

Local Agenda 21

**Methodological Manual
Based on Experiences
from Slovakia**



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THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
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Introduction

This publication was prepared on the basis of experience of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe REC Slovakia with community initiatives supporting sustainable development at local level in Slovakia. Its purpose is to transfer this valuable experience from one Central European country to the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe and to the Caucasus countries. The publication should serve as a framework guide and methodology for all who work in the area of municipal and micro-regional development and feel that the traditional methods based on commanding approaches and administration are not sufficient in our dynamic times (Mayors, deputies of municipal and city councils, members of commissions, experts in local and regional development and representatives of non-governmental organisations and citizens being interested in development of their communities).

The publication has been worked out in such a way that allows informing the reader and potential user about the whole LA 21 process and providing him with a framework guide and methodology for its implementation. Brief introduction into the issues is followed by specification of tasks of the major groups participating in the LA 21 process. The main part of the publication deals with specification of the LA 21 process itself - its initiating, planning and implementing phases. It includes description of activities, working procedures in various phases and control and monitoring of the process and achieved results with regard to sustainable development indicators.

The annex to the publication contains some case studies of Local Agenda 21 which were implemented in Slovakia in 2003 within the framework of the project "Regions 21 - Support to Sustainable Development at Local Level".

We believe that the "Local Agenda 21 - Methodological Manual" will become a useful tool for many users and removes so a certain gap in sources of information on local development issues.

1. Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21 - Background

The process of creating and implementing LA 21 programmes relates to the **UN Conference on the Environment and Development** (so-called Earth Summit), which was held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). The roles of local self-governments in the application of sustainable development are mentioned in a number of chapters of Agenda 21, the most comprehensive document adopted by the 178 countries of the world which attended the conference. Agenda 21 provides a detailed (though not always very concrete) guide about practical implementation of the principles of sustainable development. Local self-government is, in this respect, considered to be one of the most important groups of society. Chapter 29 of Agenda 21 deals with the commitments of self-governing bodies of municipalities and cities in supporting sustainable development.

In 1994, Manchester (UK) hosted **Global Forum '94** with the subtitle *Local Agenda 21 - Framework for Environmental Action at Local Level*. The objectives of this meeting were to develop practical approaches to sustainable development in local communities, to support the process of application of LA 21, to share experience and knowledge among countries and within them, to encourage local authorities, etc. Many case studies describing progress in implementation of LA 21 in various cities of the world were presented at this event.

The European Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Aalborg (Denmark) in May 1994, was an important event to support sustainable development of the European cities. Its participants adopted the so-called Aalborg Charter consisting of three main parts (see Box 1). There are 350 signatories of the Charter from 29 European countries.

The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign directly relates to the Aalborg Conference. It brings together the European networks of local self-governments and provides the opportunity and mechanisms to disseminate methodologies and information required for sustainable development. The office of the campaign is seated in Brussels and is supported financially by the European Commission and by the cities of Aalborg and Hannover. Participants in the campaign are cities and towns, which signed the Aalborg Charter and adopted the commitments resulting from it. At present there are more than 800 signatories. The 1998 Sofia Conference presented an important contribution to the extension of the campaign towards the east and south. The campaign's activities include awarding the "European Sustainable City" prize and assessing "Common European Indicators" in the European cities and towns.

Box 1 - Aalborg Charter

The Charter consists of three main parts:

- I. Declaration "European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability" - it has the following 14 parts: The Role of European Cities and Towns; The Notion and Principles of Sustainability; Local Strategies Towards Sustainability; Sustainability as a Creative, Local, Balance-Seeking Process; Resolving Problems by Negotiating Outwards; Urban Economy Towards Sustainability; Social Equity for Urban Sustainability; Sustainable Land-Use Patterns; Sustainable Urban Mobility Patterns; Responsibility for the Global Climate; Prevention of Ecosystems Toxicification; Local Self-Governance as a Pre-Condition; Citizens as Key Actors and the Involvement of the Community; Instruments and Tools for Urban Management Towards Sustainability;
- II. The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign - declaration of the campaign of the European cities and towns and a call to local self-governments, cities and regions to join the campaign; specification of the main activities of the campaign;
- III. Engaging in The Local Agenda 21 processes: Local Action Plans Towards Sustainability - commitment of the Charter signatories in relation to creation and application of Local Agenda 21.

The Second European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns was held in Lisbon in October 1996. It linked to the Aalborg Charter and specified the process of implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the European cities and towns in the so-called Lisbon Action Plan.

In June 1996, Istanbul (Turkey) hosted the **UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)** which adopted a document called "Habitat Agenda: Objectives, Principles, Commitments and the Global Action Plan". This document also contains a commitment to pursue the sustainable development of human settlements in the urbanising world by developing communities which will effectively use resources within the carrying capacity of ecosystems; take into consideration the precautionary principle; provide equal opportunities to all people (in particular to those belonging to the vulnerable and handicapped) for healthy, safe and productive lives in harmony with nature, cultural heritage, spiritual and cultural values; and enable economic and social progress and protection of the environment. It is also proposed to decentralise and strengthen local authorities, their networks and associations and to develop more public participation.

The Third European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns was held in Hannover (Germany) in February 2000. A lot of positive examples of LA 21

implementation were presented here. A number of new bilateral and multilateral partnerships and co-operation appeared. Many cities and towns joined the Aalborg Charter and the so-called Hannover Call was adopted (see Box 2). The Conference led to the initiative to monitor common indicators in the European cities and self-governments.

Box 2 - The Hannover Call of European Municipal Leaders at the Turn of the 21st Century

The participants of the Hannover Call have committed to act at the local level, being aware of global responsibility; to support the European integration with the aim to achieve social and economic cohesion, whilst adhering to recognised social and environmental standards; to introduce indicators of local sustainability, whilst the set of Common European Indicators can be a tool for comparing changes in Europe in the area of progress towards sustainability. The Hannover Call addresses all competent bodies and calls:

- the international community and national governments to provide more support to implementation of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda document in countries, which have not joined sustainable development yet,
- the European institutions, in particular the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to give higher priority to sustainable development, which is a basis of European society,
- the national governments to support national campaigns for sustainable development and LA 21, to earmark resources to support local and regional self-governments, in particular in the areas of urban development and renewal and transport upon condition that they comply with the criteria of sustainable development.

The Hannover Call contains a separate Annex "Our Considerations" which includes opportunities, obstacles and challenges related to European integration, to integration of environmental issues into all strategies at the European and national levels and to other up-to-date themes with an emphasis on the importance of international co-operation.

A number of other activities at the local level relate to the sustainable development process along with the above-mentioned international conferences and adopted documents. There are, for example, the **Healthy City** and **Brundtland City** projects in Europe.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) started and implements the Healthy City project. The project was initiated in 1988 and more than 1,100 cities and towns in 29 countries joined it during the first ten years. It serves as a tool enabling practical application of the "Health for All" strategy at the local level. The aim of the project is to meet the vision of a "healthy city" seeking to improve the health and quality of life of inhabitants. The process is the responsibility of self-governments of participating cities and towns, but participation of other groups of society is also important. A Pan-European network of healthy cities has been created and at the national level there are usually national networks of healthy cities. The project should encourage international activities and public participation, should bring innovations and should result in public health policy.

The Brundtland City international programme supports concrete projects helping sustainable local development. The programme has been named after the former Norwegian Prime Minister G. H. Brundtland, the chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development which prepared the 1987 UN Report on the Environment and Development (known as Our Common Future).

In order to achieve better implementation of LA 21 activities, it is necessary, along with institutional management of individual projects and activities, to involve other international institutions, which support the whole process expertly and financially. One of the most important institutions includes the **UN Development Programme (UNDP)**, whose known Capacity 21 programme is directly oriented towards support of sustainable development in the member states - at present it is being carried out in 50 countries. **The UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD)** deals with implementation of the Rio agreements also at the level of LA 21. The Commission includes representatives of 53 countries (usually at ministerial level) and more than 1,000 non-governmental organisations.

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is an important institution seated in Freiburg (Germany). The Council associates self-governments oriented to protecting the environment and to solving environmental problems by local initiatives and activities (it associates approximately 350 cities, municipalities, regions and associations from all over the world).

According to the conclusions of a survey carried out by this organisation in 2000-2001, more than 6,400 self-governments in 113 countries of the world have committed and actively implemented LA 21 by the end of 2001. The survey was carried out with support provided by the UN Secretariat for the Johannesburg World Summit, which was, at that time, under preparation (see hereinafter), in co-operation with UNDP. Conclusions of the survey further show that the lack of political will and financial support from governments are still the main obstacles in implementation of LA 21 in the world. Large differences in progress in implementing LA 21 in the world are quite clear. The year 1997 seems to be a

turning point in the implementation of LA 21. National campaigns carried out in 18 countries considerably contributed to the implementation of LA 21. The highest rate (almost 100%) of involvement in LA 21 processes is in Sweden, high percentages are also in other Scandinavian states. Successful implementation of LA 21 has been achieved in the UK where LA 21 documents have been implemented in more than 90% of municipalities by 2001.

The most important activities of ICLEI include education of self-governments in preparation of Local Agenda 21 and co-operation in development and testing of sustainable planning at the local level and in the implementation of specific pilot projects. Hundreds of local self-governments from all over the world have taken part in the preparation of LA 21 action plans.

Another institution working in the area of LA 21 is **the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)** which is seated in Paris. Included in the framework of the working group for the environment is also the Network of National Co-ordinators for Local Agenda 21 (since 1996), which participates in the above-mentioned European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in August and September 2002 in Johannesburg (South Africa), was an action of global importance. Its role included assessing the progress achieved in implementing conclusions from the Rio Conference during the decade after 1992. A conference of representatives of cities and towns from all over the world dealing with the application of Agenda 21 at the local level was a side event to the World Summit. The conference stressed the very positive role played by self-governments during the last decade in implementing the Rio conclusions and recommendations. A notion of "local action" should be used in the future in order to strengthen the action character of local activities. The role of local self-governments and partnerships in implementing objectives of sustainable development is mentioned also in the main document adopted at the World Summit - the Implementation Plan.

The above-mentioned examples show that a number of projects are being implemented in the world, which involve thousands of urban and rural settlements. A common objective of these projects is to improve the overall quality of life and to orient development strategies in a sustainable direction. At the same time, it is clear that the roles related to implementing sustainable development at the local level are and in the near future still will be up-to-date.

2. Role of major groups in LA 21

The LA 21 Programme should be built as a set of mutually supportive community (municipality, micro-regional or regional) activities, which is able to address the representatives of all stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary, from the very beginning, to pay special attention to the identification and involvement of various partners. The tasks which are crucial for success of the entire LA 21 process include: i) addressing the representatives of individual stakeholders for co-operation in the LA 21 programme, ii) presenting their ideas on a proper form of involvement, iii) discussing and seeking a proper form/motivation of their involvement.

Stakeholders of LA 21 process

Stakeholders represent all groups and individuals who can affect or can be affected (positively or negatively) by the results of decisions, plans, programmes or processes leading to such results.

We present a survey of stakeholders who can be taken into account when dealing with LA 21. Such a list can, however, differ in individual municipalities and will depend on the concrete conditions in each municipality/micro-region.

The stakeholders of LA 21 at the level of municipality/micro-region include:

- *Local self-government* - represented by the Mayor (Lord Mayor), deputies of municipal (city) councils, employees of municipal (city) offices and expert commissions or by authorities of a micro-region;
- *Regional self-government and local state administration* - employees of various departments of regional self-governmental offices, regional and local state administration offices, specialised offices;
- *Public sector* - representatives of organisations of so-called public services (education, culture, health service, churches, social services, police, army, etc.);
- *Local and regional enterprises and entrepreneurs* - employers, representatives of local enterprises, businessmen, tradesmen, craftsmen, small and medium entrepreneurs, service operators including infrastructure (transport, water supply, electricity and gas distribution, etc.), sometimes also including representatives of the financial sector (banks, insurance companies);
- *Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)* - lobbying and social organisations, civic associations in various areas. Activities of NGOs are diverse (social activities, charity, environment, education, development, community centres, infor-

- mation centres, micro-regional and regional associations, euro-regions, etc.);
- *Representatives of selected groups of society* (informal groups and their clubs and associations) - children and youth, pensioners, women, the unemployed, national minorities and ethnic groups, disadvantaged groups, etc.;
 - *Individuals not involved into formal groups and the public* - personalities affecting the public opinion in a municipality/micro-region, local activists and the general public in several cases (opinion polls, questionnaires, meetings);
 - *External partners* - representatives of universities, scientific and expert organisations, national and international non-governmental organisations, important personalities and other experts.

Although the above-mentioned "list" of stakeholders is relatively extensive and the LA 21 process usually involves most of these groups, their roles vary. A **key role** (co-ordination and management, implementation of activities) **is played only by some of them**; the other ones are complementary (they take part only in several steps, or fulfil other roles).

Box 3 contains, as an example, the four most important partners in rural development - self-government, state administration, private sector and non-governmental organisations.

According to the results of the LASALA project¹, assessing the LA 21 process in European countries, *local self-government* is the most important stakeholder in the LA 21 process. It is obvious due to the fact that the self-government bears responsibility for the municipality and community. *Non-governmental organisations with an environmental orientation* are another key group followed by the *private sector* (enterprises and entrepreneurs), *public sector* (state administration and organisations of public services) and *socially oriented NGOs*. The role of experts has been stressed (consultants, scientific and research institutes). Public participation varies; they mostly participate as members of lobbying groups. Citizens, as individuals, very rarely participate in decision-making. The participation of various informal lobbying groups of citizens (the elderly, women's organisations, disadvantaged groups, national minorities, the unemployed, etc.) is insufficient, except for children and youth, who are considered to be an important and prospective group in the process of creating and implementing LA 21

¹ ICLEI (2001). The LASALA project. More information can be found at www.iclei.org.

