

Quality of Public Services at the Local Level in Slovakia

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Abstract The aim of the paper is to summarise the results achieved in the area of public administration reform in Slovakia and to evaluate the development and reform measures of the past administrations aimed at increasing the quality of public services at the local level. This includes changes in the provision of public services to citizens through the ESO reform project (2013-2020) and the changes that have taken place at regional and local levels under the influence of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This programme has significantly influenced the formation of inter-municipal cooperation and the functioning of public-private partnerships, which led to the improvement of public services in municipalities and regions. The paper addresses the question of how these new policies have contributed to changing the quality of public services provided at the local level.

Keywords: • local state administration • self-government • quality of public services • inter-municipal cooperation • multi-level governance • public administration reform • Slovakia

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1 Introduction

The paper aims to summarise the results achieved in the area of public administration reform in Slovakia and to evaluate the development and reform measures of the past administrations aimed at increasing the quality of public services at the local level. The authors will answer the question of how new policies coming from different levels of decision-makers (European, national, regional, local) have contributed to the development of public services provided at the local level. The key argument is based on the fact that citizens often do not differentiate between the institutions and the different government levels but they consider them as generally being run by the state. Furthermore, for an ordinary citizen what really matters is not who the provider of a specific public service is but rather what quality of service the citizen receives. Slovak experience shows that quality of public services at the local level depends on numerous factors. The paper will focus on institutional structure and efficiency of policy making process, on development programmes, strategies and their implementation.

2 The Slovak Model of Public Administration

The paper will first provide an overview of the Slovak model of public administration and public administration reform process from 1990 till now in order to better understand the different factors affecting the quality of public services at the local level. There have been a number of studies published regarding the Slovak public administration reform process, including Verheijen's comparative study of the EU8 countries (i.e. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) in which the author argues that the new member states of the European Union, including Slovakia, face significant challenges that require a strong public management system (Verheijen, 2007). Moreover, Verheijen contends that 'Slovakia [is] showing some interesting ministry-based reforms, without having achieved progress across the system (Verheijen, 2007: X). It could be argued that this trend has largely continued, and it has had an impact on quality of public services both at the national and local scale.

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic sets the system of public administration in Slovakia as a two-tier self-government system with dual power model of the administrative functions of the state. Public administration of the Slovak Republic is divided into state administration and self-government. State administration comprises central government institutions such as ministries, other central state administration bodies (e.g. the Supreme Audit Office, the Public Procurement Office); and local state administration bodies (72 District Offices). There are two tiers of self-government at the subnational level: regional self-government (higher territorial units or *vyššie územné celky*) and local self-governments (municipalities or *obce*) – see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: System of public administration in Slovakia

Public administration			
State administration		Self-government	
Central state administration (i.e. ministries, Government Office, central-government agencies)	Local state administration (i.e. 72 District Offices)	Regional self-government (8 higher territorial units or <i>župy</i>)	Local self-government (2890 municipalities or <i>obce</i>)

This model shows that compared to the Western European transformation process of public administration, fundamental changes at the local level in Slovakia were made during a short period of time. Between 1990 and 2004, Slovakia went through institutionalisation of new formal structures and procedures for the recently created democratic system. Little attention has been devoted to developing the quality and potential of human resources of changing values in the system of public administration. It was a top-down reform process that followed political and budgetary logic rather than practical issues and citizens' needs. Slovakia similarly to other new EU member states made administrative changes in the system of public administration largely due to preparation for EU membership and the EU access criteria (Jacko & Malíková, 2013). However, since the accession in 2004, there has been an increasing focus on the quality of public service provision, in particular through regional and local self-government.

2.1 Public Administration Reform Process and Changes at the Local Level

Public administration in Slovakia underwent a fundamental transformation after 1990, when local self-government was restored and the state administration was separated from the self-government (Malíková & Vávrová, 2011)². The central government could since then only intervene in the municipal government by law. Gradually, a number of basic competencies were transferred to the municipalities, in particular the transfer of property to municipalities as well as the transfer of decision-making powers over the budget and municipalities' own revenue. Act no. 346/1990 on Elections to Municipal Bodies³ unlike similar legislation in the Czech Republic, introduced a direct election of mayors of municipalities and towns. Hence, a strong mayor model was implemented into the environment of local self-government in Slovakia. Gradually, interest groups were established to promote and protect the rights of towns and municipalities in Slovakia – mainly the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia, and the Union of Towns. A complex process of decentralization of competencies and responsibilities continued in 1999 when the government of the Slovak Republic adopted the Strategy of Public Administration Reform⁴ and approved the Concept of Decentralization and Modernization of Public Administration⁵.

