

## ***Strategic Planning in two Border Regions in the Czech Republic – Comparison of Project Impact in Zlín and South Bohemia Regions***

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**Abstract:** *One of the methods of effective management is the use of strategic planning that represents a very important tool for development of regions. An integral part of strategic planning is to create individual projects through which strategic objectives are subsequently carried out. The objective of the paper was to examine perception of local population related to the impact of development projects in two selected regions in the Czech Republic (Zlín and South Bohemia Region). The researched projects, implemented in the programming period of 2007-2013, focused on impacts of the projects from Regional Operational Programs with special emphasis on tourism. In terms of an overall impact, it is possible to state that in both researched regions the greatest impacts were perceived to be those that accomplish purpose and brought something new, followed by met expectations of residents and not so much behind those projects that had an impact on improve equipment.*

**Keywords:** strategic planning, municipality, development project, perception, Czech Republic

**JEL:** R51, R53, R58

### **Introduction**

If modern public administration is to fully use the development potential of a given area and also integrate its activities appropriately within regional context, it must accept suitable management methods (Kachaner et al., 2016) which lead to a conceptual development of a given territorial unit. One of these methods is the use of strategic planning. Strategic planning (Oliveira, 2015) represents a very important tool for regional development. It applies to all levels, i.e. from the smallest ones – strategic plans of municipalities, cities and microregions, through strategies of regions up to the state level (Ježek, 2013; Malekpour et al., 2015; Perlín and Bičík, 2006).

Strategic planning has been an integral part of development planning in the public sector (Manoharan et al., 2015) for many years and should be the basic

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instrument for the development of cities and municipalities. Its core should be to achieve clear changes for the better through analyses and sequential specific steps in the long term (usually 20 - 30 years)(Berman, 1997; Pacios, 2004). It is therefore long-term planning (Al-Turki, 2011; “Better strategic planning,” 2012) that enables municipalities, cities and regions not only to determine the concept of their development strategy but also plan human and financial resources in the optimum way, through which individual targets will be achieved. The objectives, however, may not be only development but also reduction or elimination of the activity that exists in the city or municipality but it is unwanted or without good prospects. It is essential that the planned and subsequently implemented changes resulted in a demonstrable improvement of the situation (Půček and Koppitz, 2012; Šilhánková, 2007; Wokoun, 2008).

An integral part of strategic planning as an instrument of regional policy is, based on defined strategic visions, objectives and priorities, creation of individual projects (Killen et al., 2005), through which strategic objectives are subsequently implemented (Sokol, 1992; Wokoun et al, 2016). The objective of this paper is to examine the perception of the impact of implemented development projects by local population in two selected regions in the Czech Republic.

## **1. Literature Review**

Strategic planning is not defined by any law in the Czech Republic. Its main legislative support is provided by the Act 248/2000 Coll. on Support of Regional Development as well as the Act 128/2000 Coll. on Municipalities which assign the right to approve municipality development to a municipality.

### **1.1. Strategic planning in the Czech Republic**

Despite that, strategic planning in the Czech Republic is part of wider strategies within the European Union. As our research concerns projects executed in the programming period of 2007-2013, we will further focus not on actual objectives but those which were to be achieved in the previous programming period, i.e. within 2007-2013 or in 2015 (according to the rule n+2).

In the programming period of 2007–2013 more than 347 billion EUR was allocated to the cohesion policy in all member states, which was more than one third of the European budget for this financial period. The Czech Republic could have received more than 26 billion EUR from these European Union funds. Investments of the member states in this period were focused on the objectives resulting from the European Union strategy to support growth and employment (the so-called Lisbon Strategy) (European Commission, 2017).

