

Chapter 19

Local Public Service Delivery Arrangements in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

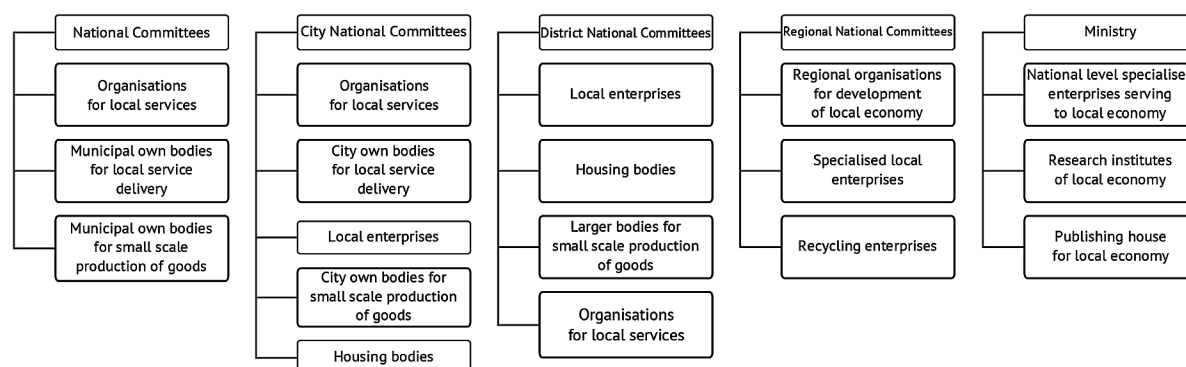
This chapter discusses the issue of efficiency of the different modes of the provision of local public services in two selected new EU member states – the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Czech Republic and Slovakia have a long common history and it is feasible to include both of them in the analysis. The first main part of the chapter analyses the history, transformation and the current local public delivery arrangements in the Czech Republic and Slovakia with the focus on the efficiency of the different modes of production. The final part tries to explain the main purposes behind the fact that externalisation does not deliver visible improvements.

INTRODUCTION

Public administration reforms in Czech Republic and Slovakia started almost immediately after the ‘Velvet Revolution’ in 1989. From the beginning, decentralization was used as an important reform tool to achieve better performance from the system, bringing positive but also negative results at the same time. The municipal and regional governments are currently responsible for a comprehensive set of public services: local public services, part of the sport, leisure and tourist provisions, children’s homes, some health services, basic social services, primary and secondary education or cultural establishments. Probably the most important remaining problem, limiting the success of decentralization processes in

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Figure 1.



the Czech Republic and Slovakia is significant territorial fragmentation and lacking the financial and managerial capacity to successfully adopt the NPM instruments in public service delivery.

During the socialist period, the local communal public services were part of the so called ‘local economy’. The structure and size of the ‘local economy’ are characterized by Figure 1 and Table 1. Local services were delivered by national committees in accordance with uniform rules as defined by the law and financed partly from the state budget and partly from consumer fees (local enterprises, recycling bodies and housing bodies were self-financing institutions).

During the transformation after 1989 the system of the public private mix mode of delivery of local communal services was created, where many different bodies (from the viewpoint of ownership and also of the ways of financing) were delegated to produce the services. The first research data about the changes were obtained by our group of researchers in 2000 and from that year we and other experts have closely monitored development trends - Table 2 shows the proportion of external delivery of selected local services.

The data shows that already at the time of collecting the first data contracting was widespread and its scale may slightly increase in the following years. The most frequently contracted service is waste management and we provide more detailed information about its delivery modes structure for both republics (Tables 3 and 4).

In both countries (with some exceptions), companies that were formed on the basis of inter-municipal cooperation are the delivery mode we may present as a good practice. Small municipalities use inter-municipal cooperation as a possible alternative to exploit scale economies and this form delivers positive results (this might mean that ‘joint action’ limits space for corruption).

The fact that a large proportion of local services is produced by external subjects created motivation for in depth research about the efficiency of such arrangements in the Czech and Slovak conditions. In the following text we summarise the existing knowledge (mainly data collected by our group) with the aim to respond to the following research questions:

A: Does externalisation (external production – outsourcing) of local public services improve the efficiency (economy and quality) of local service delivery in the Czech Republic and Slovakia?

B: What are the main factors determining existing results from externalisation?

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