Since the very beginning in 1990, Slovak decentralisation has included basic decentralisation principles – ‘decentralisation of political power, decentralisation of governing roles and responsibilities, and decentralisation of the overall financing system’ (Malíková & Vávrová, 2011: 77). The first wave of public-administration reform was in the form of decentralisation and creation of genuine self-governing local governments (i.e. local self-governments) (Jacko & Malíková, 2018). Municipalities and local citizens in particular were given the right to elect their own mayors based on the strong mayor form of local government. Later on, a similar principle was applied when regional decentralisation took place and citizens could also directly elect the Chairmen of regional assemblies (i.e. *župan*). This system can vary even in neighbouring countries. For instance, in the Czech Republic mayors are still voted on and elected by council members who pick someone among themselves. In Hungary, a similar system of directly electing mayors is present but in case of county elections, the chairman of the County Council is elected by the members of the County Council rather than by a popular vote of citizens.

Jacko and Malíková (Jacko & Malíková, 2013 and Jacko & Malíková, 2018) further argue that the extreme level of fragmentation leads to inefficient use of resources, lack of economic growth, limited quality of public-service provision, etc. However, some municipalities instead of merging into bigger units have since then started to create *micro regions* which not only promote tourism but also lead to other means of cooperation, for instance in terms of sharing municipal property in order to save and use resources more efficiently. The three tiers of government each have their specific roles and functions, which however, in some cases overlap. This often results in the lack of coordination between central government (including local state administration) and regional and local self-governments. However, it also allows for great opportunities in terms of local and regional development and cooperation.

Public administration reform has also affected new territorial-administrative division of Slovakia which was approved in 1996. Act no. 221/1996⁶ created eight regions and 79 districts (Žárska & Šebová, 2005). These reallocated competencies between the state (i.e. the central government) and the regions – i.e. regional offices. However, the regional level of self-government with its own competencies and democratically elected representatives, who would represent local and regional interests and pursue regional programmes, was not established until July 2001.⁷ Since this time, regionalisation has been recognised as a shift from merely administrative and territorial regionalisation to political regionalisation. In September 2001, the National Council of the Slovak Republic approved another piece of legislation⁸ which concerned more than 400 competencies that were to be transferred from the state administration to the municipal and regional self-governments during the next three years. In October 2001, additional legislation was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic, which initiated the provisions regarding the independent activities of municipalities and the process of transferring competencies and property from the national state administration to the municipalities and regional self-governments. Most importantly, these included financial and economic matters, which should have led to a diversified system. Later, in October 2007, regional

state administration offices were dissolved, and their competencies transferred to 50 area offices (*obvodné úrady*)⁹. Finally, the remaining Regional Offices of Specialised Public Administration were dissolved on 1 January 2013 and regional state administration de facto ceased to exist – see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Overview of the public administration reform process since 1989 (Jacko & Malíková, 2013)

Period	Process	Events & measures
1989		Fall of communist regime in Czechoslovakia
1990-1998	Decentralisation & deconcentration	Creation of local self-governments (2900 municipal self-governments), dissolution of Czechoslovakia and creation of Slovakia (1993). Territorial change and reconstruction of state administration (1996) - new districts [okres] (79 in total) and regions [kraj] (8) with own district and regional offices representing and carrying out tasks by civil servants.
1998-2004	Decentralisation & Modernisation	New public administration reform strategy, creation of 8 regional self-governments (i.e. higher territorial units).
2004		EU accession
2005-2012	Politicisation	Abolition of Regional State administration Offices and fiscal decentralisation to regional and local self-governments.

Period	Process	Events & measures
2012-	<i>Modernisation II & Quality improvement</i>	Public administration reform <i>ESO</i> (efficient, reliable, open) commenced. Reduction of the number of local state-administration offices from 613 to 79 until 2016. Newly joint 72 district offices established. Implementation of Rural development program, Leader (2017-2013). Emphasis on quality of public services.

