

APPLYING THE GLOBAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract. Improving the quality of life is a global strategic goal. It is the long-lasting goal which is supported by the projects at the national, European and even the world level. International project ‘Healthy Cities’ represents active movement of the European municipalities which systematically proceed with the health of their citizens. A conception of the ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ motivates organizations and municipalities to contribute the sustainable development and urge better quality of life of their employees, local commonwealth and the society. Concrete realization of the recommended principles is done by help of various tools. There are for example ‘Agenda 21’ with emphasis on planning the further development of the region in harmony with principles of the sustainable development and with emphasis on public involvement. Another method is ‘CAF’ for performing continuous self-assessment. Application of these principles at the level of municipalities’ administration should contribute to the regional development and to the improvement of the quality of life of their citizens. Its own realization is done at the bigger municipalities where the agenda could be done by specific workers exactly trained for it. Small municipalities do not have these possibilities – they have low knowledge about the above mentioned procedures or are afraid of the situation that agenda might be complex or unusable for them. This text is aimed at these small municipalities and to the assessment of the procedures and usable activities which might contribute to good mastering in the meaning of global strategic goal, which is better quality of life.

Keywords: quality of life, sustainable development, Local Agenda 21, CAF

JEL Classification: H11, H70, H83, R5

1 Introduction

Providing the inhabitants’ life quality is a priority while municipality administration. The strategic framework for the Czech Republic’s development called the ‘Czech Republic 2030’ specifies that the quality of life could not be measured only by the economic indicators, its evaluation needs to study other aspects of human life e.g. health, balance between the working life and private life, civic engagement, the quality of the environment etc. (UVCR, 2017). This framework emphasizes inseparability of the life quality and sustainability. Effort about applying the principles of the sustainable development while municipalities’ administration should contribute to the region development and to their inhabitants’ quality of life.