Box 3 - The four most important local partners in rural development

Motto: Strength of a table

As a table has four legs, so depends rural development on four partners. The strength of a table depends upon the steadiness and firmness of its legs.

Rural development is not possible without institutions belonging to the four main stakeholders - self-government, state administration, the third sector and the private sector. None of these groups can be excluded since they all reach other areas of political, economic and social life. The omission of any of them would weaken the development process. Each partner has to feel that he is a full member of the partnership, and no one can dominate the others or weaken them knowingly.

Roles of stakeholders

Each stakeholder participating in the process of preparing and implementing LA 21 at the level of the municipality/micro-region plays its role, which is determined by the character and needs of a given stakeholder and by the starting situation of the municipality. We will try to outline the importance and tasks of individual stakeholders in the whole process, their contributions as well as risks imposed by an over-appreciation of importance or by the dominance of any group in the LA 21 process.

Local self-government is responsible for the management of a municipality. Implementation tools and competences in public administration are concentrated here. **Local self-government is crucial in the whole process of LA 21** in all its phases. Without active participation and the support of local self-government, the success of LA 21 could hardly be expected. Local self-government is most often the leader of the entire LA 21 process in European countries. The main contribution is usually the influence of local authorities in relation to local citizens, knowledge of local conditions and problems, competence to make decisions, disposition of municipal budget, existence of expert commissions. Risks are presented by an insufficient capacity and sometimes insufficient expertise of self-governmental bodies (in particular in smaller municipalities), a limited election period tempting short-term decisions, insufficient municipal budgets, political pressures, a concentration only on large infrastructure projects, or an unwillingness to change/adjust the municipal budget to new priorities.

Regional self-government and local state administration have competence and power delegated in some areas of governance. Their employees are usually experts in their areas and have knowledge about activities at the regional and

national levels. Therefore, they can contribute valuable knowledge, in particular during the initial and programming phases of LA 21 - in setting priorities and objectives and also in seeking sources of funding. In the European process of LA 21 **they play an important role, however, they are seldom a key group** - there is a risk that they are not fully aware of local issues, can suffer from a lack of financial sources, etc..

The public sector plays an important role in local development. Organisations in the public sector provide inhabitants with a number of services (education, health service, culture, churches, social services, police, army, etc.), and therefore are considered to be important. **Their role is very important** in the LA 21 process, in particular in smaller municipalities and peripheral areas. Main activists include local teachers, heads of cultural agencies and social workers. However, the public sector has not yet been very active in the LA 21 process in Central and Eastern European countries. On the other hand, there is a risk that dominance of a particular issue will lead to suppression of another one, which can cause an imbalance in the LA 21 process.

Local enterprises and entrepreneurs represent the economic power of a municipality and region. They produce economic values, generate funds for local activities, employ local inhabitants and, in some cases, support and develop traditional local crafts, use local resources for development of local tourism and agro-tourism or provide the infrastructure in a municipality/micro-region. Therefore, **their role in the LA 21 process is irreplaceable**. Involvement in the process is, however, often problematic and depends on relations with local self-government, on the economic power of concrete enterprises and entrepreneurs and, in particular, on their decision. Thus, the issue of their motivation is crucial. In creating the vision, strategy and objectives of LA 21 it is necessary to consider the plans and ideas of this group and to use their capabilities and activities. Enterprises and entrepreneurs represent one of the most important sources of funding of development projects - their role is important also in the implementation phase - here it should be even more crucial. The risks of the "active" involvement of enterprises and entrepreneurs into the process lie in their possibility to pursue personal and partial interests, which are often in conflict with the interests of the community. Control and feedback are therefore necessary. If local entrepreneurs remain outside the LA 21 process, this can lead to economic stagnation in a municipality or to a lack of jobs and an insufficient number of development projects or projects which do not comply with the priorities and objectives of LA 21.

Non-governmental organisations in European countries are the most **important partner of local self-governments in the LA 21 process**. They are formal representatives of the citizens of a municipality/micro-region. In most cases, the role of traditional environmental and social NGOs is to assist in the

development of a community, municipality or micro-region. They involve people with good knowledge in certain areas and often with a quality vision and strategy of development. An important role is also played by NGOs oriented to maintaining local cultural traditions and crafts. NGOs oriented to social and health aid and advisory services play an important role in peripheral areas. Members of NGOs are often better oriented to development issues, have good knowledge about possibilities of project funding, and have contacts to similar organisations both in their own country and abroad. NGOs and lobbying groups often play the role of implementing agencies, and therefore, they are important in the entire LA 21 process. Some associations and organisations are established for a special purpose to pursue particular interests. This is not always in accordance with LA 21 objectives, and the involvement of these groups in dealing with the tasks of community development is risky. For the effective and efficient involvement of NGOs in the LA 21 process, it is very important that the self-government is well informed on all activities and projects carried out by NGOs in the territory of the municipality/micro-region. Representatives of the self-government should realise the importance of NGOs for citizens in their municipalities/micro-regions and create favourable and motivating conditions for their activities. In this respect, NGOs should be active and in dealing with projects supporting community development. They should sign a contract with the Mayor at the very beginning, which will clearly define what the project will bring to the municipality/micro-region, how it will be implemented and what input there will be from the local self-governments (financial and material). Such a procedure will help strengthen the partnership between self-government and NGO.

Representatives of selected groups of the society are informal representatives of typical groups of local community and should reflect their needs, ideas and objectives. Generally, their representation in the LA 21 process in Central and Eastern European countries is insufficient, and their motivation belongs to the greatest problems from the point of view of full partnership in LA 21. The only exemption is children and youth, whose motivation is usually successful and whose involvement in activities is very high. Representatives of the major groups in a given municipality/micro-region (children and youth, pensioners, women, the unemployed, national minorities and ethnic groups, disadvantaged groups, etc.) **should play an important role in defining the priorities and objectives of LA 21**, but they should also be beneficiaries of projects and should participate in their implementation. There are again the risks of pursuing particular interests at the expense of other ones, insufficient involvement of community stakeholders and a subjective understanding of problems without knowing the real facts.

Individuals not involved in the formal groups and the public will be probably the most numerous group in the LA 21 process. Some of them are known and influential personalities who can affect the process significantly (respected

persons in a municipality or micro-region, local activists). Their involvement is usually important and effective, but involvement of the general public without motivation is very limited and insufficient. The rate of involvement depends mainly on the extent of civic participation in a given municipality/micro-region, on relations of a self-government with citizens and vice-versa. Generally in Central and Eastern European countries, the rate of involvement of the public and citizens into the LA 21 process is considered insufficient. **The role of the public is very important and irreplaceable in the programming and implementation phases of LA 21** because citizens are the main recipients of LA 21 process and executors of concrete projects. Providing information and public participation, which usually are being achieved through proven procedures (opinion polls, questionnaires, meetings), is necessary for success of the whole process. Risks of involvement of individuals and the public are the same as in the previous group.

External partners play an important role in the LA 21 process in European countries, but they are not key actors in the process. Extensive knowledge, expertise and experience from various areas of LA 21 are their most important contribution, increasing quality of the whole process. Due to the fact that they do not come directly from the municipality/micro-region, they are independent and can look at the local problems (often short-term and unimportant) more realistically. External co-operators play therefore an important role as consultants and advisers. **They play their role in the initial and, in particular, in the programming phases.** However, they should not directly affect the method of identifying priority objectives or other important local specific assessments, which are being prepared by local activists. Risks from a high number of external experts in the LA 21 process lie in an excessive emphasis on academic aspects and a low operability of outputs from the programming phase as well as insufficient respect for the needs of the community.

In the process of LA 21, it is necessary to stress the fundamental importance of the **partnership and participation** of stakeholders (more information in the chapter on the initial phase of LA 21). Although the role of individual groups in the process will vary, the partnership of all stakeholders, acceptance of the principle of common adoption of decisions and a shared responsibility for the procedure and results of the entire LA 21 process are very important. A good method in this respect is so-called **local forum of LA 21** involving representatives of all major groups. Results of LASALA project show that as many as two thirds of respondents mentioned the activities of the local forum in the LA 21 process. The forum can be, of course, named otherwise - e.g. **co-ordinating group, local partnership, etc..**

3 Procedural aspects of LA 21

Process of LA 21

This chapter provides an initial description of the process of preparing and implementing LA 21 in municipalities and micro-regions and its main phases. We have decided to describe the concrete procedures and methods in creating and implementing LA 21 specifically for the **three main phases of the LA 21 process - initial, programming (planning) and implementing phases.**

Initial phase of LA 21 - Community initiatives and local partnerships

Its task is to start the process - to identify and associate partners of the process (to establish a so-called **local forum** or a *co-ordinating group*), define common objectives (vision and objectives of sustainable development of a municipality/micro-region), find out conditions for implementing LA 21 (internal and external) and possibilities for implementing objectives as well as work out the framework of a work plan and financial plan for the LA 21 process. The length of this phase can vary. In any case, however, it requires the existence of an active and informed *process initiator*, who is usually the engine of the initial (often also the programming) phase of the process in a municipality/micro-region. In the ideal case this phase can last 1 to 2 months, but more probably it will take several months, in some cases even years.

Programming (planning) phase of LA 21 - Local development programme (plan)

The role of this programme is to work out fundamental documents, which will govern the development of a municipality/micro-region. This includes analysis of the current state - assessing preconditions and opportunities for development, specifying a strategy (vision) of sustainable development, defining priorities, objectives and measures to achieve them and, finally, preparing an action plan as a starting point for concrete projects. The action plan should contain a programme for project funding as well as monitoring and controlling the implementation of LA 21 objectives. It is possible to work out one basic document containing the mentioned items (called for example Local Agenda 21, or Development Plan of Municipality, etc.), or several documents prepared step by step which must be logically inter-linked. The development document should be adopted and approved by all partners in the process and should be binding (adopted by a municipal council or the authorities of a micro-region). A well-prepared document of LA 21 requires a lot of work - it depends on concrete conditions in a given muni-

pality/micro-region. When sufficient background documents exist and with the active work of all stakeholders, it is possible to elaborate such a document within six months. More often, however, the required period will be 1 to 2 years. The development document also defines the timetables for objectives and measures.

Implementing phase of LA 21 - Local actions

The aim is to work out and implement concrete projects determined by the results of the programming phase of LA 21. Projects will be prepared and implemented by various stakeholders coming from a given municipality/micro-region. The LA 21 document must contain sufficiently clear starting points: defined priorities, objectives, measures, implementing tools, which should be binding for the implementation of individual projects. The existence of a local forum (co-ordinating group) is important in this phase - it should work as a managing and controlling body for all projects from their approval through monitoring and control up to potential sanctions and remedial measures. In this phase, an important role is played by elected representatives of self-government (they approve fundamental development documents, budget and financial resources for projects and activities), local entrepreneurs, sponsors, local activists and external advisors who assist the municipality in gaining required financial resources. Overall control (monitoring) of meeting the objectives and measures of a development document, or their revision and updating, are part of the implementing phase. Duration of this phase depends on individual objectives of the municipality's/micro-region's development document. Projects can be short-term (implemented within a couple of weeks or months) or middle-term (implemented gradually or last several years). In any case, there must be a mechanism of controls for meeting the objectives carried out in a defined frequency.

Initial phase of LA 21 - Community initiatives and local partnerships

The initial phase is the first and the key step in meeting the programme of LA 21. How to start and what is necessary to carry out in the initial phase? This depends on starting conditions (internal and external) in a given municipality/micro-region, on what experience of a self-government and civic activities can be used and, in particular, on what **the motivation to start with a LA 21 programme** is.

Despite the fact that the initial phase is always unrepeatable and original for each municipality/micro-region, it is possible to identify the following basic steps of the initial phase:

- **establishing an initial group** (main initiators, actors, i.e. the group of activists who prepare the start of the LA 21 programme in a municipality/city/micro-region),
- **extending the initial group to involve other partners** and establishing a "local forum" (local working group),
- **seeking guiding values, priority areas and a common vision for the future of a municipality/city/micro-region for 10 to 20 years**, using local experts and receiving necessary support in a local self-government,
- **assuring management of LA 21 programme** (executive management and co-ordinator of LA 21 who ensure management and inter-linkage of local activities, involvement of other stakeholders and public participation),
- **mapping support resources** (financial, material and in particular human resources),
- **working out timing and financial plan** and preparing for the programming phase.

Motivation to start with LA 21 programme

A strong motivation to join the LA 21 process lies in most cases in concrete urgent problems (environmental, social, economic, etc.) related for instance to the adverse development of a municipality/micro-region, the quality of life and the environment and a high unemployment rate. Motivation can also be an offer for the local self-government of a municipality, micro-region or civic association to join a concrete project supporting LA 21 with an aim to gain new experience and financial resources for developing the municipality/micro-region.

Motivation to apply LA 21 can also be to become more acquainted with positive examples, experience and achievements in other municipalities and micro-regions in the area of strategic planning and in the preparation of action plan (e.g. at training courses, seminars). Inspiration and incentives to join the LA 21 programme can be brought to a municipality/micro-region not only by representatives of local self-government, local state administration, or local activists but by external experts and advisors as well, including members of active non-governmental organisations from other regions.

It is often a short and spontaneous period when the local self-government or local activists decide to start with the preparation of an LA 21 programme. Reasons usually include the solution of urgent local problems, improvement of the current socio-economic development and state of the environment in the area, strengthening of co-operation among municipalities or achievement of a better partnership with the public.

Initiator(s) of LA 21 programme and initiating group

Local self-government (or local state administration) or a **group of local activists** are most often the main initiator of the LA 21. A group of external experts (advisors) can also initiate the process. The role of an initiating group is to cover and, in the first phase, also to manage preparatory steps of the LA 21 programme.

However, **the initiator can be any inhabitant of a municipality/micro-region**, or the initiation can also be external. In cities there are usually local institutions, councils, non-governmental or expert organisations which initiate the process. In a smaller municipality this can be done by any citizen who wants to change something or who wants to solve a concrete problem.