Changes at the regional level have also taken place within a relatively short space of time. As a result, functioning rules which would have coordinated activities linked to the transfer of competencies were largely missing. Furthermore, there was arguably a lack of planning, strategies and road maps which would set out the creation and implementation of regional policy by new actors in the newly created self-governing regions. The decentralisation of power from the state to the regional level and the strengthening of the competencies of local and regional self-governments had the potential not just to strengthen the interests of political parties to enhance their specific political policies and interests. It could have also ultimately helped revitalise regional socio-economic development and create a regional regulation system which would benefit the entire population of the respective region. Much of the political discussion was, however, concerned with competencies, political positions and budgetary squabbling and despite numerous efforts since the early 2000s, the 8 HTUs face a number of problems to this day, including low voter turnout, lack of public participation, political mistrust and the rise and electoral success of extremist political parties. Also, non-functioning relationships between central, regional and local levels of government lead to other profound socio-economic effects such as deepening regional differences, regions with high unemployment rate and rising population of people living in socially excluded areas. These problems signify that the process of public administration reform was largely dependent on political changes at the central level of power and the pre-accession criteria rather than true motivation for reform and improvement of public services.

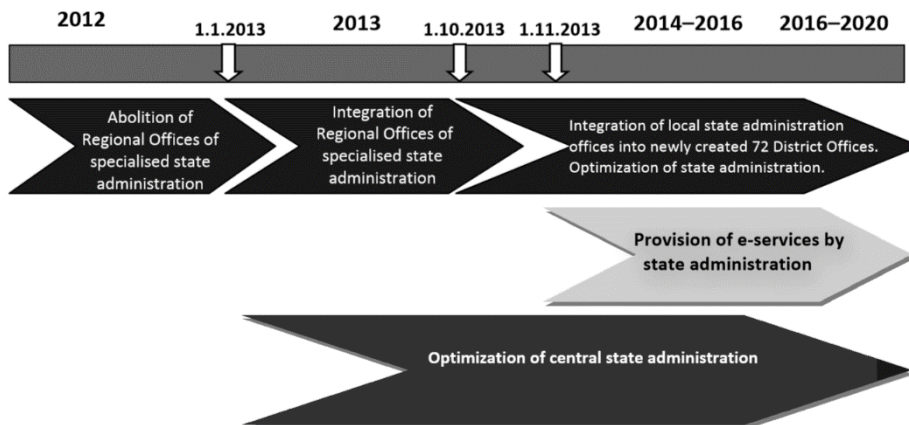
After 2012 a new one-party government was created which led to a window of opportunity in terms of further development and in particular amalgamation and modernisation of state administration. This was also an opportunity to implement New Public Management-style managerial principles into the otherwise Weberian-like system. One of the aims was to create new managerial posts for staff who would be able to implement and carry out necessary changes despite political pressures and other obstacles.

2.2 Modernisation and Quality Improvement Period

Even 20 years after the public administration reform process commenced, the system of public administration was still lacking high quality managerial elites not only at the central but primarily at the municipal and regional level. In the 2012 Government's Manifesto¹⁰, the one party government committed itself to take measures that should have contributed to overall government's spending through efficient and modern state administration at the local level. One of the main steps towards meeting these objectives was the introduction of the ESO reform programme.

The ESO programme or effective, reliable and open state administration was approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic no. 164/2012.¹¹ This document essentially introduced changes mainly in local state administration. The ambition of the ESO reform has been to make functioning of the state administration offices more efficient, transparent, accessible, and to increase overall quality of public services, while reducing the cost of running the system of public administration (Jacko & Malíková, 2018).

In a country of 5 million inhabitants, the system of public administration in Slovakia and state administration in particular had become too fragmented, complicated and perhaps most importantly too expensive to run (Jacko & Malíková, 2018). As a result, one of the clearest government reform goals of 2012 was to decrease the number of most state-administration offices from 613 to 72. The government promised and has already delivered dissolution of 64 regional offices of specialised state administration and merged most remaining local state administration offices officially under one roof (see Figure 3 below). The main idea was to copy the already existing territorial division in Slovakia (i.e. 79 districts) and to create a corresponding number of one-stop shop offices. On October 1, 2013, 72 new District Offices came into existence¹². Interestingly, the government used similar public administration structure that had already been used in Slovakia in 1990s and even before during the Communist era. Such reorganisation has not been intended to limit the power of central government. Instead, the Ministry of Interior became the only central state administration body in charge of entire local state administration. Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior created Support Centres and Support Units in order to outsource and take certain purely administrative tasks away from the newly created District Offices.