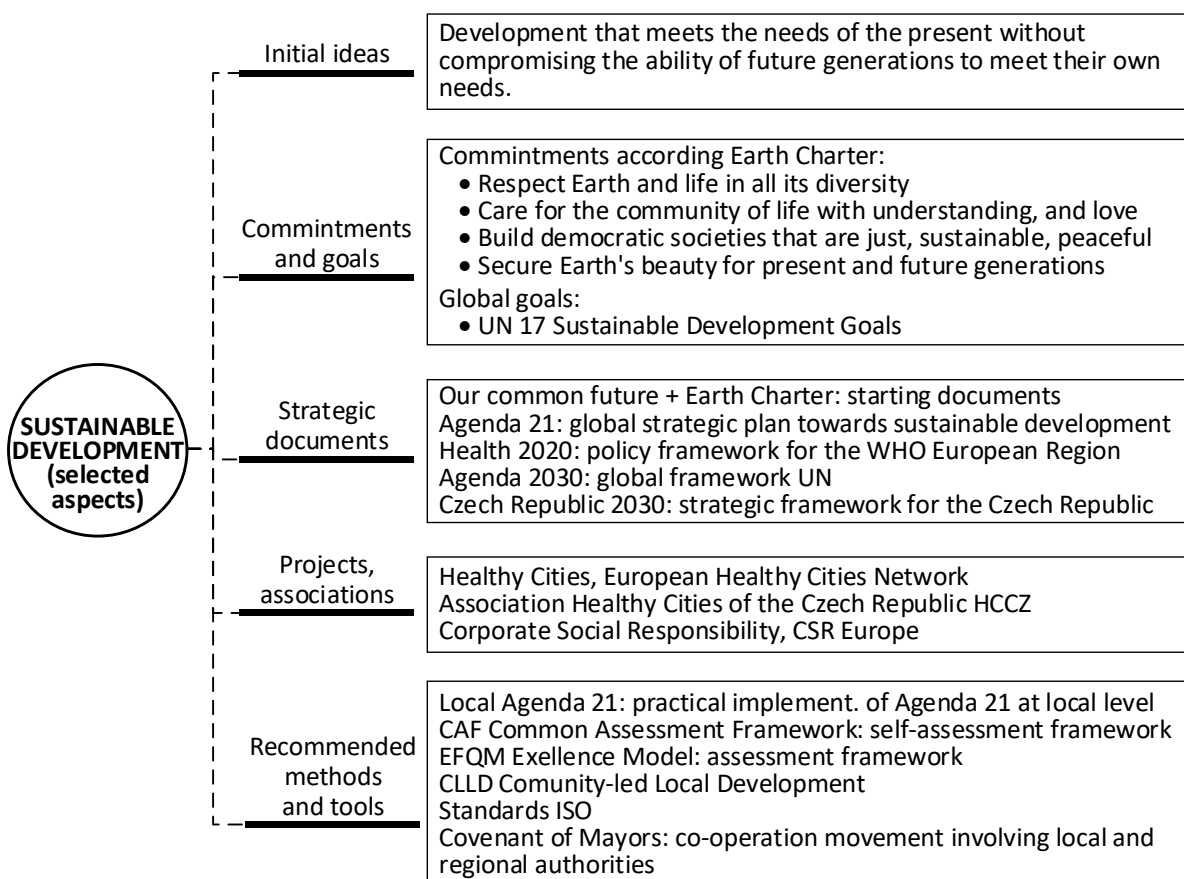
2 Methodological framework

Conception of the sustainable development represents model of the society development, which reflects the natural environmental limits of the economic growth. Basic definition of this concept could be found in the document ‘Our common future’, committee WCED (UN World Commission on Environment and Development), where the definition is mentioned: ‘Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs’.

2.1 Approaches and Tools

Conception of the sustainable development is developed within the framework of the strategic documents at the international and also national levels, programmes and tools are proposed, there is an effort about the concrete projects realization. Basic aspects of the whole problematic are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Basic aspects of Sustainable Development



Source: own processing

International project ‘Healthy Cities’ represents the movement of the European municipalities and regions, which systematically goes towards the quality of life and health of their inhabitants. Participating cities associate to European Healthy Cities Network, where there are at the moment 1.400 Healthy cities in 30 countries (WHO, 2018). The good point is that the members (in national network or within the international cooperation) can exchange their examples of the good practise (Krbova, 2017). Project is developed in accordance with

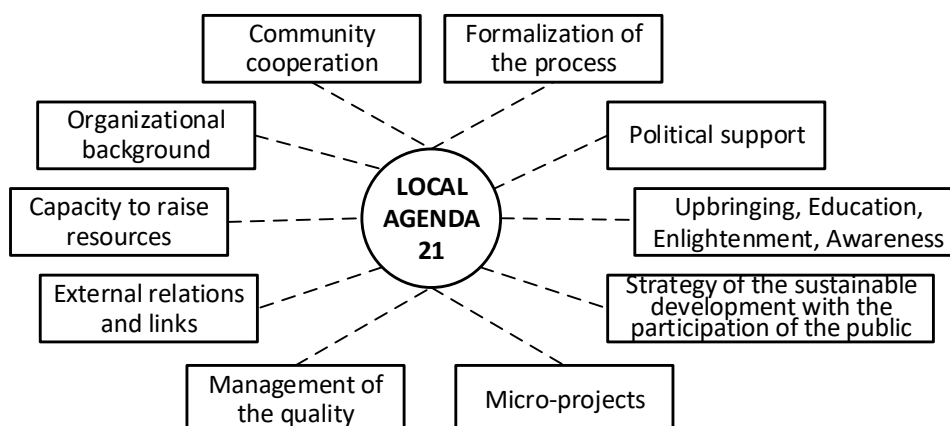
actual accepted strategic documents; there belong e.g. – the global framework ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ and its ‘17 Sustainable Development Goals’ (UN, 2015), the policy framework for the WHO European Region – ‘The Health 2020, the strategic framework ‘Czech Republic 2030’ (UVCR, 2017). Similarly, the conception ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) is the platform for those organisations looking to enhance sustainable growth and positively contribute to society (CSR, 2015). CSR Europe is the European hub incubating multi-stakeholder initiatives that tackle the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). For the needs of the public administration in the Czech Republic was created ‘Manual CSR’ (NSPK, 2016), which content corresponds with motto of the document CSR Enterprise 2020 Manifesto – ‘Business and Governments working together for a more inclusive and sustainable society by putting their words into action’ (CSR, 2015). The purpose is to provide inspiration to the organizations of the public administrations, how to begin with socially responsible activities or how to deepen them, which participants to start the cooperation with and to make their activities more effective. Conception of the sustainable development is reflected also within the Smart City concept as the advancement in technology bring new possibilities how to make life more comfortable (Kopackova & Libalova, 2017).