Specific strategies and areas to receive the EU funds were established by the National Strategic Reference Framework (Ministry of Regional Development, 2017). The Czech Republic set out to meet the following three objectives:

Objective 1) Convergence: support of economic and social development of regions at the NUTS II level with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of less than 75% of this indicator's average for the entire European Union. Furthermore, other countries eligible to receive funds related to this objective are those with the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita lower than 90% of this indicator's average for the entire European Union. This target is funded by ERDF, ESF and FS and in the Czech Republic it includes all cohesion regions except for the capital of Prague.

Objective 2) Regional competitiveness and employment: support of regions at the NUTS II or NUTS I level exceeding limit indicators for inclusion in the Convergence objective. This target is funded from ERDF and ESF, and in the Czech Republic it includes the capital of Prague.

Objective 3) European territorial cooperation: support of cross-border cooperation of regions at the NUTS II level situated along all internal and some external land borders and all regions at the NUTS II level along maritime borders separated by no more than 150 kilometers. Furthermore, interregional and transnational cooperation between regions is supported. This target is funded from ERDF and in the Czech Republic it included all regions (Ministry of Regional Development, 2017).

The following table shows the distribution of funds among the objectives. In the Czech Republic about 97% of these funds were intended for the Convergence objective in 2007-2013 and about 1,5% for Regional competitiveness and employment (so for the capital of Prague).

**Table 1. Distribution of the EU funds among the objectives  
of the cohesion policy in 2007-2013**

Objective	Funds for EU27		Funds for CZ	
Convergence	283bn € (c. 7 082,80bn CZK)	81,54%	25,88bn € (c. 730,00bn CZK)	96,98%
Regional competitiveness and employment	54,96bn € (c. 1 385,40bn CZK)	15,95%	419,09m € (c. 11,73bn CZK)	1,56%
European territorial cooperation	8,72bn € (c. 218,55bn CZK)	2,52%	389,05m € (c. 10,97bn CZK)	1,46%
Total	347bn €	100 %	26,69bn € (c. 752,70bn CZK)	100 %

*(Source: Ministry of Regional Development, 2017)*

Strategic documents at the state level are associated with regional and particularly strategic development documents of municipalities. As part of the programming period of 2007-2013 (according to the rule n+2 the funding of this period finished in 2015), 'Integrated Urban Development Plans' (hereinafter IUDPs) were used as integrated tools for development. IUDPs were funded from

the Regional Operational Programs (ROP) and Integrated Operational Program (IOP - housing). The Integrated Urban Development Plan (Miguel Fernández Güell and Redondo, 2012) is understood to be a set of content- and time-related actions implemented within a defined territory or within a thematic approach in cities and aim to achieve a common goal or goals of a city, municipality or locality (Půček, Koppitz, 2012). The Integrated Urban Development Plan was a fundamental coordinating framework building on the overall vision and de facto was a strategic development document of a city, i.e. a strategic plan, adapted for the purpose of identifying and solving problems of developing areas of a city in relation to the use of Structural Funds in the programming period of 2007 – 2013.

The approach of the public administration officials to strategic planning was examined by Ježek (Ježek, 2015; Ježek et al., 2015) who identified that “officials of Czech municipalities and cities see the main purpose of strategic planning in knowing where they are heading so that they can prepare for an uncertain future and at the same time, so that they can clarify to themselves where they want to get. This was a response by 80,6% respondents of the Ježek’s research. Other reasons are the preparation and implementation of key development projects (66,4% of respondents) and an increase in opportunities to receive funds, mostly from structural funds (61,1% respondents)”. Ježek further states that “*compared to the previous findings this is a shift for the better as there was a substantial decrease in answers that strategy is only a tool to obtain grants from national or European sources*”.