Figure 3: The ESO public administration reform stages (Saková , 2012)

On November 1, 2013, the e-Government Act was put into practice which set the ground for all electronic communication both with and within public administration and government bodies¹³. Most recently, in January 2014 the Ministry of Interior formally established the Analytical and Methodological Unit of Public Administration which has been in charge of developing Client Centres at selected District Offices and was given a number of other analytical and methodological tasks.

The Minister of Interior, who is responsible for the ongoing reform, argued that it would make public services and state-administration staff costs cheaper, more efficient and accessible (Jacko & Malíková, 2013). The reform programme and government representatives also emphasised in a rather PR-exercise way values such as transparency, quality, client approach, accountability, citizen involvement in decision-making and a ‘system of strategic planning and management’ in civil service¹⁴. If the reform had been fulfilled as planned, it would have arguably delivered a significant public administration reform, primarily in terms of its modernisation but also in terms of a considerable drop in central government spending. The reform also promised to bring a major enhancement to the quality of public services provided. However, because the current public administration reform is still ongoing, a thorough analysis is possible only after the process will be finished.

In terms of criticism, the government and the Ministry of Interior in particular are still not willing to release all internal documents including own and external analyses regarding the current public administration reform processes. Their release would make work of researchers and commentators much easier. Furthermore, some critics contend that the reform lacks plans and effort towards depoliticisation and further decentralisation. Also, the overall amount of public resources to be saved, and a number of political scandals have been reported in the past years. Critics also argue that the ESO reform is too narrow and lacks a more complex approach – especially misses the opportunity to improve running of municipal and regional self-governments.

The dual system of public administration (i.e. state administration and self-government) in Slovakia often lacks cooperation and willingness to implement reform measures. This then easily leads to inefficient decision-making which has an impact on the quality of public services provided at the local level. Most Slovak municipalities are members of the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia, a strong interest group which represents the interests of local self-governments. They have a strong say in principal questions of self-government development and central government decisions concerning self-government. The authors of the paper personally interviewed a number of civil servants, employed at the Ministry of Interior, who administer self-government agenda. They confirmed that the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia is politically strong and all government initiatives have to be prior consulted and approved by the Association. As a result, central government initiatives to make local self-government more efficient are difficult to implement.

In Slovakia, practically since 2010, various strategy documents have called for the integration of the fragmented self-government system. However, it is not an easy task to solve this issue. The main reason why this issue is so challenging is the sheer number of mayors and councillors who realise that any reform attempting to deal with fragmentation would lead to severe cuts in their numbers¹⁵. Thousands of local and regional politicians and their families would lose a significant source of their income. Hence, finding political will and support for such a reform at the local level seems mission impossible. It is clear that this issue needs to be resolved via consensus between the central government and representatives of local self-governments. The current government coalition makes a number of pledges in the current Manifesto of the Government¹⁶ regarding improvement of public services, mainly through eGovernment tools and measures. However, the document fails to mention anything regarding a more systemic self-government reform.

3 Quality of Local Public Services

The European Union played a crucial role and has had a significant influence on the local government reform in Slovakia. Slovakia is one of the EU member states which is a net recipient of the EU funds. Until 2004, the EU provided help during the pre-accession period through various pre-accession funds, e.g. Phare, SAPARD, ISPA. After Slovakia's accession in 2004, structural funds continued to provide financial aid and support regional development (e.g. European Structural Fund – ESF, European Fund for Regional Development – EFRD).

In 2003, the National Development Plan of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development was adopted. It stated that regional structures are unprepared to handle the process related to spending of the EU structural funds. They did not have sufficient capacity to manage the projects. They lacked information and trained personnel to deal with project preparation and its implementation. Resources from the EU structural funds, however, generally represent only additional funding for regional development policy. The emphasis should be placed on the use of its own, internal resources and on the central

government. Therefore, the Slovak Parliament adopted in 2008 a new law on regional development that defined the conditions for effective adjustment and implementation of regional policy. Moreover, this law more widely allowed regional and local self-government to use their powers for the benefit of their development¹⁷.

Although there was a political consensus on public administration reform process – especially in terms of its general direction, policy-making process of decentralization has been fuelled by commitment to implement special interests of political parties which have been often put before the interests of the public. An example of such political squabble was the issue of the size and boundaries of the newly created regional self-governments. Political parties in some cases wanted to draw the boundaries in order to secure and maintain political influence in the newly created regional units of the country.

Frequent changes of central government coalitions as well as the intransigence of the dominant party groupings does generally contribute to effective solutions. What is more, high level of local self-government fragmentation can lead to further inefficiency of government's expenditure and to the complexity of service provision and competencies at the local level.