Project ‘Healthy Cities’ or the conception CSR can be realized by many tools, such as e.g. Local Agenda 21 or Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Model excellence EFQM, standard ISO 9001. Agenda 21 is a global comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment (UN, 1992), (Navarro-Espigares et. al, 2018). The CAF model (Common Assessment Framework) is one of the good tools for continuous improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments (Flaska et. al., 2015). The CAF model sets the assessments criteria the application of which should help a public sector organization to increase its performance.

2.2 Global aims, local procedures

Agenda 21 is a global strategy; cities and human settlements are critical sites for implementation of these universal global objectives, indicating the need for local action that serves global and local interests (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017). Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a practical tool for applying concrete principles of the sustainable development in the local conditions. Basic part of the procedure LA21 is expressed in Figure no. 2.

Figure 2: Parts of Local Agenda 21



Source: own processing, based on (LA21, 2003)

The establishment of LA21s in many countries has exposed that the impetus of local authorities to transit to sustainable social, economic and environmental practices is vital but still not sufficient; however, the agenda's vision has caused a number of innovations in municipal policies in environmental, social and economic terms (Pinar-Alvarez, 2017). Also Czech Republic has a growing number of municipalities and regions that work with Local Agenda 21, its implementation is supported financially and methodically by national institutions (Vochozkova & Trhlinova, 2016). Public local governance has to combine policy, data governance and decision-making (Lnenicka et. al., 2016). The regions have systematically support the quality of public administration with respect to the sustainable development and health support, actively ask the inhabitants about their opinion. Citizen participation is very important, state and local governments have to be interested not only in improving their performance but also in maintaining public confidence in the implementation of public services (Suebvises, 2018). Governing sustainability should be about finding creative ways for opening spaces for participation and change, that is, for creating alternative ideas, practices, and social relations (Wittmayer et. al., 2016). An initiator of the process can be a local administration, or a non-profitable organization or a group of people, who are involved in the healthy regional development. It depends on the structure of the process – if the process will be viable and if the principles of the sustainable development will be applied in everyday people's practice, mainly in decision making process in the local administration.

3 Case study – an application of the chosen tools of the sustainable development in the selected municipalities

There are about 6.250 municipalities in the Czech Republic, which run the local public administration. Association Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic has at the present about 130 members (however with regional influence for 50% of the population (HCCZ, 2018). Yet the ratios of 6.250 municipalities to 130 connected subjects indicate that most cities are not connected to the systematic orientation to the quality of life improvement. The authors of the text realized the project, which aim was – to prepare procedure for selected villages for the active implementation of the chosen quality principles. Project had following steps – 1st Mapping the present situation (mainly with focus on small villages), 2nd Selection of the municipalities, 3rd Decision about appropriate principles of the quality and their implementation using the suitable tools.

3.1 Mapping the present situation

The project was aimed at the small villages because of the fact, that the small villages are the majority in the Czech Republic (in the CR 88% of the villages has up to 2.000 inhabitants, 96% of the municipalities has up to 6.000 inhabitants). Present bases were established after the discussion with various representatives of the municipalities:

- Self-rules of the small villages mainly do not think about the implementation of the 'state conception of the quality' (e.g. LA21), for the content and capacity reasons.
- The villages realize 'their program of the quality', such as projects about waste sorting and recycling, or the villages are the members of the voluntary union etc. However, mostly municipalities do not have arguments, by which can be proved, that the local public administration is provided effectively and with quality for the local electors.

