate in cooperation due to their geographical position (Fig. 1).
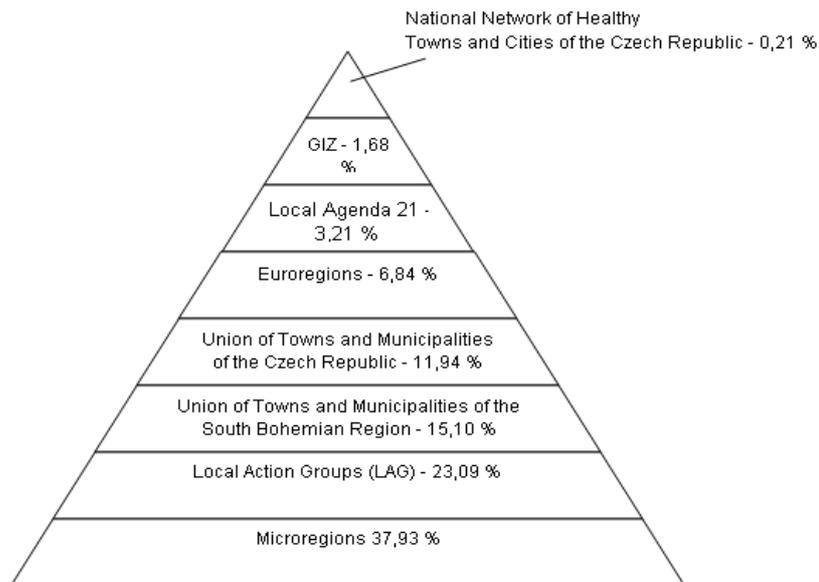

Figure 1 – Share of individual forms of inter-municipality cooperation in the South Bohemian Region (own research)

In order for it being possible to compare the overall intensity of individual forms of cooperation in the South Bohemian Region, the so-called coefficient of cooperation (C_C) was created using the method of quantification. The maximum theoretically possible value of the coefficient of cooperation in the South Bohemian Region is 11, the minimum value is 0. The higher the C_C values, the more intensive the involvement of a town or municipality in inter-municipality cooperation in the South Bohemian Region. If necessary, the indicator can be modified to accommodate specific conditions

of a different region (specific in the South Bohemian Region is the form of national structure of cooperation represented by the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the South Bohemian Region) (Fig. 2).

$$C_C = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(C_{MICROREG.} + C_{LAG} + C_{LOCAL\ AGENDA\ 21} + C_{NNH} + C_{SMOCR} + C_{SMOJK} + C_{EUROREGION} + C_{GIZ\ (IMPULSCENTER)})}{n}$$ (1)

* SMO ČR (Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic), SMOJK (Union of Towns and Municipalities of the South Bohemian Region)
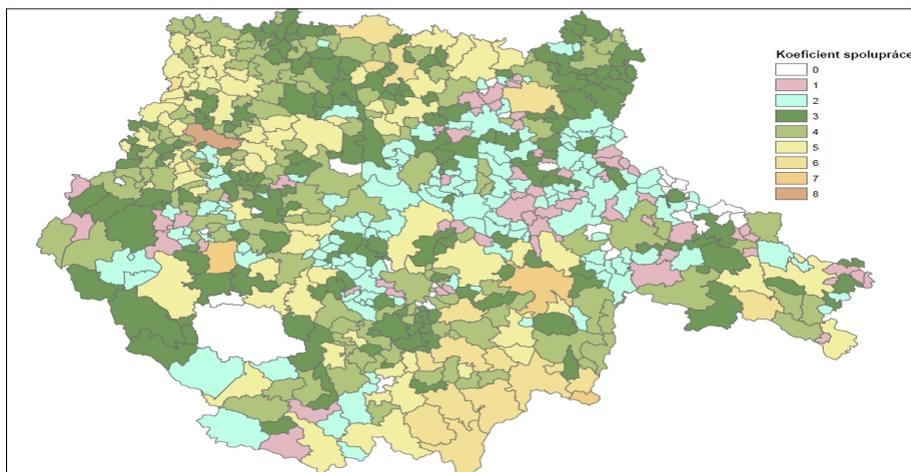

Figure 2 – Coefficient of cooperation (C_C) in the South Bohemian Region

Although individual forms of cooperation differ in their importance and significance for the development of a region, all of the individual indicators were given equal weight. The reason for this decision was the fact that municipalities first become involved in microregions and/or local action groups and only later engage in further "above-standard" forms of cooperation. The scales thus reflect more the relevance of data base than the significance of individual features. With the defined equal weight, the coefficient of cooperation has better informative value – it is obvious at first sight how many times a town or municipality has been involved in any form of cooperation in a region [6].

An advantage of the coefficient of cooperation (C_C) is easy comparability of towns, municipalities and other pre-defined areas from the point of view of intensity of cooperation; a disadvantage are difficulties connected with the set-up and validation of basic data base, from which the coefficient is calculated.

By means of the coefficient of cooperation, it is possible to identify problematic areas of the region and categorize towns and municipalities of the South Bohemian Region according to their inter-municipality cooperation and suggest a specific strategy for their further development. The significance of the coefficient of cooperation thus moves from a theoretical level to a level of practical application by the public administration of the Czech Republic.

Cooperation of municipalities is an important factor of regional development and its significance should not be underestimated. The state and public administration should try to support cooperation between municipalities – financially, administratively and legislatively, as well as by consultancy and other forms of support. The results of questionnaire surveys have indicated that the main problem of inter-municipality cooperation was lack of finances and the right method of financing the cooperation. Legislation often inhibits inclusion of other partners in inter-municipality cooperation (e.g. business organisations, non-profit organisations and other institutions). For instance, no business entity can figure in a voluntary union of municipalities and it is very difficult to reach an absolute majority of entities outside of public administration in the case of an LAG [7, 8].

CONCLUSIONS. The cooperation of local and regional entities can become an even more important factor of regional development in the future thanks to activation and better use of local resources, which will increase the competitive strength of a given region against other regions. The results of this work can be of value not only to individual participants in regional development in the South Bohemian Region (towns and municipalities, microregions, local action groups, South Bohemian Region), but also other institutions as a basis for assessment of the intensity and significance of cooperation among municipalities of the South Bohemian Region. The created model of assessment using the C_C coefficient can also be applied to other regions and administrative districts in the Czech Republic, which would be very interesting for reasons of the possible comparison of the results acquired.

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КОЭФФИЦИЕНТ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА – ЭФФЕКТИВНЫЙ СПОСОБ ДЛЯ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ МЕЖМУНИЦИПАЛЬНОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА

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В статье рассмотрено сотрудничество местных и региональных субъектов с целью лучшего использования ресурсов. Подходы к повышению конкурентоспособности регионов проиллюстрированы на примере Южного региона Чехии. Предложена модель оценки сотрудничества с помощью коэффициента C_C. Созданная модель оценки с использованием коэффициента C_C также может быть применена к другим регионам и административным районам в Чешской Республике.

Ключевые слова: коэффициент кооперации (C_C), местная инициативная группа (МИГ), «высокие стандарты» формы сотрудничества.

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