## **1.2. South Bohemia and Zlín Region**

The following part of this paper will cover the South Bohemia Region and Zlín Region. In order to generally compare these regions, we can use the Czech Statistical Office data and some key regional indicators. The following table shows apparent differences, particularly in the number of municipalities and in visitors’ turnout. However, on the other hand, it is possible to summarize that the regional GDP and growth are similar in both regions (Table 2). Similarly, in these two regions the unemployment decreases. In further research, we will focus on the South Bohemia Region, specifically on the district of Jindřichův Hradec (České Budějovice) – territories of Staré Město pod Landštejnem, Nová Bystřice, Slavonice and Český Rudolec. All these territories can be designated as peripheral territories. In the Zlín Region we will focus on the following districts – Uherské Hradiště, Zlín, Vsetín and Kroměříž. These territories are characterized as rather developing urban territories. As part of these territories some stabilized localities have been selected, such as Bojkovice, Karolinka, Kašava and Nový Hrozenkov, as well as peripheral territories, Vigantice, Valašské Klobouky and Valašská Polanka.



**Table 2. Specific focus of the socioeconomic variables of selected regions**

	Number of districts (absolute values)	Number of municipalities (absolute values)	Number of inhabitants (absolute values)	Regional GDP in mil. CZK*/growth of the previous period in %	Visitor's turnout	General unemployment rate in %/ Growth (decline) in % since 2015
South Bohemia Region	7	624	638648	230508/+3,7	1 449 863	2,8/-0,8
Zlín Region	4	307	584 020	222918/+3,7	686 661	3,7/-0,9

*(Source: Czech Statistical Office, 2016)*

\*in 2015

## 2. Comparison of regions in strategic planning

### 2.1. Research methodology

This article compared impacts and results of implemented projects in selected areas in South Bohemia as a local model (after 1989 – “the Iron Curtain” - Communist Ideology) and Zlín Region. We provide an overview of residents’ perceptions of the local border development to stakeholders or key local players. The aim of the research is to summarize impacts of the specific development activities in the observed areas, while helping the regional development with regards to the project funded by the EU. The first step focuses on the European rural development fund – ERDF that provided support to the Cohesion Regions during the period of 2007-2013 with some projects in the Czech Republic financed after this period. The next step will focus on the support from regional programs (Regional operational programs supported from ERDF are analyzed here) and support from integrated programs (particularly Integrated Operational Program supported by ERDF is aimed at here) with a specific focus on the previously mentioned localities. This research deeply evaluated selected projects and residents’ attitudes towards impacts in the observed areas funded according to the program NUTS II – Southwest and NUTS II – Central Moravia by ERDF, OPEI, OP Environment and Integrated OP. During May – July 2016 110 standardized interviews were conducted with residents in the Zlín Region (Antošová, 2016), especially in 11 municipalities including the main districts: Zlín, Vsetín, Kroměříž and Uherské Hradiště. In September 2016, 85 residents (South Bohemia Region) were interviewed in three selected destinations in the Jindřichův Hradec district. The project focused on the following areas (table 3): Strategic plan, local or urban/reconstruction of a square or village common (54); Green grounds/ design of Greenland (24); Children’s playground or areas to spend free time in (22); Bicycle path or tourism (5); Reconstruction of buildings/museums/gallery or school (33);

Cultural center (19) and Infrastructure (up 14). We observed negative and positive impacts of the projects perceived by residents on the Likert scale, 6-point scale, from “Totally agree (1)” to “Totally disagree (5)” and (6) “Don’t know” as a missing value. In addition, residents’ participation in the projects was measured using a percentage scale: (1) 0%-10%, (2) 11%-30%, (3) 31%-50%, (4) 51%-70%, (5) 71%-90%, (5) 91-100%. The primary dataset was analyzed in the SPSS program and some analytical tools were used to obtain a descriptive analysis and exploratory factor analysis with outputs of the Kaiser’s Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) (South Bohemia region KMO=0,638 and Zlín Region KMO=0.782) and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity (South Bohemia Region 855,246 and Zlín Region 742,387).

