

Assessment of Cities Preparedness for Development - Development Audit

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Abstract

In general, a city is the basic spatial and administration development unit, which has clearly defined self-government functions and wide field of activities, competences and responsibilities for sustainable city development and for the quality of city life improvement. The city, as a legal subject responsible for effective decision making and management of development of its cadastre, works out not only its internal problems and needs, but it also has to react on trends and impetus of external, quickly changing surroundings on the local, regional, central and European level.

City self – government functioning is, in the present, deemed as a shift from demand driven to needs driven public services, ergo from aspiration of self-governments to mainly satisfying claims of citizens to dynamic, sustainable and long term development of territories they govern.

Development audit as a tool for strengthening city-government position in the development process is an independent specific activity oriented on the many-sided and integral analysis and qualified evaluation of the self-government in the area of preparedness for further development. The development audit is a complex of three consecutive stages: assessment of the current state of the development document, available competencies and implementation mechanism, than proposal for the correction process and the last one is the elimination of identified gaps. First experiences from this innovative approach are presented.

Key Words: development audit, city management, preparedness for city development

1 Roles and responsibilities of city authorities in development

In general, a city is the basic spatial and administration development unit (NUTS V statistical unit in EU terminology), which has clearly defined self-government functions and wide field of activities, competences and responsibilities for sustainable city development and for the

quality of city life improvement. The city, as a legal subject responsible for effective decision making and management of development of its cadastre, works out not only its internal problems and needs, but it also has to react on trends and impetus of external, quickly changing surroundings on the local, regional, central and European level.

City self - government decides on and proceeds all the tasks related to the city administration, and by exercising competences regulates the city economical activities, plans and realizes investments, procures, adopts and implements its development documents.

Among the most common assigned functions and tasks of city self-government is so called “direct services provision” to people and organizations (for example public transport, street lighting, city orderliness, building civic and technical infrastructure, management of administrative matters etc.).

Less attention was and still is devoted to the self-government development activities, i.e. to new activities and steps benefits of which are visible only in long-term, often extending the 4-years election period. They are not directly and clearly stated by law, neither specified by specific competences of the city.. Selfhood of the position of the city self-government, as a legal subject responsible for its development, is visible mainly in acting and coordinating its three basic roles. The first role is the city acting as an administrator of development activities, which follow on its origin competences (investment building, education, social services, etc.), the second one is a role of “an entrepreneur”, operating with its own property in favor of citizens and the quality of city life improvement (companies with a business share of the city). The third role is the role of the city as a partner for supporting development activities on its territory (for example trough the common projects with other subjects supporting the development goals of the city).

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2 Initial situations for city development audit