It is important that the initiator is not discouraged at the very beginning and that he can find a supportive environment in the self-government and in the whole community or micro-region.

The initiator does not need to be also the leader or manager (co-ordinator) in the process which he initiated. If he does not have required skills, the initiator becomes, after a certain time, a member or supporter of the LA 21 process or can, after a certain time, assist in implementing the ideas of other activists.

Initiators should be convinced that preparing the LA 21 programme supports the orientation of a municipality/micro-region to sustainability and that it helps improve the quality of life, the environment and its components, achieves a higher level of social justice, better uses human potential and strengthens economic development of the territory. The initiators must have a clear idea why they want to implement the LA 21 programme. It is necessary to discuss, in detail, what individual activists (initiators) expect from the LA 21 process, whether they are prepared to reassess the current development documents of the municipality/micro-region and to integrate principles of sustainable development into these documents and whether they are aware that achieving concrete results will take some time.

In the ideal case, the **initial group (i.e. the first informal executive management of the LA 21 programme)**, from the beginning, consists of representatives of local self-government (or also local state administration), local activists and external consultants - advisors. Such a cross-sectoral composition offers a good basis for effective future partnership.

Established and working **partnership** at the local level is a very good input. Partnership among LA 21 stakeholders means that they are equal partners and have a common responsibility for achieved results and their implementation. It is important that the partnership respects all involved LA 21 stakeholders. In the case of a working partnership, it is possible, from the beginning, to better distribute the tasks related to preparing the LA 21 programme, to more quickly involve all stakeholders and local inhabitants and to define a comprehensive view on

the procedural aspects of preparing and approving documents needed for LA 21.

In real practice, if the municipality/micro-region only starts with community activities, the initial group may consist only of representatives of one group (e.g. representatives of local self-government, local activists or even external experts). For a short time this can offer certain advantages and members of the initial group may have a feeling that they proceed well. Short-term "successes" of such a solution include:

- if consisted only of representatives of local self-government (this analogically also applies to initial group involving only local activists), such an initial group has good knowledge about the territory concerned and is able to achieve an agreement within a short time and to prepare needed inputs (priorities, solutions, objectives, vision, etc.) from its point of view, from its local experience and on the basis of its ideas (i.e. ideas of one stakeholder),
- if consisted only of external experts, such an initial group - on the basis of experience from other municipalities and micro-regions and based on a relatively short survey - is able to prepare a framework assessment of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the territory concerned and to work out a draft strategy of sustainable development with an action plan from its point of view and based on experience from other territories/municipalities/micro-regions.

In both cases it can seem that things proceed well and rapidly, preparations are going practically without problems. Neither of these alternatives is a perspective, acceptable and sustainable solution. Without a broad partnership of all stakeholders and without the support of citizens, civic associations and entrepreneurs, the documents worked out in this way will remain unimplemented, even if their authors consider them to be perfect. It is necessary to involve into the preparation all stakeholders who must feel, from the beginning, that their opinions and proposals are respected in the programme (for more information see the Chapter "Role of major groups in LA 21").

Identification and involvement of other partners including the general public and creation of working groups

An important role of the LA 21 initiator (initiating group) is to create a partnership of the major groups. At the beginning, it is important to address the representatives of the main lobbying groups. It is recommended to address local personalities and respected people and to ask them for assistance in this step.

Immediately after creating a partnership, it is necessary to find out the expectations of various partners. It is necessary to create such an atmosphere that all stakeholders can come with their own ideas and confront and harmonise these ideas in the partnership. It is a gradual process requiring patient explanation of each step, tolerance to other opinions, knowledge of dealing with conflict situations, and so on. It is necessary to incessantly use methods to motivate the partners to co-operate and to stress what a micro-region, municipality, community, stakeholders, family and individual can obtain by joining LA 21. **It is necessary to look for ways of building trust and co-operation** among the self-government, stakeholders and local inhabitants. It should be borne in mind that it is not possible to involve all the stakeholders equally. Even in the ideal case, there will always be conflicts of opinions. LA 21 is not a solution to a single problem or project.

When the team of involved activists and representatives of stakeholders and individuals is expanded, as early as the initial phase, it is appropriate to consider the **creation of working groups**. Working groups are created for priority areas (see the next Chapter) and should consist of representatives of various stakeholders. It has proven very useful to invite external and local experts together to sessions of these groups. This applies mainly to larger municipalities and cities, where larger numbers of those interested in co-operation can be found. Each group should be led by a leader who should be also a member of a more comprehensive, cross-sectoral local group of activists (if such a group had already been created). Such a **cross-sectoral working group** is often called "**local forum**". The "local forum" should cover and link all local activities and should be aware of the main activities of working groups. Based on their background materials and proposals, it should prepare comprehensive and mutually co-ordinated draft solutions. In the ideal case, the basis of a local forum is prepared as early as the initial phase.

The more partners involved in LA 21, the bigger the chance to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings in the future. It is necessary to offer an opportunity to all who are interested in the LA 21 programme. No doubt that it is more difficult to achieve consensus in a large team, but, on the other hand, this increases its creative capacity, brings new ideas and invaluable personal experience and acquaints people with each other.

Box 4 - Contribution of a partnership in LA 21 to the sustainability of civic activities

Involvement of a large number of inhabitants and various stakeholders requires sufficient time, tolerance to opinions of others and use of appropriate methods for achieving representative opinions. The LA 21 activities must be open to all who are interested. This creates a basis for motivation, cohesion and trust that the voice of an individual can influence common objectives. The partnership must be built on mutual trust, and therefore, all steps must be formulated clearly and taken transparently. The most important thing in the LA 21 process is achieving such an environment that all feel their share of responsibility for achievements. This is the basis of sustainable civic activities.

At the beginning of partnership building or at the beginning of co-operation, the partners must define their expectations. Conflicts often appear because people do not reveal their real expectations. The most serious conflicts are caused by money. There are people who are motivated first of all by money, while others have different motivation. It is true that development processes require a lot of voluntary work, and there are not always sufficient funds to fund all activities. Therefore, the partners must clarify their expectations. If they do not, they will later find they made a mistake.

On the other hand, some people who will be involved in the development process will be paid for their work or will earn some money - in particular those who contribute each day to achieving results (see the part on executive management). It is acceptable that somebody earns money - but not all the money at one moment. When you carry out the projects and steps planned in LA 21, you will have more paid people. The abilities and skills of people can be assessed even if they work voluntarily. Therefore, do not underestimate voluntary tasks and do not be afraid of working without salary. When your partners see that you are skilful, they will help you definitely find your position. Do not be unhappy if it does not happen immediately, your time must come.

Entrepreneurial people always expect some benefits. They have different viewpoints. Remember: this is alright. You need these people in your efforts to achieve objectives - they will assist achievement of these common objectives. It is okay if somebody, in achieving a common objective, achieves also his own objective. Do you want to avoid conflicts? Do define your expectations and your objectives.

Seeking guiding values, priority areas and a common vision of a municipality/city/micro-region

Seeking guiding values, common priority areas, a development vision, and a value orientation which reflect the interests of inhabitants is a key task in successfully starting the entire LA 21 programme.

Guiding values are those values which are recognised and respected by stakeholders participating in the LA 21 programme. The following are listed as examples of guiding values: **equal opportunities for all, respecting the needs of inhabitants, respecting achievements in the area of sustainable development.** Identification of these values is very important, since they determine the basic orientation of common work and help formulate common objectives and common vision.

Determination of priority areas, which need more attention, requires elaborating a list of all priorities requiring a solution. Based on that, the LA 21 stakeholders will determine or select areas which require more attention or which are prioritised by all stakeholders. In the initial phase, those priorities should be sought, which connect all stakeholders. It is not recommended to divide the power among a lot of specific interests or partial objectives.

Although in the initial phase the priorities only start being sought, it is appropriate to discuss in depth and to clarify an overall sense of priorities. The LA 21 programme is usually based on planning, implementing and monitoring the success of individual projects. It is, therefore, welcomed if, during the initial phase, it is taken into consideration how the principles and procedures of LA 21 should be reflected in the daily life of a municipality and in the work of the self-government. In the LA 21 process it is very effective when it involves all commissions working at the municipal or city council. Properly working commissions, which on the basis of law play the role of the initiative, advisory and controlling body of the municipal council and the Mayor, have an extraordinarily important position. Along with partner co-operation with the self-government, the commissions execute certain delegated competences and can influence the decision-making process considerably. Compliance with these principles will lead to quality project implementation, which will be more smooth-flowing and simple.

A common vision on the future of the municipality/city/micro-region has to express our ideas, dreams and desires for future life. The vision represents a long-term objective of the LA 21 programme, it should be determined by analysis of the territory and knowledge of specific local characteristics. It is very important to work it out consistently because meeting the vision is a main point of the LA 21 agenda.

The LA 21 programme offers municipalities a new approach influenced by strategic planning, comprehensive solution of problems, etc. It is very important within the initial phase to maintain a comprehensive approach to the development of a municipality/micro-region. Local activists should concentrate on long-term common objectives. After adopting long-term, common objectives, it is possible to start to deal with individual and partial objectives. This approach can considerably improve the work of a self-government. Self-governments often prefer rapid, immediate solutions without an assessment of other functional and spatial conjunctions and long-term impacts. They are often oriented to large, expensive activities, while simple solutions remain unnoticed, though they can be implemented with the use of local resources and with the experience of local experts, and they could improve the quality of daily life of inhabitants.

It should be clear to all LA 21 stakeholders from the very beginning that the LA 21 does not mean dispersing the real work of a municipal self-government. It is the strategic planning, which is a basis of LA 21, that starts real partner co-operation among the self-government, state administration, citizens and civic associations, local experts, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. It is important to effectively use local potential and local resources on principles of sustainability, to prefer common interests and to eliminate the preferring of partial interests.

Methods of LA 21 management (executive management and LA 21 co-ordinator)

It is not possible to meet the objectives of the LA 21 process without good management of the whole programme. As it is a long-term and time-consuming programme, it is necessary that, at the beginning, the initial group defines methods of co-operation and establishes a managing group (e.g. executive management). Local activists can fulfil the role of executive management.

In municipalities or micro-regions, where civic associations and lobbying groups already actively operate, **the executive management (i.e. the managing team of LA 21 assuring management of LA 21 activities)** can consist of representatives from non-governmental organisations, self-government, the business sector, educational organisations, external organisations, etc. Also, in this case, it is necessary to agree, in advance, on the rules of co-operation, to define clearly competences, methods of preparing documents and approving them and to define clearly ways of adopting common decisions and making the work of the executive management transparent.

The best way, however, is to entrust the daily management of an LA 21 programme to a paid management team with defined terms of reference and scope of competences.

The tasks of executive management can be, in certain cases, fulfilled also by the self-government - if partners agree so and if the self-government has sufficient capacities. In the case of changing the self-government's composition and when the self-government is not interested in supporting the process anymore, it is appropriate to detach the executive management from the self-government. If the workers prove to be good, another partner can employ them.

In municipalities and micro-regions without civic associations, where community activities are only starting, the initiating group can create an informal association. After clarifying and defining common objectives of the LA 21 programme, it will be possible to register this association, for example, as a **community civic association** (or as another proper form of a non-governmental, non-profit organisation).

In the statutes of the association, it is necessary to clearly define the rules of mutual relations, on which the stakeholders (e.g. local activists and representatives of other stakeholders) agree. This allows the rights and duties of members of the initiating group and the competences of established bodies of the association in decision-making are clear to all.

The appropriate institutional arrangement of executive management of LA 21, in the case of establishing a community civic association, allows its members and executive bodies of the association to work out a **plan of activities** for each calendar year, assess this plan, receive financial means from their own activities and from contributions of supporters. It is possible to receive additional funds also from the resources of various grant schemes.

The partner forms of management and work, transparency and access to information for all should be preferred in the LA 21 programme. Positive experiences and achievements of local active non-governmental organisations and lobbying groups should be used. Civic associations or lobbying groups working in the municipality/micro-regions can represent or cover certain "working groups" for individual areas (e.g. social area, culture, education, work with children and the youth, sport, environment, etc.). In the ideal case, these civic associations and lobbying groups are represented in the commissions of a municipal council. This enables an operational connection to the bodies of a self-government.

It is important that maximum **access to information and public participation** is ensured from the very beginning. It is therefore recommended:

- to prepare working documents (ensured by executive management) transparently and submit them to public discussion if necessary. These documents can include a concept of vision, a concept of analysis of the main problems of a municipality/micro-region, etc.;
- in accordance with the needs and capabilities of the self-government (execu-

- tive management of LA 21) to carry out preliminary public polls and to use their results in preparing all strategic documents of a municipality/micro-region;
- in the form of questionnaires to allow citizens to express their views on better life in the community.

Role of co-ordinator (leader of LA 21) and his position in the LA 21 process

The process of LA 21 requires a co-ordinator with a sufficient amount of time and an organisational background, who will be accepted by most stakeholders as an independent and impartial person. **The co-ordinator** should guide the work of the executive management. He should be a leader and a respected person in the community. At the same time, he should possess managerial abilities, should be communicative, should be creative with experience in public relations and should be independent. It is important that the position of co-ordinator is not threatened by municipal elections. It is more appropriate when the co-ordinator is a respected local activist or an executive member of a local civic association, or an active member of the municipal council. If the co-ordinator of LA 21 were an employee of the municipal council, there would be a risk that a newly elected self-government will not support the LA 21 process, which would threaten continuation of the project. Under no circumstance should the Mayor fulfil this role.

The co-ordinator should support and, together with the executive management and other activists, ensure the interconnection among individual activities, the provision of information, creativity in co-operation, the initiation of involving other stakeholders, and the motivation of target groups in the area of education. He should assist in organising training, seminars, and conferences with public participation, and should ensure the organization of working group meetings and documentation of their work.