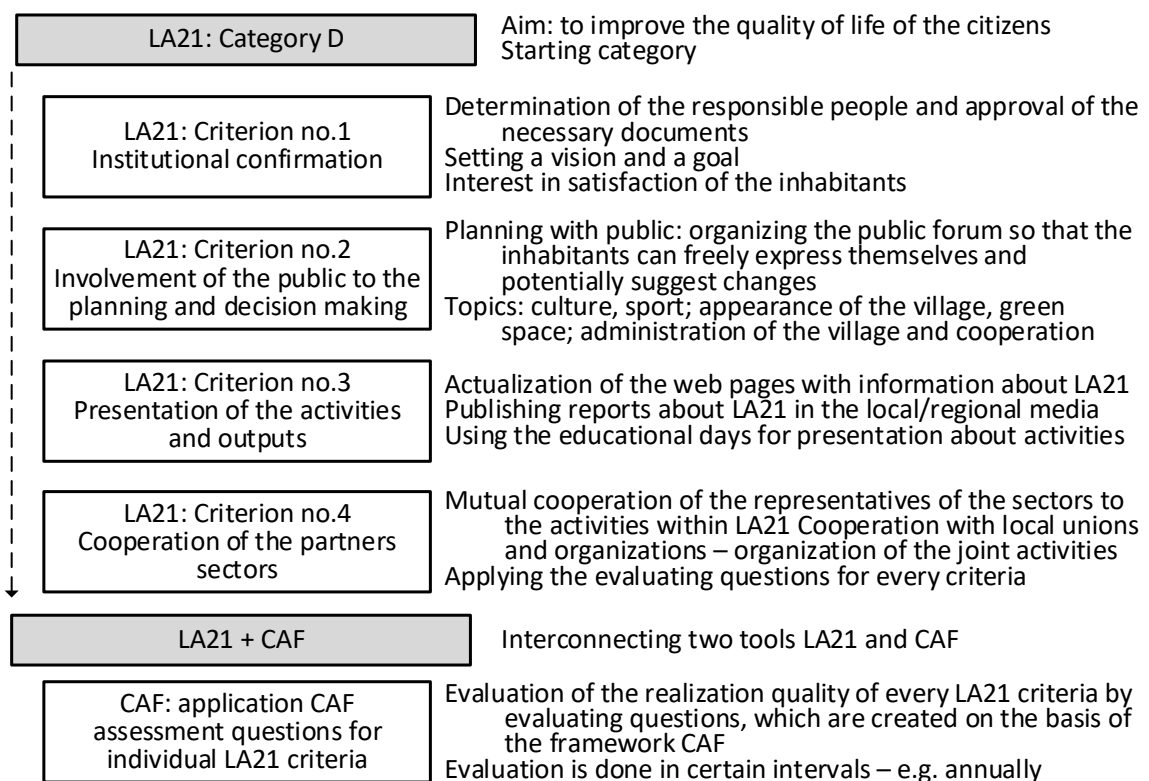
3.2 Selection of the municipalities

After the initial discussions with the representatives of the various municipalities two villages were chosen with different size in terms of the number of their inhabitants. First village with about 600 inhabitants is a type ‘village of the Ist degree’, second village with about 5.700 inhabitants is the type ‘village of the IInd degree’ (with an authorized municipal office). Representatives of both villages had minimal information about ‘Healthy Cities’ or about tools LA21, but they showed interest in this problematic.

3.3 Decision about the appropriate principles of the quality of life and their implementation using the suitable tools

The aim for the villages was defined as – the village wants to become ‘Healthy City’ and thanks to it help with improving the quality of life of their inhabitants. Basic focus was defined as – a key role has communication between the public administration and public, this communication should lead towards the public involvement into planning and decision making about the future of the village. Based on this focus was decided that procedures should be combined from two tools – LA21 and CAF. The reason for CAF is that this framework proposes repeated evaluation of the monitored procedures (Simonova & Novak, 2016). The suggested procedure is shown in the scheme no. 3.

Figure 3: Interconnecting LA21 and CAF



Source: own processing

From the tool LA21 was mainly decided to focus on the category D. It is the category ‘start’, which represents beginning of the process for starting the principles of the sustainable development. The outputs from this category are then connected to the selected evaluation criteria. These criteria are set on the basis of the evaluation framework CAF.

The most important part is to interconnect criteria LA21 with evaluating questions, which are created on the basis of principles evaluating the framework CAF. In the project there was suggested set of the evaluating questions, where every criterion has defined several questions. The examples of the evaluating questions are in the Table no. 1.