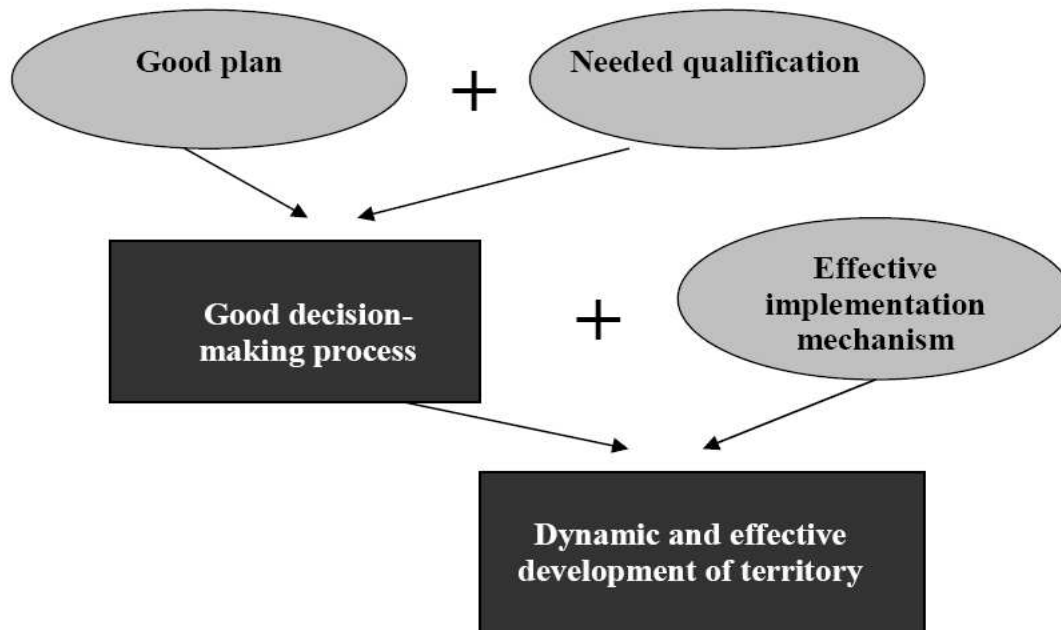
The current EU programming period is not only the period of the pressure on increase of development effectiveness and dynamics of self-governing regions, but also considerable opportunities and challenges for its support are appearing. They are not only complementary funds from EU, but also favorable economy development in Slovakia, which, except others, reflects in gross domestic product growth, employment increase, decreasing of inflation and currency strengthening. In addition to that, as a result of fiscal decentralization and greater amount from tax collection, self-governing entities dispose with more financial resources as it used to be in the past.

But the problem consists in the fact that in many cases city self-governments are not ready enough for new and unique chances of the next coming EU programming period. Although city self-governments already went trough planning processes, and as a result of it the majority of them dispose with approved development documents, the Programme for socio-economic development and the spatial plan of the city but these tools are not enough for effective city development. In addition to that, the degree of their exploitation for city development processes management and development activities realization in praxis can be, and often really is, very disputable. The open question and problem of the city self-

government is also insufficient human resources capacity for new development operations and activities. Relatively low attention cities devote to decision -making processes and implementation.

What does it mean to be ready, respectively to create conditions for dynamic and effective development of the territory the city governs? The whole process can be illustrated on the next figure:

Figure 1: Conditions of dynamic and effective development



As we can see, from the figure above, there are three necessary input factors (colored in grey) – the good development plan, needed qualification (skills, knowledge and attitudes) and the effective mechanism for the development plan implementation.

It is definitely proved by praxis, that if any of the factors is missing or it is of low quality, there will not be obtained the final effects i.e. the good decision-making process and enabling conditions for dynamic development of the territory (colored in black). Going out from this it makes sense to influence/improve development input factors at the same time and not in longer time phase shift.

Good plan

The city preparedness for better development is conditioned by several aspects. As one of the most important we can consider the existence of good development plan as a tool of development, which is based on expected development on global, European, national and regional level, on the territory potential utilization, and on close connection with relevant plans and concepts on higher administration level. The good plan is also based on integrated approach to resolving prioritized economical, social and environmental challenges, including exploitation of the existing and new-coming opportunities.

Needed qualification

Another very essential aspect of future development is human resources preparedness. Necessary part of the people concerned is their attitudes needed for effective development

process of their own territory. It includes the decision-making and executive sphere as well as different self-government entities (organizations in founder competence of the self – government bodies and companies with a business share of the city) but also the other stakeholders.

Implementation mechanism

A necessary assumption for the development process functioning is the implementation mechanism settings. This should enable not only effective implementation of the development plan with all stakeholders and partners involvement but also criterion evaluation (through indicators) of the results achieved, eventually also the corrections of the process itself.

Detail knowledge of the city self-government environment, active cooperation mainly with the cities of the Eastern Slovakia in the area of staff education, consultations and facilitation of the planning processes, projects development, and also our rich experience with planning and implementation processes on regional, national and international level, led us to the elaboration of methodology of cities preparedness for dynamic and effective development – development audit.