The global measure always lies between 0 and 1, and it should be higher than 0.5 to determine that the factor analysis is useful. Finally, we selected the rotation method Varimax; we use the Eigenvalues for the explanation of the total variance by a factor (Charry et al., 2016). Reliability of the interviews was estimated using the Cronbach’s reliability coefficient, which is a measure of internal consistency (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  lies in 0.805 (South Bohemia Region) and 0,745 (Zlín Region), which reaches above 0.7, signifying the basic requirement of internal consistency (Joseph F. Hair Jr et al., 2009).

**Table 3. Specific focus of the analyzed projects**

<b>Focus framework</b>	<b>Number of observations in South Bohemia Region</b>	<b>Number of observations in Zlín Region</b>
Strategic plan, local or urban/ reconstruction of a square or village common	4	50
Green grounds/ design of greenland	4	20
Children playground or areas for leisure activities	2	20
Bicycle path or tourism	5	10
Reconstruction of buildings/museums/gallery or school	28	10
Cultural center	14	
Infrastructure	14	These criteria are included in Strategic planning

*(Source: Authors)*

## **2.2 Respondents profile and the sample of dataset**

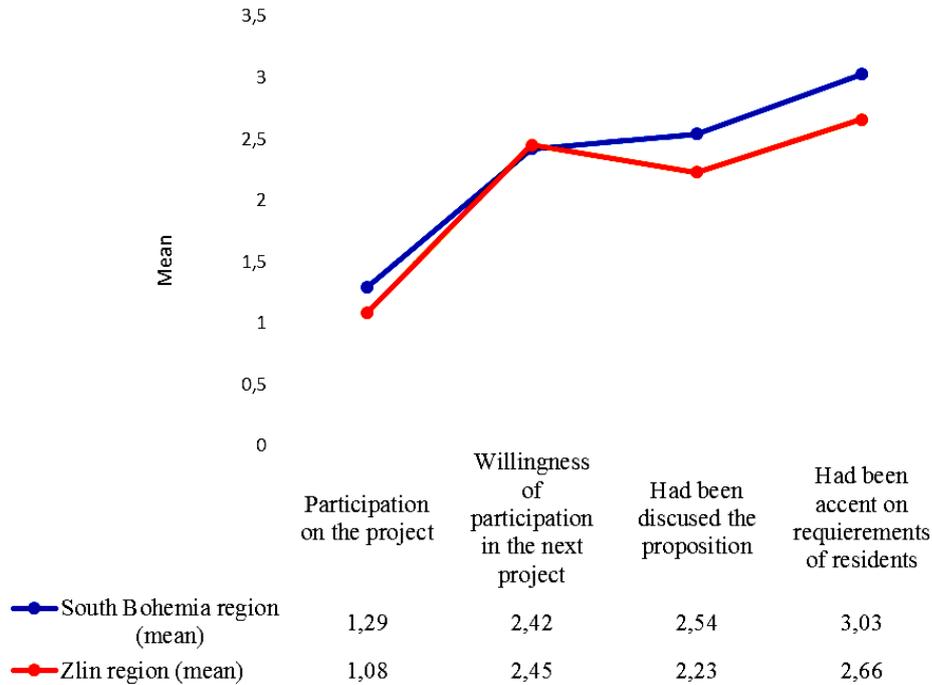
Interviews in each region were conducted using the same standardized questionnaire that included questions in three specific areas (Table 4a; Table 4b).

**Table 4a. Sociodemographic area with the following observations**

Region	Gender				
	Male		Female		
South Bohemia	41,20%		58,80%		
Zlín	47,30%		52,70%		
	Age (in years)				
	< 20	21 – 35	36 – 50	51 – 65	> 65
South Bohemia	8,20%	24,70%	32,90%	34,10%	0%
Zlín	12,70%	12,70%	22,70%	39,10%	12,70%
	Living period in destination				
	<5	6 – 20	21-35	36-55	> 55
South Bohemia	15,30%	34,10%	22,40%	22,40%	5,90%
Zlín	3,60%	20%	14,50%	44,50%	16,40%