Especially small municipalities (68% of the municipalities in the Slovak Republic have less than 1000 inhabitants) often struggle to provide sufficient level of public services to their citizens. Two reasons stand out among a number of them. First, small municipalities very often lack professionals with specific skills and experience and second, they struggle financially due to the fact that cost of administration in a small municipality takes over half of its total budget expenditure. In 2006, the government set out a strategy for modernization of public administration in Slovakia and has commissioned a concept of municipal reform – i.e. the modernization of local self-government. According to this concept, government should focus on economization, computerization and development of human resources as the key objectives of a modern public administration.

4 Inter-municipal Cooperation

Slovakia has a highly fragmented structure of local self-governments and so many choose to collaborate in order to achieve greater socio-economic development and improve quality of public services. Fragmentation has led to cooperation of local self-governments (i.e. municipalities) in the form of *inter-municipal cooperation*. It has become one of the ways to contribute to the development of regional policies and to create a stable and efficient system of decision-makers' networks in the regional environment – for the EU operational programmes defined as NUTS levels.

NUTS division predetermines the need for cooperation of regional and local self-governments. However, the 8 higher territorial units are at the NUTS 3 level, so in order to apply for specific EU funds and to use them more effectively, it is necessary for them to apply within the larger NUTS 2 level units. As a result, Slovak self-governing regions

still need to cooperate with other regions in order to meet the minimum regional population criteria and apply for EU funds. This generally leads to extra transaction costs, which then contributes to Slovakia's record on EU-funds absorption.

Inter-municipal cooperation takes place in a number of forums:

- a. Joint municipal office – association with common administrative agenda established by agreement between municipalities which cooperate in problems connected with administrative and technical affairs of municipalities (mostly small ones). These offices (234) are the most common form of collaboration between municipalities in Slovakia.
- b. Voluntary associations of municipalities (370 in 2016), i.e. microregions. Cooperation takes place in the provision of specific public services (e.g. infrastructure, water pipes, tourism, communal waste management, sewerage). This form of cooperation started to operate with support of EU projects (SAPARD, Phare, ISPA).
- c. Local action groups (LAG; 29 from 2007 to 2013). Cooperation occurs in social-economic development of regions.

Local action groups are direct recipients of EU support and funding. Local action groups evolved from networking of actors from the public, private and civic sectors in the regions with the aim of developing the region; created according to the EU criteria. Their activity is designed to support mutual cooperation and increase the responsibility of local and regional authorities and their direct links to the powers, resources and capacities of local and regional authorities. They are legal entities which are to contribute mainly to the development of the regions and to the solving of problems identified by the actors concerned. A local action group is not only an administrative unit but also a model of organization or policy network, which should positively influence implementation of multi-level governance at the regional and local level. This should then ultimately lead to new and improved public services at the local level. Local actions groups are the result of the LEADER programme (EU investment aid for rural development).

In the 2007-2013 programming period, the LEADER programme, a tool for rural development support which encourages involvement and cooperation of local partners, was implemented for the first time in Slovakia. One of the specific LEADER principles is the establishment of a local action group - LAG (a public-private partnership) where actors from different sectors (private, public, civic or non-profit) cooperate on multi-sectoral partnerships in development projects to improve the quality of regional and local services for citizens. Public-private partnerships work on a voluntary basis, while creating their own institutional structure and bringing together representatives from all three sectors of society in their bodies (the general assembly or the members' meeting, the presidency)¹⁸. The purpose of the partnership is to establish a common integrated territorial development strategy, the institutional structures of the LAGs and, in particular, to benefit from the LAG system. During the 2007-2013 programming period there were 29 LAGs in Slovakia. The majority of them was established based on cooperation of all three sectors of society – public, private and the third non-profit or civic sector.

The LEADER method requires a number of principles to be met: homogeneity of the territory (traditions, common needs, identity, cohesion, human and economic potential), bottom-up policy development (from local actors), public-private partnerships (LAG creation), the right to use innovative approaches to modernization), to involve all sectors of society (public, private, civic); to share experience through networking and to provide information to other LAG groups not only within a single country but within all states of the European Union (this is ensured by the Slovak National Rural Development Network); and cooperation. It means more than networking, as it represents the cooperation of one LAG with other LAGs in the form of joint projects of different types (cooperation in tourism, preservation of cultural heritage, promotion of LEADER group marketing) within a single state or at a transnational level. These individual elements that form a single entity are overlapping and are dependent on each other. Maintaining the purpose and the spirit of LEADER is conditioned by the implementation of all seven key principles at the same time (Thuessen & Nielsen, 2014).