The co-ordinator should be paid from local resources in order not to lose the willingness and motivation to evaluate and control his work. There is not always a co-ordinator available in a municipality/micro-region who could execute this job as full-time or part-time job, and sometimes it is not possible to create a working position and receive financial resources for this task. Proper solutions have to be sought in such cases. In several cases, it is appropriate for the municipality to have a **broader co-ordinating team** (including a leader with defined tasks) consisting of volunteers - experts and activists - that are able to divide their work and substitute for each other. Expert co-ordination built in this way is less vulnerable than co-ordination based only on one key co-ordinator.

It is necessary to have more activists or members of executive management able to take over the tasks of preparing and managing community projects. The co-ordinator, together with the executive management and other activists, should

have at their disposal or should prepare a maximum number of **trained people** to work with LA 21. This strengthens the long-term sustainability of the LA 21 process and gives a chance for local activists to demonstrate their organisational abilities.

In the ideal case, the executive management of LA 21 is supported by the local self-government, or the co-ordinator is an elected representative of the self-government.

Examples of tasks, which can be included in the initial phase as preparation for the programming phase

As early as the initial phase, it is very appropriate **to impartially, comprehensively and critically assess, or recapitulate the starting situation for a municipality/micro-region**. It is good preparation for and is a start to the programming phase. This includes, for example, assessing the following characteristics of a municipality/city/micro-region:

- what are internal and external conditions of territorial development,
- how are local conditions used in development,
- what information and documents will be needed,
- what partnerships exist in the municipality and out of the municipality,
- what is the economic situation (in particular unemployment, prosperity of local entrepreneurs, business plans under preparation, etc.),
- what is the quality of the environment and life of inhabitants,
- how does the local self-government work and how is inter-municipal co-operation used,
- what development documents exist for the municipality (it is necessary to check whether they are up-to-date, is the quality sufficient, etc.),
- what is civic involvement, what local civic initiatives and their activities have already been carried out in the municipality, whom is it necessary to address for co-operation (including external experts),
- what are the tasks of individual partners,
- what is needed to ensure educational and public activities evoke the general public's interests.

Only based on a well mapped starting situation (knowing "where we are"), it is possible to launch the next phase, to define objectives of LA 21 and means for how these objectives can be achieved.

It is important to realise and persuade the representatives of all stakeholders that it is **possible to start with the LA 21 programme in all starting situations of the municipality/micro-region**. But, input analysis is necessary in order to select proper methods and to set realistic long-term objectives for LA 21 and objectives for the near future.

For each municipality/micro-region it is necessary to look for its specifications on the basis of which it is possible to build the civic involvement required for preparing the LA 21 programme, and it is necessary to encourage and motivate citizens, organisations and entrepreneurs.

In some municipalities, it is possible to be confronted with an opinion that without interest and solution of problems from the national level by state authorities, it is not possible to change anything. There are even opinions that the state administration should carry out everything in the country because it makes all decisions.

At present, however, the state administration in Central and Eastern European countries is not flexible. Moreover, there are a lot of changes going on in the state administration, and information goes to civil servants slowly. The LA 21 programme is not oriented to changes in state administration, but to changing and increasing the quality of life of local inhabitants.

There are a lot of qualified and competent experts in the state administration. The role of LA 21 partners is to find them and to gain them as allies to achieve the objectives - to get information and document or to get advice and support for implementing various activities.

Box 5 - When to start?

Do not wait until the situation in your country improves for these processes or until implementing the LA 21 programme is more simple. Change to better situation does not need to come soon and when it comes, you will be much further than those starting and you can already implement and present your achievements. Our objective is to achieve improvements as soon as possible.

Identification of local activities and small actions

The selection of appropriate and illustrative projects (local activities), which can be implemented in a short time (in relation to the first concept of common long-term objectives), is welcomed. Based on concrete practical examples, it helps to encourage the general public to get involved or to be interested in preparing LA 21.

Box 6 - Examples of local initiation activities, which can be used to encourage involvement into LA 21

- renewal of cultural monuments, revival and maintenance of traditional customs and crafts,
- development of agro-tourism,
- establishment of a communication centre,
- improvement of a municipality's appearance,
- planting public greenery, revitalisation of watercourses and water bodies,
- building sporting and recreational sites,
- care of the elderly (e.g. use of social taxi,, building a facility where they can spend time during day),
- support of activities and clubs of children and youth,
- support of development of employment and business,
- introduction of environmental management systems.

What else to do so that the initial phase is a quality basis for the next phases of LA 21

As early as the initial phase, local activists could formulate at least a framework idea on the entire process of the LA 21 programme, including perspective for the implementation phase. It helps avoid risks, which, for example, can appear due to unrealistic expectations regarding objectives and benefits of LA 21. It is necessary to speak about difficulties very openly from the beginning. Everything depends on people, they must want to take responsibility and to start working on public projects. It is necessary that all stakeholders (representatives of all groups involved in LA 21) are informed about the need to look for financial and other resources. It is also necessary to bear in mind the possibility to reassess the municipal budget (in the case of micro-regions of municipalities) for the next year (years).

Defining, in advance, clear and understandable indicators (measurable if possible) helps avoid disappointment. In the first phase, those indicators are used which are able to identify the first achievements and which are able to warn if the LA 21 programme does not meet the defined objectives. Box 7 contains an example of evaluation indicators, in the form of testing questions.

Box 7 - Indicators of success and efficiency of work

In order to find out whether the LA 21 process works, do ask yourself:

- Do various people participate in your activities?
- Do you spend less time explaining the basis of the problem?
- Are new resources allocated to activities related to sustainable development?
- Are activities of authorities generally supported?
- Did a feeling of participation emerge in the area of sustainability?
- Does the number of your collaborators grow?
- Can you avoid or successfully solve arising problems?

The programming (planning) phase of LA 21 process - Local development programme (plan)

The programming phase of the LA 21 programme is represented by elaborating a local development document (hereinafter referred to as document). This document should connect the aspect of spatial and territorial development of a municipality/micro-region with various aspects of sustainable development (economy, social area, the environment, management and governance in the municipality/micro-region).

Starting point of planning and programming in the LA 21 process

Formal and informal types of planning were summarised in the previous chapters. In several post-Communist countries, the public underestimates planning - as a process - due to experience from the socialist era. However, it is a fact that each developed society plans its future, defines its priorities and objectives as well as measures their achievement. Programming and hierarchic planning at all levels (national, regional, micro-regional and municipal) are also important. The action dealing with various types of planning often enables the public to participate in the planning and decision-making processes, which is, however, used minimally. LA 21 provides a method for influencing various plans and, what is even more important, this opportunity is provided in the phase of preparation and not at the end of commenting.

Land-use planning documents usually also include strategies of sustainable development and development conceptions dealing with the various aspects of life in settlements. Sectoral policies and development strategies of municipalities and other programmes of economic, social and cultural development have to comply with the binding parts of land-use planning documentation. The public has a right to take part in discussion on these documents. If the LA 21 process works on a partnership principle, it is realistic that opinions of the community are taken into account as early as the phase of creating land-use planning documentation.

The municipality can also work out other development documents, e.g. dealing with development of health care services, development of culture or sport, development of extracurricular activities of children and the youth and others.

Planning documents often differ from each other regarding quality, extent and detail. This results in various possibilities to use them at the local level, and some of them do not take into account the real needs of beneficiaries. Sometimes their results can be in mutual conflicts and can exclude each other. Experts, who do not know local conditions and local people, often prepare plans. This all is a result of the current insufficient co-ordination of planning in Central and Eastern European countries, particularly due to a prevailing sectoral approach toward planning and programming without adequate involvement of the public, absence of methodologies and methodological procedures, lack of experts and time, frequent changes of competences, weak skills and experience, unwillingness to communicate, etc. Also, these documents can provide lessons for the future - inter alia in programming and planning at the local level. At the same time, it is important to realise that these documents are finally used in the decision-making process (building permission and other types of administrative decisions).

The local development document must be well prepared so that it takes into account the results of existing planning documents at the local, regional and national levels. These documents, despite their limits, can serve as a source of inspiration and a guide to preparing a quality action plan and a source of information on potential funding for local development activities. On the other hand, an ambition of such a document should be also to influence creating and updating spatial, landscape, regional and other mentioned programmes and plans.

Principles of programming and planning in LA 21 process

It is assumed that the initial phase in the process of creating LA 21 is successfully completed, and the local partnership exists (formally represented by the co-ordination group). A vision for development of a municipality/micro-region is formulated, and there is a consensus that the vision should be transformed into a development document. Basic principle in preparing the LA 21 document should be using lessons learned in the higher levels of the programming and planning processes and should be taking into account the outputs of higher-level documents and related documents. This should also be work vice-versa. During the elaboration of a development document of a municipality/micro-region, it is appropriate to comply with certain principles, which should help ensure its quality and implementation in practice. These principles include:

- *A working partnership* - all LA 21 stakeholders (see the chapter on the major groups) take part in preparing the document or are informed about it. There is, of course, the opportunity for the gradual growth of a partnership or building of

neighbourly and regional partnerships,

- *personal, organisational and material assurance* - it is necessary to ensure a working team involving experts from all the main areas of development, to ensure good organisation of work (with working co-ordinating group, proper structure of team and working method), to ensure allocation of sufficient resources (in particular financial resources for direct material costs and preparation of a document),
- *a mechanism for controlling and correcting shortcomings* - define working tools which can be used if objectives are not being met,
- *the principle of mutual consensus of adopted objectives and measures* - it is determined by the adopted partnership; it should ensure better acceptability of LA 21 in the community,
- *adoption of realistic objectives* - it is necessary to define objectives and measures together so that they are feasible in given conditions and timetables,
- *elaboration of the document regarding the need to adopt it as a binding document by authorities of a municipality/micro-region* - to formulate the binding part of LA 21 to be approved by the local council; the document will include a strategic objective, development priorities and the main measures to achieve these priorities and objectives,
- *openness, knowledge and publicity relating to local actors (citizens, municipal council or authorities of micro-region, formal groups, lobbying groups, enterprises and entrepreneurs)* - providing information on progress, openness to incentives and comments, possibility to join the work,
- *openness to external impacts - monitoring activities at regional, national or international levels* - transfer of knowledge and experience into our own work and incorporating it into the existing structure and providing information on our work (e.g. healthy cities, sustainable cities...).

Draft content of LA 21 document

The aim of the programming phase of the LA 21 process is to work out a development document, which will be a realistic background for the next phase of the process - implementation. As it has been stressed several times, a **working local partnership (local forum)** with a clearly and commonly defined development vision of the municipality/micro-region (which is the objective of the initial phase of LA 21) is a starting point and a crucial condition for successfully preparing this document. It should be adopted by the municipal council or by a body within the micro-region and should become a binding document. Then it should be elaborated into a concrete project and implemented - this is aim of the implementation phase of LA 21.

It is appropriate if the LA 21 document **complies with the criteria applied to various types of development documents** - in particular the land-use plan of the municipality and the plan for economic and social development of the municipality.

It should also include aspects of landscape planning, agricultural and rural development and land arrangement. In such a form it will be acceptable if it requires resources from EU structural funds in implementing concrete projects during the implementation phase of LA 21.

Regarding the **formal aspect**, an LA 21 document can be worked out in various ways: it is possible to work out a single basic document containing all phases of programming, including an action plan, or individual phases can be prepared gradually and the main outputs (an action plan with strategic objectives and development priorities for the municipality/micro-region) will be binding (will be approved by the municipal council). Results of the analytical phase will represent an informative, guiding background (it is not necessary to approve them, but they are necessary for preparing the action plan) and can be used other times for other purposes (e.g. education, publicity).

The whole documentation can be called *Local Agenda 21*, or *Development Programme of the Micro-region*, *Programme of Village Renewal* and the binding part can be called *Development Plan of the Municipality* or *Strategy of Municipality Development*. When the content corresponds to a required structure in accordance with the relevant legislation, the name can also be *Programme of Economic and Social Development*.

Basically, there are two approaches to preparing any planning document - *community and expert approaches*. They differ in their extent of involving local representatives and external experts. The **community method** is based on repeated meetings of the local partner group, which progresses through individual programming phases using forms of moderated meetings and various other techniques of communication with the public. The advantage of this method is a clear orientation to a concrete problem and concrete action. This working method does not require extensive analyses (which sometimes even do not bring expected benefits). Another advantage is a comprehensive and clear connection between individual steps of planning. The strategy is being created with the participation of those who will implement it later, and due to this participation, they feel ownership of the final result. A disadvantage can be an imbalance of monitored areas; some themes can be omitted or can be formulated with mistakes due to the lack of expert knowledge or due to external limits.

The **expert method** is based on the elaboration of a strategic plan, which is carried out by contracted external experts (a multi-professional team), who usually do not come from the concerned territory. They gain information from expert documents, from various databases and information sources, and from investigation in terrain by local experts, and they use standardised procedures - e.g. land-use planning methods, sociological polls, methods of landscape planning, etc. Strengths of such a document are its independence from local conditions, high professionalism, the use of a large amount data, and its relation to other existing plans and pro-

grammes. A disadvantage is little involvement from local activists and insufficient depth in negotiations with the public.

The Local Agenda 21 is characterised by interaction between these two methods. **The interactive approach** will ensure a quality output, which is a combination of professionalism and local knowledge. Permanent communication, summing up the results of the two methods and adopting all partial outputs by local people, is very important, too.