(Source: Authors)

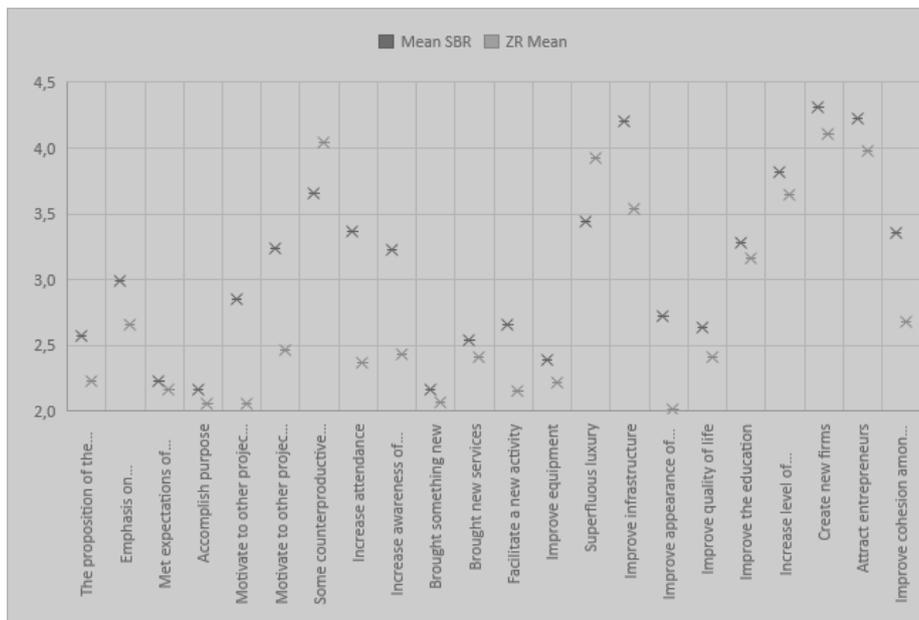
**Table 4b. Participation in the project and awareness of the implementation**



(Source: Authors)

We assume that participation levels in the projects in both regions were 0-10% and the willingness to participate next time in local development activities was 11-40% in both regions (Table 5). The emphasis on the requirements of residents wasn't sufficient in the observed areas in both regions, so we recommend, as part of the next implementation of the local development activities in both regions, the key players to emphasize the residents' requirements more.

**Table 5. Evaluation of results of the projects, positive and negative impacts on local economy according standardized interviews with residents**



(Source: Authors)

The above graph shows that in the Zlín Region the impact of implemented projects is evaluated and accepted significantly more positively than in the South Bohemia Region. The values in the range between 2-2,5, i.e. values with high impact include 13 impacts out of 22 evaluated ones, and within the range of up to 3, there are two more impacts, i.e. in total, more than two thirds of the evaluated ones. The best impact of the implemented projects was determined in the Zlín Region as “improvement in appearance of destination” (with the result of 2 on the Likert scale). The weakest impact, as stated by the respondents in the Zlín Region (ZR), was “create new firms”. Above 4 on the Likert scale there is also “some counterproductive results” in the Zlín Region.

In the case of the South Bohemia Region (SBR) the most impacts occur in the range of 2,5-3 on the Likert scale, i.e. 7 impacts. Within the range of 2-2,5 there we only 4 impacts. However, half of the assessed impacts (11) come out more or less positive. The highest ones are almost equally two impacts, i.e. “accomplish

purpose” and “brought something new”. On the contrary, the smallest impact, within the range of 4-4,5 is represented in South Bohemia by three topics, i.e. “improve infrastructure”, “create new firms” and “attract entrepreneurs”.