Table 1: The examples of the evaluating questions

LA21 criterion	Examples of CAF evaluating questions
Active involvement of the public to the fields of planning and decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the town meet its inhabitants to find out their satisfaction? • Do you realize activities on the basis of the inhabitants' requirements? • Does the office provide all possible information about what is happening in the town? • Does the office have an asset for the society from the point of view of the sustainable development? • Are the inhabitants happy with the environment in the town?
Presentation of the activities and outputs of LA21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the office accept and realize incentives for improving the accessibility, accuracy and transparency of the information on the web for the inhabitants?
Cooperation of the public sector and civic sector and business sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the inhabitants possibly involve into suggesting and providing services or into decision making processes? • Do you organize educational days for the inhabitants when celebrate the day? • Do you conduct a public opinion poll about the reputation of the office? • How many activities does the office realized in cooperation with the relevant organization or the representatives of the public? • Do you support the international developing projects?

Source: own processing

Set of the questions does not need to be complete, because evaluating questions might be changed on the basis of situation at every village separately. However, it is essential for every criterion to be verified like this. An import for the evaluating via CAF is that every claim must be proved (e.g. realized event, record from the solved complaint, published article in the periodic, accountant statement etc.). On the basis of the existence or the non-existence of the proof is then determined present degree of the criterion meeting. Then there are suggested some activities, which will help with the improvement of the quality of every criterion (e.g. providing more information to the media, looking for the incentives from the inhabitants etc.). The sense of this procedure is that at the following evaluation – e.g. after one year time – the criterion will gain higher quality.

4 Conclusion and Discussion

Improving the quality of life of the inhabitants is a global goal when administrate the region. Requirements of the sustainable development are declared for many years at the global (international) as well as local (regional) levels within the strategic documents. There are some international projects where there are recommended some practical tools for the concrete implementation of the principles of the sustainable development. However, the real situation of the municipalities does not reflect this effort. In the Czech Republic exists about 6.250 municipalities, but only 130 of them expressed their effort to systematic heading forwards the 'Healthy Cities', i.e. 130 members of HCCZ association (when the member must not be a municipality itself, but part of the city or Interest Action Group). Situation is that most villages do not think about the involvement into state conception heading towards the quality of life of the inhabitants. Some representatives of the villages are on the other hand

persuaded, that they do maximum for their villages (realize projects towards waste sorting and recycling of the waste, they are involved into activities of the micro-region, support the projects oriented to children or seniors, together with some local groups they organize some social meetings such as balls or concerts with the local groups etc.). The villages consider unnecessary to join the state conception of the sustainable development, or better say that they do not have any idea of the concrete possibilities of this conception and about the benefits of the recommended tools. This emerged from the discussions with some representatives of the villages within the project by the authors of this text, which was focused on this problematic and was oriented especially to the small villages. The project had three main aspects. First aspect was, that the key role was determined for the development of the communication between the public administration and public, mainly for gaining opinions of the inhabitants and their involvement to the decision making process of the village. Second aspect was to emphasize the necessity of the systematic access so that the administrations would proceed in accordance with the aimed programme oriented to the quality of life and the sustainable development, in this case in accordance with the selected criteria of the tools LA21. Third aspect was that it is necessary to verify realized activities somehow. Therefore it was suggested the combination of LA21 with the principles of the evaluated framework CAF. Based on the framework CAF were suggested evaluating questions, so that every criterion LA21 could be objectively evaluated and that the incentives would be gained for improving this criterion. At the end of the project was stated that realization of the concrete activities is not at all burden for the villages, because some of the recommended activities are already done by the villages or were done before. However, there was the lack of method of this realization. Very surprising for the villages were two findings. Firstly, villages mainly depreciated discussion; they only informed the inhabitants about the plans, but do not gain any incentives from them or any feedback (e.g. via public forum). Secondly, they depreciated evaluation of the quality of the realized activities in the village (they assumed that effort must mean the quality). The project documented that the realization of the conception of the sustainable development is depended on the understandable procedure to the village including the explanation of the assets and the possibilities of the realized tools. So that this procedure means the asset for the villages and their inhabitants what to do with the quality of life and the sustainable development, it is necessary to concentrate on three linked key elements: method – communication – verification. For the verification was suggested LA21 principles linked with principles of the evaluating framework CAF.

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