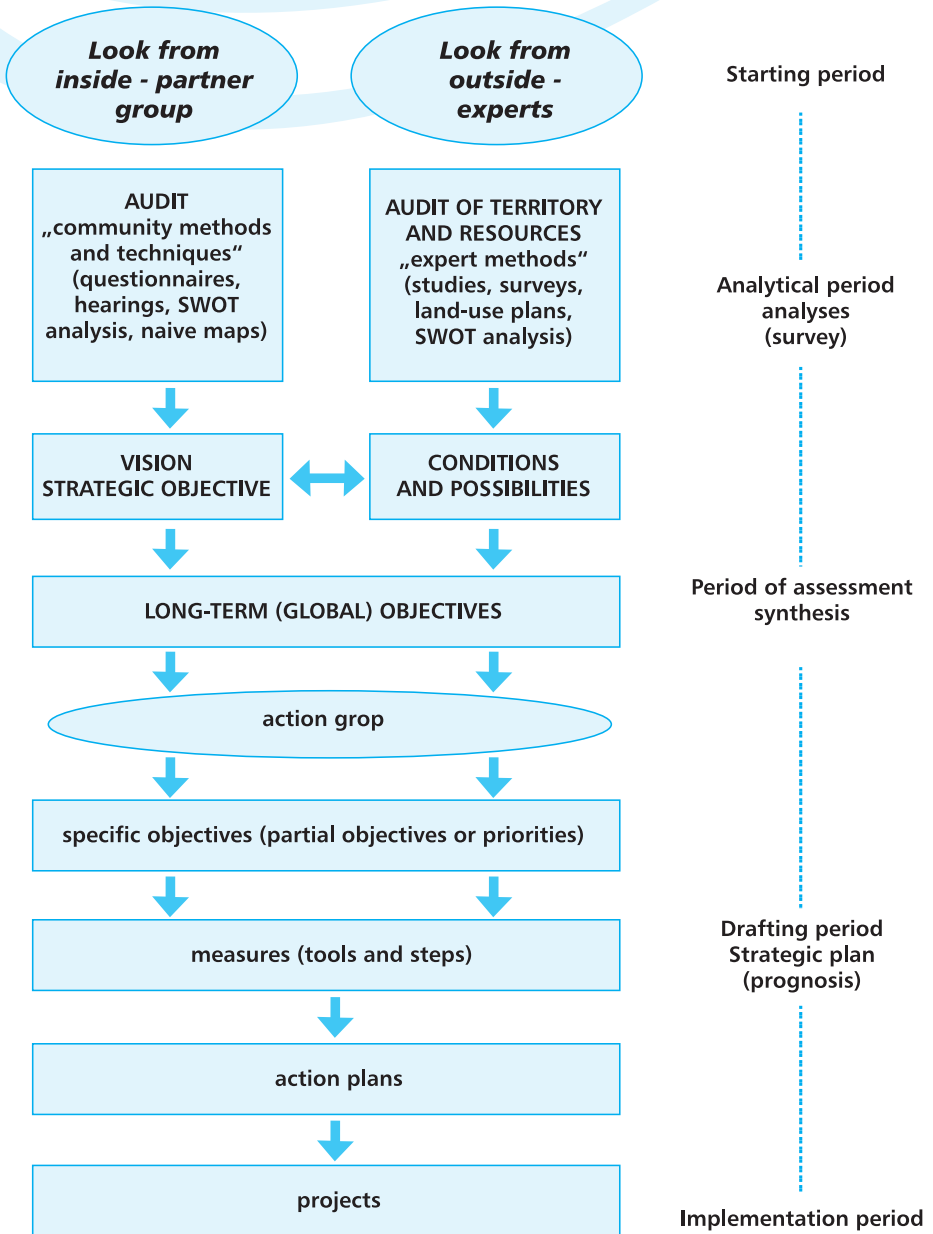
It is very difficult to prepare a **timetable** for elaborating the LA 21 programming phase without knowing local conditions. It depends on the concrete specifications of a municipality/micro-region (the existence of background materials, chosen methods of work - which also determines the number of members of the team and their professional backgrounds). In the ideal case, it is possible to compile quality material complying with LA 21 criteria within several months; however, at least one year is considered to be a realistic period. It is also important to meet with the public and to provide information with the aim to get feedback from them and from experts.

With certain simplifications, **the programming phase can be divided into the following periods:**

- **starting period** - existing partnership of a municipality/micro-region (local forum) and working co-ordinating group, defined development vision (it partially overlaps the initial phase of LA 21 process), assessment of available background information,
- **analytical period** - problem analysis, audit of resources, assessment of current situation and development opportunities,
- **period of assessment** - specification of the vision and strategic objectives of sustainable development as well as priorities of the municipality/micro-region (first vision was already formulated in the initial phase of LA 21),
- **drafting (planning) period** - definition of middle-term objectives (targets) of sustainable development and short-term measures - an action plan of development of the municipality/micro-region - measures to achieve individual objectives, timetable, budget and project financing plan as well as monitoring and control of implementing LA 21 objectives (it overlaps the implementation phase of LA 21 process).

If we wanted to formalise this process, we could say, with a certain simplification, that the programming phase of LA 21 starts with the **binding declaration of a partnership** (with a defined vision of development of a municipality/micro-region) and is completed by **approval of a development document of LA 21** by the municipal council or by the authority of a micro-region (with the definition of further procedures for implementation). Approval of the LA 21 document does not mean that it is a closed document, which is not necessary to update.

Picture 1 Example of procedure in LA 21 programming



Starting period of programming

The starting point in this period is a defined local partnership with a working co-ordinating group of LA 21, which declares its commitment to work out a development document for LA 21 of a municipality/micro-region and to support its implementation.

Based on an existing and commonly accepted development vision of a municipality/micro-region, the objective of this period is (there is a certain overlapping with the initial phase of the process):

- **to work out a basic structure of the document and its main objective** - it is necessary to determine the main parts of the document, their expected content and preliminary extent (a simple division of the document for analysis, an assessment and a proposal are recommended - the content of these periods is specified hereinafter) - this is usually a role of the initial group of LA 21;
- **to establish working groups** - in the periods of analysis and assessment, it is optimal to contemporarily use both methods mentioned above (two partner groups - an expert group and a local group). It is appropriate to do consultation work in these groups and to exchange information and incentives. The expert group should involve several professions related to territorial, spatial and regional planning and management - e.g. regionalist (geographer, expert from regional self-government), spatial planner (architect, urban planner), environmentalist (ecologist), economist, demographer, agriculturist, specialist for infrastructure, etc. These team members do not have to come necessarily from the municipality or micro-region, but they have to know the territory and its problems. They should represent not only the scientific and research sector but the regional self-government and state administration as well. This team is led by a co-ordinator (chief-expert). The local partner group should involve inhabitants of the municipality/micro-region, who are interested in working on the team. It is proper if they represent the entire spectrum of the civic and public sector of the municipality (informal associations, formal groups, entrepreneurs, municipal council, etc.). A facilitator leads work in this group.
- **to organise the work** - specification of work timetable, method for work co-ordination, material and technical assurance, etc. It is recommended to appoint one chief co-ordinator and other co-ordinators of various working groups (managers, chief experts). It is necessary to agree on all important conditions of work- frequency of working meetings, control mechanisms, etc.
- **to collect available background documents and data** - before starting work, it is useful to have certain starting background documents and data, which will be utilised by the working groups. These include, in particular, the

above-mentioned planning and development documents (if they have been elaborated for the municipality or micro-region), maps, statistical data, information on natural, economic and social conditions of the area, etc. It is, of course, necessary to collect background documents and data also during the analytical period of works.

Analytical period of programming

The main objective of this period is assessing the current situation in the territory and conditions of its development. Views of both expert and local (civic) working groups are important.

The expert group works in this period with standard methods and procedures (analysis of natural, economic and social conditions - audit of resources and the territory), which can be expressed, in the sense of a sustainable development philosophy, as follows:

- environmental aspect - assessment of natural resources and potential of the territory (their quantity, quality and use, including negative factors),
- economic aspect - assessment of economic conditions of development (economic basis, employment, economic potential, transport and technical infrastructure, building potential),
- social aspect - assessment of human resources and their quality (inhabitants and demographic potential, cultural and historical potential, educational structure, social status - real incomes of inhabitants, unemployment, social infrastructure),
- institutional aspect - assessment of quality of local and regional self-governments and other institutions, position of municipality/micro-region within larger territorial units, public participation in governance.

The working method of partial teams can be individual, given by specifications of the concerned area. The co-ordinator of a working group (chief expert of expert team) is responsible for the overall form and content of the output.

The final output of the analytical period from the expert group should be an *assessment of conditions and opportunities for development of a municipality/micro-region*. An example of a proper form is SWOT analysis (analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the municipality/micro-region) according to individual areas of sustainable development. The final part of analysis and elaboration of texts should be carried out by group members at common working meetings. It is proper to supplement the text with maps, graphs, tables and pictures.

A **group of inhabitants** works in this period using specific procedures - at common working meetings. It is important to involve a so-called *facilitator* - a person who facilitates the entire process and guides the work of the whole group. It is a trained person with experience from moderating and guiding teamwork, whose role is to meet defined objectives through guided discussion on a given issue and to assist in formulating conclusions from working meetings. This person and his role must be respected by all. This role can be fulfilled by an inhabitant of the municipality or by an external expert, but knowledge of local conditions and problems is necessary.

Working process of a group of inhabitants can be as follows:

- creation of a vision - a motivating, common vision on the future life of the municipality/micro-region - it is not based on reality, it rather expresses desires (there can be specification of the vision formulated in the initial phase of LA 21),
- analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the municipality/micro-region in various areas, analysis of development opportunities and threats (internal resources, external conditions) - SWOT analysis,
- creation of "naive maps" of development - a certain form of expressing ideas on possible development of the municipality/micro-region - collection of opinions on development expressed verbally or incorporated in maps,
- problem analysis - seeking reasons for selected problems and draft solutions.

A designated co-ordinator (or facilitator) is responsible for results from an inhabitant group. The result is a vision of development of a municipality/micro-region and analysis of problems from the point of view of local inhabitants. That is why this group should actively co-operate also with other citizens of the municipality/micro-region, who are not directly involved in its work. For this purpose, it is possible and proper to use also other methods of collecting data and opinions of local inhabitants on issues of development of the municipality/micro-region - e.g. questionnaires, public polls, public meetings, etc.

Assessment period of programming

In this period, both groups work together. The main role of this period is to specify the strategy (vision) for sustainable development of the municipality/micro-region and to define objectives (targets) and measures to achieve them. We define the main terms related to this period:

- **vision of sustainable development** (specified vision, long-term orientation) is a basic idea of what stakeholders want to achieve - how the municipality/micro-region should look in a long-term horizon (more than 20 years - e.g. 30-50 years),

- **strategic objectives of sustainable development** (global, long-term objectives) represent a set of several basic long-term objectives which can help achieve the vision of sustainable development (and which are determined by the basic principles of sustainable development),
- **priorities** (specific, partial objectives) are the main areas, on which it is necessary to concentrate efforts in the process of meeting the strategic objectives and vision of sustainable development of the municipality/micro-region.

The assessment period will progress from setting general principles that define the sustainable development of a municipality/micro-region to formulating more concrete priorities requiring solutions.

The first step of the assessment period can be presenting and **discussing results** from working groups during the analytical programming period (when such groups existed and when this was not done as a part of the analytical period). Discussion can lead to a certain correction of results, but it is not necessary, when we realise that the first period is more or less the independent product of the working group. At the same time, we expect continuous consultations, which should eliminate potential discrepancies in analyses of the current situation. Different external and internal views on development potential of the municipality/micro-region are understandable and acceptable.

The second step of this period should be **specifying the vision and strategic objectives of sustainable development** of the municipality/micro-region, which should be formulated in the initial phase of the LA 21 process and which should be formulated by the group of citizens in the analytical period of programming. It is clear that in this phase of programming the stakeholders have substantially better information and can more precisely formulate the vision of sustainable development. It is necessary to achieve consensus on the wording of vision and strategic objectives because they will be presented to the public as a result of common work, and the public should adopt them in this form.

The third step of this period should be **formulating priorities of sustainable development** of the municipality/micro-region. These priorities represent the specification of strategic objectives - it is possible to formulate several priorities for each strategic objective. It is appropriate to use analyses from the analytical period of programming - SWOT analysis, which provides a good basis for identifying priority areas (priorities can be understood as the reinforcement of strengths and the use of development opportunities, on one hand, and elimination of weaknesses, on the other hand). Priorities should be complementary and can overlap to a certain extent, but they must not confine or exclude each other.

The fourth, final step of the assessment period should be presenting the vision, strategic objectives and priorities of sustainable development to the citizens of the municipality/micro-region and gaining their support. This step is very

important - support from the citizens for the common vision and objectives of sustainable development is a key precondition for the success of the entire LA 21 process.

It is, therefore, important that the citizens are informed about issues of sustainable development from the beginning of the process so that they are given an opportunity to co-operate and to express their opinions about the future of a municipality/micro-region. A proper form is to organise a public meeting of citizens, where results of each team's work are explained in detail and sufficient time is offered to citizens for commenting and expressing opinions.

Drafting period of programming

The main role of this period is specifying long-term strategic objectives and priorities for sustainable development of a municipality/micro-region. This means naming objectives and measures in the form of an action plan, while:

- **objectives** are understood as concrete targets achievable in a defined time horizon (usually middle-term - with a maximum 15-20 years, in most cases up to 10 years),
- **measures** represent the specification of individual objectives to a short-term time horizon (with a maximum 5-10 years, but usually 1-2 years).

The first step of the drafting period is assessing comments and opinions of the citizens and **formulating definitively** a vision and the strategic objectives and priorities of sustainable development of a municipality/micro-region.

The second step is specifying priorities of sustainable development of a municipality/micro-region in the form of **middle-term objectives**. Objectives must be defined concretely, including information on dates and subjects responsible for fulfilment. All these subjects should be stakeholders in the process of drafting and have to agree with the formulation of the objectives. The objectives should be measurable (in order to control fulfilment) and feasible (achievable in a given territory and under realistic conditions).

The third step is **elaborating on an action plan**, specifying individual objectives in the form of concrete steps (actions, activities). The measures are short-term, should be formulated clearly, should be feasible and should also include an assessment of costs. Several measures (actions) should be specified for each objective. Measures are specified in particular by those subjects which are responsible for their implementation, but, to a certain extent, it is a collective activity.