### **3. Research findings of project impacts**

According to the results of the Explanatory Factor Analysis, the procedure allows identifying a synthetic factor that summarizes some features which have been compiled as data, and then the information is grouped according to statistical similarities. The procedure contributes to identifying items that have a bigger explanatory capacity. We are handling 22 variables that a priori have no precise dependence across them, but subsequently could exhaust their variances in 6 detected component factors for the South Bohemia Region (SBR Impacts on the local communities and their development; Impacts on the local budget and employment; Success of project results and met expectations of the local communities; Success of networking; Motivation for the next implementation; Local development and infrastructure) and 5 detected component factors for Zlín Region (ZR – Results of the projects; Development of tourism and education; Aesthetic impacts on the basic equipment; Local development and infrastructure; Impacts on the local communities and their development). If the result of the factor analysis is not optimal for interpretation, the so-called rotation of factors is carried out, aiming to attach all originally dispersed variables to one factor. There are two different groups of rotation – orthogonal rotation assumes that factors will be independent (will not correlate), and oblique rotation does not assume that factors will correlate (Field, 2005). The orthogonal rotation group includes varimax, quartimax and equamax rotations; the most used is varimax rotation as unlike quartimax rotation, it does not tend to create one general factor (equamax rotation is then their combination).

Rotation (Table 6) contributes to confirming if few factors do collect. The process of rotation allows minimizing the multicollinearity across variables, aiming to select the variables that reveal a high loading on each factor and contributing to a better fit of model. For proceeding to rotation we use the method of Varimax that excludes correlation across factors. The table below displays the rotated factor loadings. Based on the results of rotation of factors we can label components for both monitored regions as per factor loading. As the first factor significantly correlates with most variables that are considered as positive collaboration of local officials with local inhabitants while emphasis is placed on their involvement with subsequent impact on local development, we can call the first component “successful collaboration as part of strategic planning through a community method”, which is also confirmed by negative factor loading on the variable “necessary luxury”.