There are a number of risks and destabilizing factors shaping regional policy. Cooperation between municipalities in Slovakia has so far shown that this only works in individual municipalities that really want it. This means that municipalities and their officials can also end cooperation whenever they want. The problem is that many municipalities find it difficult to reach joint decisions with common goals in the long term. Furthermore, the preconditions for creating coalitions of groups (i.e. stakeholders) and municipalities with *sustainable long-term cooperation* are lacking (Sabatier, 1999). High degree of independence and fragmentation of the self-government bodies from central government in terms of the decision-making process acts both as an opportunity but also as a threat. Problems arising from small fragmented municipalities are often intertwined and can create a vicious circle. For instance, lack of suitable human resources (both leadership and ordinary municipal staff) can lead a number of problems: initiating and implementing successful public policies, providing adequate public services, lack of control mechanisms and, last but not least, rise of extremism and support of populist fringe parties and/or candidates.

5 Conclusion

Slovak experience shows that there are a number of lessons to be learnt from this process. Slovak public administration reform process ever since it commenced in 1990 has led to an increase in the quality of public services at the local level. However, Slovak experience shows that there are a number of lessons to be learnt from this process. There are a number of ongoing initiatives, programmes and tools which could significantly improve the public service provision at the local level. For instance, joint municipal offices, voluntary associations of municipalities, and local action groups are examples of inter-municipal cooperation which could help to improve the scale and quality of public services at the local level.

The public administration reform of the 1990s concerned mainly the institutional transformation of the system, and the democratization of the management of public administration on the principle of subsidiarity. After the year 2005, a new period of quality improvement and better functioning of a new structure of state administration and self-government was introduced. The intention of policy makers was to use various management methods and tools that would affect the development of the territory, increase the quality of life of citizens (especially regarding self-governments), and increase the quality of public service provision in the target groups of citizens (e.g. healthcare services, education, social services, community services, etc.).

Slovakia has witnessed changes and improvement in the provision of public services to citizens through the still ongoing ESO reform (2013-2020) and the changes that have taken place at regional and local levels under the influence of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). ERDF was implemented at the national level as the Slovak Rural Development Programme through the LEADER programme (2007-2013). This programme has significantly influenced the formation of inter-municipal cooperation and the functioning of public-private partnerships, which led to further improvement of public services in municipalities and regions.

Lastly, the authors would like to emphasise the view of an ordinary citizen who does not generally differentiate between public service providers at the local level but instead focuses on the quality of the public services provided as a whole. Hence, local self-governments together with local state administration, regional self-governments and other relevant local stakeholders including private companies and civic initiatives should all work together towards one common goal which is the satisfaction of citizens.

Notes:

² Act no. 369/1990 on Municipalities.

³ Act no. 346/1990 on Elections to Municipal Bodies.

⁴ Resolution No. 695/1999 to the Strategy of Public Administration Reform in the Slovak Republic, Government Office of the Slovak Republic (18 August 1999).

⁵ Resolution No. 230/2000 to the concept of decentralization and modernization of public administration, Government Office of the Slovak Republic (11 April 2000).

⁶ Act no. 221/1996 on Territorial and Administrative Organisation of the Slovak Republic.

⁷ Act no. 302/2001 on Regional Municipalities.

⁸ Act no. 416/2001 on Transfer of some Competencies.

⁹ Act no. 254/2007 on the Dissolution of Regional Offices.

¹⁰ Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2012-2016, Government Office of the Slovak Republic (2012).

¹¹ Resolution No. 164/2012 to the ESO programme (Effective, Reliable and Open Government), Government Office of the Slovak Republic (27 April 2012).

¹² Act no. 180/2013 on the Organisation of Local State Administration.

¹³ Act no. 305/2013 on e-Government.

¹⁴ Manifesto of the Government (n 18) 33.

¹⁵ Each of the 2890 municipalities has a mayor and from 3 to 41 councillors. The total number of elected local public officials is around 22 thousand. Slovakia has a population of 5.4 million people.

¹⁶ Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016 - 2020, Government Office of the Slovak Republic (2016).

¹⁷ Act no. 539/2008 on Regional Development.

¹⁸ Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (20 September 2005).

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