The fourth step is elaborating on an **implementation timetable and a budget of the action plan for sustainable development**. Regarding possibilities for funding the action plan, it is necessary to utilise the results of analysing public

and private resources of a municipality/micro-region (municipal budget, local enterprises and entrepreneurs, sponsors, etc.) and disposable external public resources (state budget, funding through regional self-governments, EU structural funds, etc.). Analysis of funding possibilities should be a part of the analytical period of programming.

The fifth, last step of the drafting period of the programming phase in the LA 21 process is **approving a development document** (at least in the form of an action plan) by the municipal council or by the body of a micro-region. Similar to the assessment period, it is useful to present the action plan to the public in advance, to allow time for commenting and possibly for modifying or amending the plan. Only in this way it is possible to successfully implement the prepared and approved LA 21 document in the implementation phase.

Implementation phase of LA 21 - local actions

After completing the programming phase of LA 21, it is necessary to transform its outputs into the final form - preparing and implementing concrete projects based on the LA 21 document. When the stakeholders get through the long phase of preparing the LA 21 document, they can start with new work. The main meaning of the LA 21 lies in its successful implementation.

The implementation phase consists of two main periods - the first one is preparation and submission of projects and the second one is implementation of projects with monitoring and evaluation of success.

The co-ordinating group (or representatives of the so-called local forum) **should be responsible** for progress in implementing LA 21. This group should be active during the entire process of LA 21. It monitors and evaluates whether the people responsible for various areas and measures fulfil their tasks and assure the preparation and implementation of planned projects. The co-ordinating group has to assure preparation of a sufficient number of project co-ordinators or people who will be able to prepare projects (if they did not do this in previous phases of the process). Without active and consistent work of this group, it is very difficult to get the LA 21 process to successful implementation.

Project preparation

The co-ordinating group, together with the local self-government, is responsible for permanent re-assessment of the LA 21 process. For this, it is necessary, in advance, to define intervals of assessment (once a year, once in two years, at least once in three years). For this period, it is necessary to prepare detailed action plans and a precise timetable of project implementation.

It is necessary to distinguish several types of projects. There are projects, which **can be managed with the use of local resources** - they do not require funds or require small local funds (improvement of municipality's appearance, cleaning public areas, organising cultural and sport events, simple repairs of facilities). Voluntary work from some inhabitants is being used in these activities. Huge potential is gained though the use of this activity and by enabling civic voluntary activities in a community. This increases the activities of local citizens and increases interest in public issues. Each citizen, who joins the activities of LA 21, can influence other people, and the LA 21 activities will be more efficient.

Box 8 - Experience from the Southern Sitno micro-region

Inhabitants have to identify themselves with the development plans of the region and actively have to participate in various activities in municipalities and micro-region. If development is to be co-ordinated and sustainable, it is necessary to incorporate the opinions of citizens with opinions of experts. Therefore, the work process involved three organisations, which assured expert aspects of preparing the document. During meetings and during work in groups, it was clear that the citizens are really interested in the future development of municipalities. This will allow current generations to meet their economic, social and spiritual needs and, at the same time, protects the quality of the environment.

More complicated projects usually require **larger financial resources**, which can be received from external sources (state resources, EU resources, loans, etc.). These projects have to be prepared by skilful people, who are experienced in project preparation. Several regions think about creating teams of experienced people, who will prepare various types of projects. People, who are less experienced in writing projects, often hire firms to prepare these plans.

Current experience, however, shows that a **project is best if prepared by the applicant himself**, regardless of whether it is an entrepreneur or a non-profit agency. Nobody knows the firm of the applicant or the regional conditions better than these people. Therefore, it is necessary not to underestimate this part and to prepare key persons in regions so that those people, who will co-operate in implementing projects, could also write and work on them. If this is not possible, the applicant will have to participate in writing projects and should be in close contact with the project designer. Correction of projects will take as much time as their preparation. This time has to be used by applicants so that they are able to write projects individually, while the first sample can be a good tool.

Box 9 - Experience for the Podpoľanie micro-region

Municipalities are interested in getting resources from the EU funds. Advice and project preparation can be assured through the Co-ordinating Association of the micro-region (the advisor and co-ordinator work for the association) through the Communication Centre or through other individual possibilities. Cities have established an employee position for "regional development" to carry out co-ordination and project preparation.

Municipalities in the micro-region have experience writing projects. Involving the Detva district into the SPP-B programme, where it was possible to gain funds to support development activities in municipalities, represented an important opportunity to test and to learn how to prepare and implement projects. The regional operational programme for the Detva district is a very good starting document of the region.

The development programme worked out within the framework of Local Agenda 21 is perceived in the micro-region as a basic document for socio-economic development, which is a condition for receiving money from EU resources.

If the previous phases of preparing LA 21 managed to involve a large group of people, it is necessary to know exactly how many potential applicants there are in this phase, to know who will deal with various issues and to know what assistance in project preparation is needed. Then the co-ordinating group must assure that potential applicants receive timely information about dates of project submission. This requires knowledge about deadlines for submitting applications for funding of granting schemes and other support programmes.

Where only a small group was involved in LA 21 preparation instead of larger team, problems can appear in this phase. The capacity of a single applicant or a small group of people is always limited - they cannot specialise themselves to all types of projects and cannot cover all specific areas of LA 21.

Box 10 - Experience from the Javor micro-region

A group of Mayors from nine municipalities was dealing with planning further development. They estimated very precisely the development potential of the region. After announcing the grant round for commercial and non-commercial projects, some Mayors informed the business sector about opportunity for preparing projects just one week before the deadline. The greatest effort was needed when the Mayors themselves were preparing projects.

All projects must be filed in structured application forms, which are prepared and published by a granting scheme administrator. All parts of these forms must be filled in. If the applicant does not fill in all parts, his project can be excluded immediately. The commission will not assess it although the other parts are completed perfectly, and the project would be useful. This also applies to obligatory annexes to projects - no required document can be omitted.

Grant application forms include a relatively extensive part dedicated to describing the project applicant and his partners and team, who will implement the project. This part is very important because the commission decides whether the applicant has capacities to implement the plans based upon this section. More experienced applicants, who have implemented several projects, have an advantage. Periods of the last 3-5 years are taken into account. After accession to the European Union, there will not be a great number of applicants with this experience in Central and Eastern European countries. In the first phase, it will therefore be important for applicants to look for experienced partners and to prepare the first 2-3 projects with their assistance, which will also increase their credibility for more complicated projects.

Project submission

Grant schemes are competitions where **the applicant has an opportunity to get funds for a project if the project is well written and consulted, in advance, with experts.** The applicant can be sure of getting money only if he invents his own resources. Therefore, you must not underestimate their importance. Each working group needs to see the achievements of its work. If it does not receive any funds during several months, interest and optimism decline, and the group can disintegrate. In such a situation it is very proper to start with implementing smaller projects, which can be funded from local resources, or to chose voluntary projects.

In principle, there are two basic types of projects: commercial projects and non-profit projects. These projects differ both in their intention and the level of co-financing which is required. Usually, legal persons submit projects.

Entrepreneurs can also prepare projects and ask for public funds from various resources. Commercial projects must include a business plan - this obligation is specific for this type of project. They are reimbursed on the basis of submitted invoices. This means that it is necessary to have one's own resources or loans. Commercial projects, which are usually aimed at development of employment, building firms, increasing benefits and improvement of production processes, usually require 50% co-financing (this rate can be higher in more developed regions and lower in less developed ones).

Box 11 - Experience from the Southern Sitno micro-region

Great emphasis was put on co-operation with local entrepreneurs, and the aim was to establish an Economic club. At present, there are 14 entrepreneurs in the territory of the micro-region. Eight of them accepted invitation to the meeting, and co-operation, among them, started.

Non-profit subjects usually required to assure 20-30% co-financing. In the non-profit sector, donors are usually public institutions providing financial resources from the state budget or from other countries. This includes also resources from the European Union. These resources are very demanding concerns for administration since the state controls the use of taxpayers' money. Moreover, non-profit projects are supported by private donors - national and foreign foundations and private companies.

As donors, private firms should clearly set criteria for organisations defining what they expect if they give money for a certain project. If the company does not do that, project managers should try to do it. Then the company can see that its money was spent in a correct way, and can show the purpose for which the money was spent. In surveys, companies repeatedly say that the non-profit sector is unprofessional and is not transparent. That is why it is important that a private donor has sufficient information on this "investment".

There is always one main guarantee/applicant/partner, who involves other local or external partners into projects if necessary. Regarding EU funding, **projects prepared in partnership are more appreciated** than projects prepared by one applicant. Also, commercial projects must look for local or external partners, who respect the principles of sustainable development and LA 21. It is useful when partners sign a contract before submitting the project, specifying the con-

ditions of partnership and the decision-making system. A copy of the contract is part of the project.

A number of similar projects from various subjects, that do not communicate, may sometimes appear in one micro-region. It is not necessary that one of these applicants wins. What is important, is involving all subjects in the project. Such a project will be more valuable and can use the resources more effectively.

Projects oriented to some priorities and measures of LA 21 can be submitted to various programmes/grant schemes. Therefore, during their preparation, the partners should co-operate with a person who is informed about the conditions of these programmes. They should divide activities so that they are feasible for a given scheme and so that they are interlinked.

Project implementation

In principle, the projects are implemented by legal persons, who are in cooperation with partners responsible for implementation, administration and accounting. The project team includes various professions: project manager, coordinator of the project or individual activities, experts and support, technical and administrative personnel. The personnel involved in project implementation can include all stakeholders or external experts.

Project management requires certain skills, which have to be learned. That is why it is more useful to start with smaller projects, where one person can assure several activities (perhaps at the beginning without salary). You are gaining required skills in this way because you are not alone, and you have to communicate with others and must get support for your activities. A gradual transition to larger and more complicated projects enables one to avoid many mistakes, which could appear in implementing large projects.

An experienced project co-ordinator or manager is very important for a project. It is a person who is able to make decisions, to organise, to arrange many things, to react to changes, to deal with crisis situations and to communicate with a lot of people. A co-ordinator should also understand the financial aspects of the project budget. If the co-ordinator is not experienced in these areas, he must find a proper expert.

Partners must divide tasks as early as preparing the project. After receiving financial resources, they must verify whether the situation of partners has not been changed and whether they will be able to deal with the tasks. One of the partners is usually responsible for overall co-ordination of the project.

Box 12 - Experience from the Medzibodrožie micro-region

Co-financing public activities will be assured by submitting projects, addressing sponsors and entrepreneurs as well as by using voluntary work.

Since there are not sufficient numbers of people who are able to write and implement good projects, training for at least 20 unemployed people is under preparation.

Those who implement a project should know the entire project and not only that part for which they are personally responsible. They should also know all partners. The project manager has to assure that the **whole project team is informed about the progress of implementation**. This concerns mainly those parts, which are interlinked, in order to avoid stopping work. Projects must be implemented precisely according to the approved project plan. It is also necessary to study all related materials and the contract with the donor. All partners should know these materials. Implementation of projects has to be in accordance with these documents, in particular with the approved budget.

Changes in projects can be carried out if some problems appear during implementation, but the manager cannot do all changes wantonly. In the case of some changes, it is necessary to ask the donor for prior consent, and the change can be carried out only after receiving the consent.

Private foundations usually support non-profit organisations and their various activities. They know the situation in the non-profit sector best, and therefore, administration and implementation of projects are simpler. In the case of changes, it is necessary to explain the situation and reasons for changes. Then it is easier to make corrections and agree on new conditions. Decision-making is also simpler.

A majority of donors allow changes to the budget, by an applicant, in individual budget lines up to 10% without prior consent. Use of money is allowed only within budget lines included in the budget. A donor provides more information in the financial manual. In principle, an increase of project funds from a donor during project implementation is not possible. When some unexpected costs were not included into the budget, these will have to be reimbursed from other sources. On the other hand, when the project budget is not completely spent, remaining money must be returned to a donor.

Besides implementing concrete planned activities, it is necessary to bear in mind that **each project must be administered**. It is necessary to have a bank account (separately for each project, if necessary). One must carry out accounting, work with cash and carry out payments through the bank. Moreover, one

must work out preliminary financial assessment and project reports. In the cases of large projects, this can be a rather difficult task, but it must be considered - it is appropriate to include on the team a good expert for accounting, taxes and economy. If you have foreign donors, you may have to deal with exchange rate differences, which can cause you losses or benefits. You have to bear in mind that the donor will not reimburse your possible losses due to various exchange rates. In European projects, money cannot be used to cover value added tax (VAT). These expenses must be covered from one's own sources. In these operations it is necessary to strictly comply with requirements of the donor, otherwise the period of reimbursing resources can be prolonged. Therefore, when agreements with partners are being prepared, it is necessary to bear in mind these circumstances and to be prepared for them in order to avoid unexpected financial problems.

Control and monitoring of meeting the objectives of individual projects

Clearly defined forms of preliminary monitoring and a method of **assessing effectiveness of meeting the set objectives** must be worked out for each project. Standard criteria or measurable indicators, which can help in control, assessment and monitoring of preliminary results and the effectiveness of main outputs, include:

- a) comparing planned (expected) objectives with concrete achieved results in the areas of quality, efficiency and effectiveness (description of benefits and failures in the project),
- b) complying with timetable and content of project, including a detailed description of carried out tasks with a specification of relevant indicators, which include:
 - total number of citizens from various target groups, to which the project was oriented (to assess to what extent the set objective was achieved),
 - number of activities, workshops, seminars and other concrete activities, which have been carried out within the framework of the project (it is possible to estimate their financial, material or other benefit),
 - total number of citizens from various target groups, who were actively involved in the project (it is appropriate to mention concretely into what activities they were involved and whether the implemented activities met the expectations of involved citizens),
 - total number of citizens who were addressed within the framework of the project (participated in training courses, received questionnaires, information leaflets, etc.),
 - preliminary and non-announced controls of compliance with all conditions

of project implementation (content, finances, timetable) - such a control is often assured also by a donor/sponsor of concrete activities and projects.