3 Development audit methodology framework

Development audit of the city is independent specific activity, oriented on the many-sided and integral analysis and qualified evaluation of the self-government in the area of preparedness for further development. It serves only for internal needs of the cities. The development audit is a complex of three consecutive stages: assessment of the current state, proposal for the correction process and the last one is the elimination of identified gaps.

In the first stage we review the quality of the development document of the city focusing on its consistency and topicality, and also on its complementarities with documents on the higher level. The quality is also reviewed in the area of development plan feasibility, along with interconnection of objectives with analytical outcomes and links to the action plan. Last but not least the cross-connection between the action plan and realistically expected resources is examined.

After the necessary steps for implementation audit recommendations, the actual and feasible development plan, which takes into account potential and territory limitations, would be the output of this phase.

At the same time, in the second stage, we assess the level of human resources preparedness. The aim is to ensure, that there exists the critical mass of people (in both the decisive and executive area of the self-government) with the knowledge and skills necessary for modern planning, decision-making, projections and management of the development processes of the city.

Appraisal of the existing mechanism for the development document implementation and the corrective recommendations proposal should leads to the adoption of the mechanism for the development plan realization in the most effective way, including also monitoring, evaluation and actualization processes.

All above stated outputs of the complex development audit of the city are preconditions for either immediate or in near future concerted actions leading to the positive results in city development, in higher success rate of EU funds obtaining for development objectives, in increase of city reputation (rating). The main impact should be seen in faster achievement of

positive changes within community which lives and works on the given territory and this way to gain its appreciation.

4 Experiences with the development audit

Carpathian Development Institute gained the first experiences with the development audit implementation, as an innovative approach to the fast creation of the conditions for significant and dynamic city development, in the cities Kosice and Spisska Nova Ves.

Outcomes from development audit processes in above stated cities, but also our other experiences with cities collaboration, justified in general the state of insufficient level of preparedness of cities for further development. The main findings from appraisal of the Programmes for socio-economic development of the city pointed out the following:

- the Programmes for socio-economic development of the cities are often obsolete
- alternative scenarios for future development of cities (development prognosis) are missing
- insufficient linkage of analytical and strategic parts of the document (insufficient justification and prioritization of problems, opportunities and objectives based on in advance defined criteria))
- structure of objectives is often inconsistent horizontally and vertically, there are not verifiable indicators for measuring objectives achievement and the progress in development
- there is very often no linkage and compatibility between the Programme for socio-economic development and Spatial plan of the city
- the development objectives and measures are usually too general and that way they do not form clear and focused development guide for all interested parties
- in the development plan the sectoral programmes/concepts are not incorporated
- projection of the development plan objectives is not clearly reflected into action plans or into strategic projects

Research and analysis in the area of capacity building pointed out insufficient knowledge, skills and experience with the city development. The cities are not ready enough in the field of available competences, mainly because:

- there is not sufficient specialized capacity (internal and/or external) for full utilization of the city potential
- there is rarely in place systematic preparation of human resources, neither a worked up system of the staff education in the area of city development

Research and analysis in the area of implementation of development plan identified insufficiently effective mechanism of implementation of the Programme for socio-economic development (PSED) of the city mainly in the following issues:

- implementation of the PSED of the city is not clearly projected to the organizational structure and in the working positions of the city self – government staff
- related planning processes are not managed on the same hierarchical level of administration, they are not sufficiently coordinated in the term of linkages between the decisive and executive bodies of the city self-government
- cities are not ready yet for project management

5 Conclusions

Self - governments (their decisive and also executive parts) should be naturally but also by law, leaders and animators of the development process on their territory. Without their proactive approach and coordination have all the subjects operating in that territory unfavorable position, as their development goals and activities should be harmonized with the broader territorial development goals and activities. Concurrently the subjects' development goals should be set as complementary (and not redundant or even contra-productive) to goals of all other relevant subjects on the same territory.

That is why self-governments should review their development preparedness (by using so-called “development audit”), elaborate measures and procedures to eliminate identified gaps and as soon as possible to start to implement the correction process.

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