Along with the above-mentioned standard methods of control, assessing and monitoring, which are usually defined during submission of a project, it is very appropriate to assure preliminary co-operation and direct feedback (assessment) from representatives of all target groups, to which the project is oriented. Especially in those cases, when the project is implemented by a non-governmental organisation, assessment should be provided by a Mayor (Lord Mayor), deputies of municipal/city council and, in particular, from representatives of target groups, to which the project is oriented. If this happens, you will avoid a situation that inhabitants and the self-government are informed about the project implemented by an NGO in a municipality/micro-region only after its completion.

4 Control and monitoring of the process of LA 21 implementation

Control is an expert, target-oriented and organised activity aimed at verifying the discrepancies between the desired and real situations. The purpose of control is to find out how the tasks are fulfilled, whether legal acts are complied with, how efficiency, effectiveness and economy are achieved and then to adopt measures to remove detected imperfections and their reasons.

The role of control and monitoring of activities carried out within the LA 21 process is to monitor **how we are approaching the defined strategic, long-term objectives**. Methods of control and monitoring the realization of objectives and their tools should be defined as early as possible.

Control can be internal or external. Regarding the phase of activity, control can be preliminary (ex-ante), ongoing or final (ex-post). Regarding regularity, it can be regular (periodical - e.g. once in six month, once a year or once in two years) or irregular (resulting from the need to verify some facts).

Control and monitoring realization of the LA 21 programme should be carried out regularly in order to correct the process of implementation (if we are not meeting the defined objectives). It is exactly the efficient control and monitoring which allow prompt modification procedures and orientation. It is necessary to consider that adjusting the processes and modifying the original plans may be needed. It is very difficult to make all plans in detail at the very beginning. Control and preliminary monitoring should be understood as efficient tools to increase effectiveness of our work rather than something causing delays.

Who should carry out control of meeting the LA 21 programme?

A key role in control and monitoring fulfilment of tasks of the LA 21 programme is played by the **local self-government**. In order to assure regular control, it is very important that documents of the LA 21 programme (vision, strategy and in particular action programme) are approved by the municipal/city council (or by a council consisting of representatives of municipalities in the case of micro-region), which makes these documents legally binding. In such a case it is possible to request regular control and monitoring at the level of self-government. This can include, for example, a control to determine whether or not the tasks in adopted resolutions are being fulfilled.

The municipal council can create a special monitoring committee to assure preliminary control and monitoring of the LA 21 programme. An alternative solution is to entrust one of the units of the municipal or city council with this task.

Control and monitoring, however, can be assured also by the Forum of Citizens or by an action group, in particular, if they actively participate in co-ordination of the LA 21 programme. Also in this case, it is proper when the local council mandates control and monitoring in the form of resolution. The action group can carry out its own control and monitoring. It always depends on local conditions and the form of co-operation (form of delegated competences) between the action group and the local self-government.

Public meetings of citizens are an important element of civic control at the local level. Many self-governments, however, do not organise public meetings of citizens, claiming that they are not attended by citizens. If the citizens feel that they spend time meaningfully and if they achieve what they want (if their opinions are respected), they will attend these meetings.

Transparency in the adoption of decisions by a local self-government, partner co-operation with local civic associations and lobbying organisations, and good access to information create favourable conditions for control by the public. The satisfaction of citizens in realization of the tasks and with the overall progress in LA 21 can be monitored, for example, within the framework of public polls and questionnaires.

There are a number of tools or models about measuring and assessing compliance with tasks of the LA 21 programme, their success and effectiveness. It is possible to use some standard tools (e.g. systems of quality management confirmed by a document) and models (worked out for the public administration) to measure success and effectiveness of the public sector. So-called **efficiency audits** are used to control effectiveness and are aimed at controlling:

- the economic aspects (were costs minimised with regard to required quality?),
- the effectiveness (was maximum benefit achieved with resources used and outputs achieved?)
- the efficiency (to what extent did the activity achieve planned objectives and effects?)

Besides the above-mentioned forms of control, a proper form for verifying the progress in LA 21 is **self-assessment** (self-control). In the case of self-assessment as a specific variant of control, great emphasis is put to defining challenging tasks, which must be performed. Self-assessment is very important from the point of view of motivation.

Indicators of sustainable development are proven and simple tools of control and monitoring, proper also for the LA 21 programme.

Indicators of sustainable development and LA 21

Indicators of sustainable development are **practical tools to measure progress** in the LA 21 programme. Indicators of sustainable development can fulfil a number of roles within LA 21 - to simplify, explain and mediate comprehensive information for decision-making in a municipality/micro-region; help integrate environmental, social, cultural, social and economic aspects into decision-making; help measure and specify progress of a municipality/micro-region towards sustainable development objectives; provide timely warning in the case of economic, social and environmental threats. Commonly used indicators -such as GDP and measuring pollution of individual sources or streams - are not proper indicators of sustainable development.

Box 13 - Application of sustainable development indicators in Slovakia

Indicators of sustainable development were used at the local level in Slovakia - for example, within the framework of two projects of the programme "Sustainable cities / regions in Slovakia" (ETP Slovakia, 1997-2000) and within application of the methodology "Common European indicators of cities (REC Slovakia, 2000-2003)". Little attention is paid to the issues of indicators of sustainable development at the local level. The indicator of sustainable development can be defined very simply as **measurable data providing information whether activities in the territory of city are oriented towards sustainable development.**

In **formulating and selecting indicators**, we therefore always must be very careful to account for three points of view: quantity, quality and time. Characteristic indicators have to be selected specifically for each level of objectives. When selecting indicators, it is necessary to clarify how (using which indicators) fulfilment of objectives (e.g. long-term, strategic, short-term, implementation) will be monitored.

A fundamental requirement is that selected indicators correspond to the priorities and objectives of LA 21. If an indicator is to be considered as relevant to the LA 21 issue, it must comply with certain preconditions - importance, representative capability, measurability, reliability, relevance to LA 21 objectives. It is important that data are representative of a given municipality/micro-region in relation to LA 21, measurable, repeatedly obtainable and assessable with minimal costs. This requires utilising existing sources of data, one's own investigation and qualified estimates.

Box 14 - Examples of indicators, which will be used to measure successful of projects in the Association of municipalities of the Pod Panským dielom micro-region

Quantity indicators

- minimal participation of 20 citizens at each meeting in municipalities,
- creation of one active group of citizens in each municipality or group of municipalities,
- creation of an Action Group for sustainable development,
- elaboration of a Sustainable Development Strategy of a micro-region,
- elaboration of an Action Plan of a micro-region,
- implementation of ten projects of sustainable development - three commercial projects (aimed at use of local resources), two projects oriented to environmental protection and three projects oriented to landscape management and to improving appearances of municipalities.

Quality indicators

- involvement of citizens in life of a municipality, creation of conditions for co-operation,
- creation of partnerships, co-operation in development of documents and projects,
- growth of knowledge of inhabitants of a micro-regions and increase of public awareness,
- creation of an information database of a micro-region,
- creation of new business opportunities,
- improvement of quality of life in a micro-region.

General principles for creation of indicators

Taking into account that indicators should be transparent, understandable and assessable, the aim is not to create an extensive set of several tens of indicators. A maximum set of 15-20 indicators is considered optimal. These indicators should include all objectives of LA 21 and should also reflect an orientation towards these objectives. It is also possible to work with a smaller number of so-called key indicators or to create a comprehensive indicator of an aggregated index type (like, for example, the index of human development assessed annually by the UN).

Indicators should fulfil a so-called SMART framework²:

SIMPLE	MEASURABLE	RELIABLE	TIMELY
1. easy to interpret	5. statistically verifiable, reproducible and comparable	12. indicators of substantial environmental functions	17. timely warning of potential problems
2. easy to monitor	6. it is possible to combine them with other indicators to form new indicators	13. related to valuable environmental aspects	
3. accurate to use	7. it is possible to point out at trends over time	14. related to regional environmental policies and management objectives	
4. easy to map		15. related to national, regional environmental policies and management objectives	
		16. relevant (related) to international agreements and commitments	

Certainly, it is worth of evaluating those indicators, which can be influenced by a municipality/micro-region through its activity. For example, a municipality can substantially reduce emissions through gasification or through the use of wood instead of coal for heating, but it cannot influence the long-range transfer of emissions.

Indicators are not obligatory, but represent a very useful part of assessing LA 21 at the municipal level or level of a micro-region. During selection, it is necessary to consider local conditions and to bear in mind that the municipality will have to cover assessment of these indicators from local resources.

Basic classification of indicators

Indicators of sustainable development are usually divided into four areas (aspects) - **social, economic, environmental and institutional indicators**:

- *social area* - state and development of demographic and social structure and living standard of inhabitants
- *economic area* - state and development of economic efficiency and activities of inhabitants
- *environmental area* - state and development of the environment in the municipality/micro-region
- *institutional area* - monitoring of work of a self-government and state administration, participation of citizens of a municipality/micro-region in public life, etc.

² Jasson, A., Higgins, J., White, T. (1998). Environmental indicators - Local and community uses, report for national State and the Environment Reporting. Canberra, Australia.

Indicators can be divided also according to the scheme **driving force (pressure) - state (response)**, which represents a chain from reasons for problems through the quality of monitored phenomena to adopted measures.

Box 15 - Examples of environmental indicators of pressure-state-response type for the waste management area

Indicator of Pressure type: Waste producers

Brief definition: Main producers of waste

Measurement unit: Number of waste producers

Purpose: To monitor main producers of wastes and subsequently to set steps to control them

Indicator of State type: Generated waste per capita

Brief definition: Generated waste per capita

Measurement unit: kg/inhabitant/year

Indicator type: State

Purpose: To monitor development of waste generation per capita and subsequently to propose steps to improve this state

Indicator of Response type: Reuse and recycling of waste

Brief definition: Quantity and composition of waste, which is reused and recycled

Measurement unit: %

Indicator type:

Purpose: To measure percentage of use of secondary resources, their quantity and quality

Indicator of Response type: Projects oriented to promoting and extending separate waste collection

Brief definition: Projects and campaigns oriented to promoting and extending separate waste collection

Measurement unit: number of campaigns per year

Purpose: To map the number of projects and campaigns which support separate waste collection during a period of one year in a given territory

Importance from the point of view of sustainable development: From the point of view of sustainable development, the most important projects are those which teach inhabitants to think more environmentally. Involving people in such projects leads to growth in the amount of separated secondary resources, which reduces the volume of municipal waste, which cannot be processed and landfilled.

This classification can be inspiring, but the structure of LA 21 indicators should reflect the structure of priorities and objectives of LA 21 in a given municipality/micro-region.

It is not realistic to create one "universal" set of indicators valid for all municipalities. However, it is possible to create a set of important indicators, which are assessable and which are important for orienting a municipality/micro-region towards sustainable development. These indicators will likely correspond to the LA 21 objectives, but the final set of indicators must account for specific conditions and problems of a municipality/micro-region, and local citizens and stakeholders should understand them.

The basic set of LA 21 indicators has to be created in the process of preparing a LA 21 document with the participation of all stakeholders. In the ideal case, each defined objective should be connected, minimally, to one indicator describing how it is being fulfilled. One indicator can describe fulfilment of several objectives. Indicators can be qualitative or quantitative.

Sources of information for creation of indicators

An existing **database** should be a starting point in drafting the indicators. Some information sources can be found at the level of *local self-governments* (data on business subjects, land registers, building activities, data on environmental polluters, waste management, etc.). Usually, important data can be found in land-use planning documentation (in particular in the phase of research and analyses).

Other useful sources of information are *state administration and self-governments at a regional level*: information of sectoral and cross-sectoral documents - such as land-use plans, regional operational plans, etc. Other data can be collected from enterprises, professional associations, lobbying organisations and other subjects operating in the territory of a municipality/micro-region.

Finally, it must be stressed that *citizens of a municipality/micro-region* are also an important source of information. At present, there are a number of methods for gathering information. Meetings with citizens, interviews and specialised questionnaires seem to be the most effective. Knowledge of citizens, on one hand, and the collection of information from citizens, on the other hand, are key preconditions for successful implementation of LA 21. If more demanding methods of information collection are used, it is useful to incorporate them into projects so that these activities are taken into account (including financial requirements).

Drawing and assessing the set of indicators

Sustainable development indicators are an integral part of the entire LA 21 process - even the vision of sustainable development and the main objectives of LA 21 in a municipality/micro-region must be defined in such a manner, which allows monitoring their fulfilment with the use of measurable indicators. Main parameters should be defined for each indicator - name, measurement unit, relation to priorities and main objectives of LA 21, reference values (starting, target value - optimal, comparative), periodicity of assessment.

During the planning phase of LA 21, it is necessary:

- to map all available sources of information related to individual areas of LA 21 in a given municipality/micro-region (centrally monitored statistical data, data from regional sources, data from local sources),
- to draft a set of LA 21 indicators of sustainable development so that it takes into consideration all priorities and objectives of sustainable development in a given municipality/micro-region and so that it is realistically assessable,
- to assess the starting state of LA 21 indicators in a given municipality/micro-region, to set a period and a method of assessing indicators, including target and comparative values.

During the implementation phase of LA 21, it is necessary:

- to regularly assess indicators of LA 21 in a given municipality/micro-region with participation of all target groups and to monitor, in this way, the progress in meeting the priorities and objectives of LA 21 as well as meeting various measures,
- to correct, modify and supplement set measures for implementing the proposed objectives if necessary,
- to use all main functions of indicators - informative, comparative, control, preventive - in order to increase participation of all major groups of the society in LA 21 process.

Use of indicators to support the implementation phase of LA 21

To fully use indicators of LA 21 in the implementation phase, it is important that the entire set of LA 21 indicators is assessed regularly and that an *overall assessment of the orientation of a municipality/micro-region towards sustainable development* is carried out. One calendar year is considered to be a proper period. For such an assessment the following parameters are appropriate:

- number of improving indicators as compared to number of declining indicators,

- rate of improvement or decline of various indicators (in relevant measurement units),
- so-called distance from objective - further improvement needed to achieve the target value.

First of all, indicators should provide high *information value*. As they are connected to concrete priorities and objectives of LA 21, they provide the target groups of LA 21 with basic information about the state of a municipality/micro-region in a given area, whether or not development proceeds in a positive direction. Along with this information, they can also be used to compare with other municipalities, regions or the national average - they fulfil *comparative function*.

Control and preventive functions of indicators are also important - they allow control of defined development objectives and prevent consequences of adverse development by comparing with set acceptable values. In the case of prevailing adverse development, it is necessary to reassess the efficiency of proposed measures and to define new ones - more efficient methods to achieve the objectives of LA 21.

Indicators of sustainable development also serve as tools to *inform and involve the public* in the process of LA 21 - a part of indicators is based on active participation of citizens, who can influence further development of indicators by their behaviour.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the assessment of sustainable development indicators in the LA 21 process should not be an end in itself, but it should support the entire process through its use in a number of areas during the implementation phase of LA 21.

Conclusion

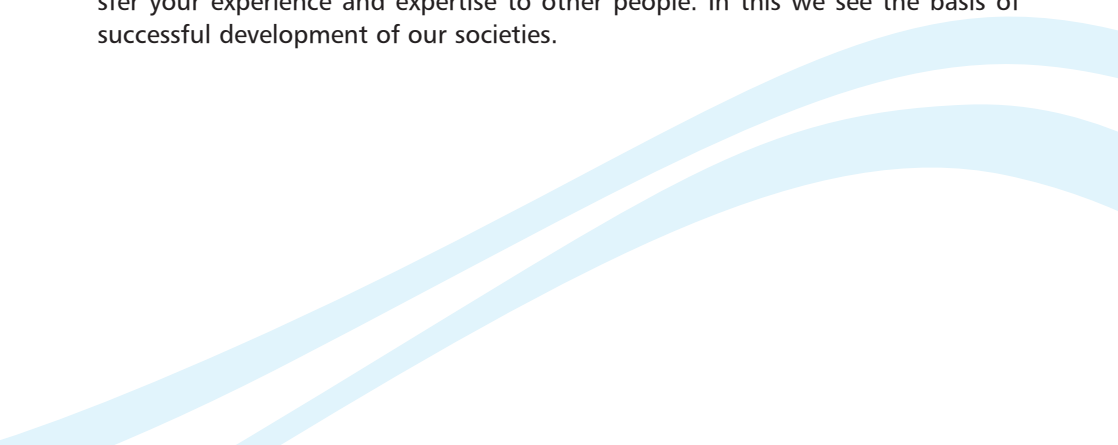
What to say at the end about the Local Agenda 21 process, about its working methods, procedures and expected results?

The aim of the whole process is to improve quality of life in municipalities and micro-regions. This should not be therefor an end in itself based on administrative processes, bureaucracy, oriented to partial and easily achievable objectives within one election period. Local Agenda 21 is a long, complex and target-oriented process, full of difficulties, limitations and, of course, partial failures. It is not a sprint, but a long distance race (maybe even marathon). It requires aim-conscious and self-sacrificing people working for the welfare of their communities. In order to achieve this objective it is necessary to be tireless, prepared to devote time and efforts to achieve defined objectives and overcome partial failures and mistrust of people at the beginning of the process.

Those, who do not give up, will achieve first results in the form of implemented projects, small improvements of daily life in a municipality and also the respect from citizens who had not understood the meaning of this work at the very beginning. This may be then followed by bigger involvement of citizens in implementing further projects and in creating a coherent, successful and prosperous community.

Yes, this might be slightly idealistic and not very realistic. However, it is worth of setting demanding goals and to come nearer to them. Those, who only criticise the situation and do nothing, will never achieve success. The LA 21 process is not attractive for such persons. However, we believe that number of these people will be decreasing and there will be more and more people active and willing to work for their municipalities and regions. They will work for our grandchildren and it is us who are responsible for the state of municipalities, cities and countries and for value orientation which we offer to our children.

Finally, we would like to wish a lot of success in developing the municipalities and regions to all who have read this publication. We will be happy if you transfer your experience and expertise to other people. In this we see the basis of successful development of our societies.



Annex

Local Agenda 21 - Model examples from 6 municipalities/micro-regions in Slovakia (results achieved within the framework of Regions 21 project)

Local Agenda 21 in the Southern Sitno micro-region

Participating municipalities/micro-region

The Southern Sitno micro-region was created in 1999 and involves 6 sub-montane municipalities in the Štiavnické vrchy mountain range in the district of Banská Štiavnica. The territory covers 108 km², and 1,400 inhabitants inhabit the municipalities of the micro-region.

Main objectives and motivation of the project

- to use own resources and develop values of the micro-region,
- to continue on the basis of previous projects carried out in the micro-region,
- to work out a strategic document of long-term sustainable development of the micro-region.

Involvement of major groups of the society

- project implementation and management - non-governmental organisations (civic associations of the micro-region, communication information centre),
- co-operating groups - local self-government (negotiations, material management), local entrepreneurs (work in the economic club), citizens (project of hearing, questionnaire),
- external experts - expert organisations (management and facilitation, preparation of the document).

Procedural aspects of the project, main results and outputs

- project of hearing - questionnaire for citizens (102 questionnaires were filled in),
- meeting with entrepreneurs - the economic club,
- creation of action plans, resource audit and SWOT analysis of the micro-region,
- problem tree - identification of causes and consequences of problems,
- definition of objectives - one general and three specific objectives,
- action plans of the micro-region,
- definition of areas which are crucially important for municipalities in the future - tourism, environmental protection, social services,
- drafting projects for individual objectives, criteria, indicators.

General objective of the micro-region: Through improving the quality of life, creating proper social conditions, re-orienting human potential to present needs and conserving traditional cultural values, we want to create an economically and environmentally working micro-region.

Specific objectives of the micro-region: re-orienting human potential to the needs of the present, receiving financial capital, developing rural tourism.

The result of the project is a **document of Local Agenda 21 in the Southern Sitno micro-region**, which will serve as a basic document in order to receive financial resources for development of the micro-region for the next 10 years.

Demonstration project

Solar energy for all projects - installing demonstrational sets of solar collectors on the Primary School building in Prenčov and on three family houses - collectors have been made on the self-help basis.

Main benefits of the project:

- support civic participation, build an open society, create new partnerships,
- elaborate a strategic action plan of development of the micro-region based on sustainable development principles.

Strategy of sustainable development and action plan in the Pod Panským dielom micro-region

Participating municipalities/micro-region

The association of municipalities in the Pod Panským dielom micro-region was created in 2000 and associates 7 rural municipalities in the district of Banská Bystrica, which are located in the submontane landscape on the foot of the Starohorské vrchy mountains and the Low Tatras. The territory covers 112 km² and is inhabited by 8,500 inhabitants.

Main objectives and motivation of the project

- to support activities of civic associations, informal partnerships and citizens within the micro-region,
- to work out *plans of economic and social development*, supported by an elaborate action plan of the micro-region within the framework of sustainable development.

Involvement of major groups of the society

- project implementation and management - Association of municipalities of

the micro-region, Mayors of municipalities,

- participating groups in planning - self-government, members of civic associations, entrepreneurs, representatives of municipalities, youth,
- external experts - civic association (process initiation), expert organisation (elaboration of audit).

Procedural aspects of the project, main results and outputs

- *interactive planning* - SWOT analyses, naive maps, plans - learning the priorities of citizens in individual municipalities, knowledge of other citizens,
- *strategic planning* - work of an action group within the micro-region - defining a common objective of the micro-region, five priority measures and an action plan of the micro-region,
- *defining binding outputs* - the action plan will be approved by municipal councils of all municipalities.

Strategic objective of the micro-region: A developed, attractive and co-operative micro-region inhabited by happy, educated, successful and healthy people

Measures to implement the strategic objective:

- improve and develop technical and civic infrastructure and knowledge,
- improve the environment and increase ecological awareness,
- improve conditions for business and employment,
- improve conditions for recreation,
- maintain cultural and historical traditions and develop cultural and social life of citizens

Demonstration project

Mini-grant programme of the micro-region - support voluntary activities of citizens in municipalities of the micro-region. Total support of SKK 400 thousands was provided to 21 small projects in all municipalities (e.g. course for folk crafts; folk events; educational, cultural and sport events; building reconstruction; environmental improvement).

Main benefits of the project

- elaborate an important document for further development of the micro-region and its municipalities,
- support activities of people in the micro-region, implement small projects supported by their own resources,
- improve preparedness to use financial resources from EU funds for developing municipalities and the micro-region.

Harmonious and balanced development of the Podpoľanie micro-region on the basis of principles of sustainable development

Participating municipalities/micro-region

The territory of the Detva district represents the Podpoľanie , covering 450 km². It associates 2 cities and 13 municipalities inhabited by 33,700 people. It is a typical submontane landscape with dispersed settlements. Two cities (Detva and Hriňová) and three municipalities joined the project.

Main objectives and motivation of the project

- to increase partner co-operation; to influence positively the inhabitants' activity, thinking and relation to the municipality; to create a development programme of municipalities by involving the general public,
- to link the previous activity in Detva (elaboration of a strategic action plan for the city, completion of a public poll using a questionnaire and meetings with citizens) - it is possible to involve other municipalities of the micro-region into the process,
- to create an opportunity for implementing development programmes of municipalities as starting documents for elaborating a strategic development document of the micro-region.

Involvement of major groups of the society

- implementation and management of the project - the "Local Agenda 21 in Podpoľanie" association - representation of the civic association, self-government and state administration,
- partners of the project - self-government (deputies, members of commissions), active citizens, local facilitators.

Procedural aspects, main results and outputs

- *preparatory phase* - informative meeting, formation of working groups in various municipalities, training programme, methodology for preparation of the LA 21 document,
- *implementation phase* - workshops in municipalities, public polls, elaboration of development documents in municipalities.
 - workshops - create a development programme - strategic part (vision, SWOT analysis, priorities, objectives), action plan (roles, responsibility, financial arrangements, monitoring),
 - public polls - use questionnaires to find out people's opinions regarding development of the municipality; it will then be published, providing the public with information (local press, Internet, activities of deputies and

activists),

- assuring the knowledge - informational leaflet, CD documenting the process and results of the project.

Participating municipalities have worked out their **development programmes**. A prepared document containing a strategic part and action planning was *approved by the city or municipal councils* and became a starting document for creating a municipal budget for 2004.

Demonstration project

Putting the Detva Communication Centre into operation - support a co-ordinating and servicing organisation for development of the whole micro-region - monitor information in the area of sustainable and regional development, assure public access to information, provide services to non-governmental organisations.

Main benefits of the project

- increase the activity of citizens for their municipalities,
- create an opportunity for dialogue among various lobbying groups, increase trust between citizens and the self-government, create conditions for co-operation and partnership,
- change the work method of the self-government, define a new approach to planning and monitoring processes,
- elaborate the development programme of the municipality and enact it through a municipal council.

Local Agenda 21 for the municipality of Vinné

Participating municipalities/micro-region

The municipality of Vinné is located in the northern part of the Michalovce district at the edge of the Vihorlatské vrchy mountain. At present, it has approximately 1,600 inhabitants; the territory covers 29.8 km².

Main objectives and motivation of the project

- *main objective of the project* - to define principles, priorities and orientation of development of the municipality in accordance with the concept of sustainable development,
- *partial objectives of the project* - to involve inhabitants in the life of the municipality and in planning, to increase knowledge, to support building partnerships between citizens and municipalities,
- *motivation* - to create a basis for using resources from EU funds and from other resources through planning the development of the municipality.

Involvement of major groups of the society

- project initiator and co-ordinator - the Institute of Regional and Municipal Development of the Technical University in Košice (external partner),
- project submitter - the local self-government in Vinné
- co-operating groups, partners of the project - the state administration (the District Office - department of the environment), entrepreneurs (Forum of Entrepreneurs), citizens.

Procedural aspects, main results and outputs

- create partnership and working groups (representatives of participating major groups), provide citizens with information (public meeting),
- create the LA 21 document - vision of the municipality, strategic development objectives, action programme,
- present project results (public meeting), submit and approve the LA 21 document by the municipal council.

Accompanying activities:

- environmental competition for primary school children, a folk festival, public polls using a questionnaire,
- elaborating and publishing informational materials on Local Agenda 21 in Vinné.


Main outputs:

- vision of the municipality - permanent improvement of the municipality by developing business, agriculture and tourism,
- strategic development objectives - ten strategic objectives in the areas of economy (support agriculture, business development and tourism), the environment and health (protection of soil, water, biodiversity; environmental management; health protection) and a renewal of cultural and historical heritage,
- action plan of the municipality - 8 main tasks connected to the strategic objectives (e.g. enforcing sustainable development principles and integrating them into projects and activities in Vinné, increasing environmental awareness, supporting small and medium business, developing tourism, meeting objectives of the LA 21 project).

Demonstration project

It was oriented toward *improving conditions in the Vinianske jazero (Vinné Lake) tourism centre*. Adjustment of water inflow, a canal and a catchment facility was completed. Showers and a playground for children were built on the shore of Vinné Lake.

Main benefits of the project

- building an open society where citizens learn to make decisions, build partnerships and plan development activities in the municipality,
 - initiating the preparation of a Programme of economic and social development of the municipality, positively influencing the municipality's preparedness for structural and post-accession changes,
 - complying with sustainable development principles - the self-government, with extended support from entrepreneurs, can reduce unemployment and contribute to improving the quality of life of inhabitants.
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THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
for Central and Eastern Europe
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