Table 6. Rotation Varimax Method for project impacts

		Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>					
		Component					
South Bohemia Region (SBR)	Zlín Region (ZR)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Facilitate a new activity (SBR)		<b>,824</b>	,199	-,072	,053	-,096	,069
Accomplish purpose (ZR)		<b>,854</b>	,233	,014	,054	,264	
Improve equipment (SBR)		<b>,678</b>	,046	,162	,055	,043	,272
Met expectations of residents (ZR)		<b>,750</b>	,517	,084	,051	,154	
Improve the education (SBR)		<b>,678</b>	,192	,014	-,334	,056	-,120
Some counterproductive results (ZR)		<b>-,738</b>	-,336	-,150	-,032	-,221	
Improve cohesion among residents (SBR)		<b>,637</b>	,099	,174	-,232	,443	,072
Emphasis on requirements of residents (ZR)		<b>,700</b>	,159	,396	-,114	,329	
Brought new services (ZR and SBR)		<b>,621</b>	,226	,220	,200	,046	-,276
		<b>,687</b>	,211	,137	,399	,002	
Improve quality of life (SBR)		<b>,581</b>	,162	,282	,233	,000	,404
Superfluous luxury (ZR)		<b>-,679</b>	-,576	-,020	-,031	-,178	
Brought something new (SBR)		<b>,564</b>	,230	,405	,312	,161	-,128
The proposition of the project has been discussed with residents (ZR)		<b>,673</b>	,095	,443	-,121	,258	
Create new firms (SBR)		,078	<b>,903</b>	-,109	-,100	-,100	,100
Facilitate a new activity (ZR)		<b>,658</b>	,153	,331	,320	-,100	
Attract entrepreneurs (SBR)		,077	<b>,870</b>	-,167	-,081	-,030	,159
Brought something new (ZR)		<b>,603</b>	,406	,370	,311	,033	
Increase awareness of destination (SBR)		,324	<b>,624</b>	,038	,043	,346	-,001
Improve cohesion among residents (ZR)		,306	<b>,803</b>	,044	,229	,157	
Increase level of employment (SBR)		,431	<b>,602</b>	,098	-,158	,057	,050
Improve quality of life (ZR)		,341	<b>,752</b>	,027	-,013	,322	
Increase attendance (SBR)		,257	<b>,580</b>	,098	,247	,281	,061
Motivate to other projects in nearest localities (ZR)		,283	<b>,638</b>	,464	-,031	-,131	
Met expectations of residents (SBR)		,149	,031	<b>,753</b>	,176	-,064	,332
Motivate to other projects in residence (ZR)		,491	<b>,638</b>	,092	,035	-,290	
Superfluous luxury (SBR)		,099	-,087	<b>-,719</b>	,352	-,236	,156
Increase attendance (ZR)		,091	,071	<b>,879</b>	,182	-,021	
Some counterproductive results (SBR)		-,265	,077	<b>-,699</b>	,015	,223	,054
Increase awareness of destination (ZR)		,228	,153	<b>,849</b>	,138	,193	
Accomplish purpose (SBR)		,126	-,265	<b>,693</b>	,148	,238	,187
Improve the education (ZR)		,141	,230	<b>,643</b>	,190	,578	
The proposition of the project has been discussed with residents (SBR)		,033	-,073	-,083	<b>,865</b>	,083	,003
Improve infrastructure (ZR)		,311	-,270	<b>,620</b>	,433	,009	
Emphasis on requirements of residents (SBR)		-,035	-,012	,123	<b>,809</b>	,117	-,050
Create new firms (ZR)		,022	-,142	,044	<b>,922</b>	-,031	
Motivate to other projects in nearest localities (SBR)		-,080	,170	-,046	,047	<b>,836</b>	-,061
Increase level of employment (ZR)		,090	,356	,306	<b>,702</b>	,191	
Motivate to other projects in residence (SBR)		,195	-,073	,108	,264	<b>,722</b>	,205
Attract entrepreneurs (ZR)		,085	,217	,368	<b>,500</b>	-,044	
Improve infrastructure (SBR)		-,097	,166	,151	-,022	-,021	<b>,736</b>
Improve equipment (ZR)		,121	-,015	,046	-,006	<b>,765</b>	
Improve appearance of destination (SBR)		,398	,139	-,087	-,095	,337	<b>,631</b>
Improve appearance of destination (ZR)		<b>,514</b>	,206	,095	,023	,717	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

(Source: Authors)

The second factor (less significant) can be defined as the factor of satisfaction of local population, which is evident from fulfilled expectations of local communities resulting from the monitoring of the impacts of implemented project in both regions. The third factor fully defines “infrastructure improvement” except for the South Bohemia Region. The fourth factor can be described as “development of activities of the business environment”. The fifth factor significantly correlates with motivational variables where particularly motivations to implement other projects were monitored in the observed locality or surrounding municipalities and we can also observe correlation within a variable of the impact on basic amenities of a municipality, so this factor may be called “motivation to implement other projects with an impact on basic amenities of the monitored locality”. The last factor refers only to the South Bohemia Region and correlates most with variables to improve infrastructure and appearance of observed localities, which can be summarized into one specific “improved appearance and accessibility of a locality”.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The aim of this paper was to examine perceptions of the inhabitants in two selected regions in the Czech Republic and share the impact of development projects implemented with a substantial financial support from ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) in the programming period of 2007-2013 (with implementation till 2015). The examined projects focused on the impact of projects from the priority axis of tourism, where the main goal was to *make regions attractive for the purposes of tourism through the development of infrastructure, services and promotion as the aim of the tourism priority axis* and where all allocated funds from ERDF amounted to 127 m € (Ministry of Regional Development, 2017). The paper, therefore, aims to answer a question whether implemented projects and invested funds make the regions more attractive and how their impact has been perceived by local population. From the point of view of impacts, we can state that in both regions the biggest impact was achieved in “accomplish purpose” and “brought something new”, followed by “met expectations of residents” and also, to a lesser effect, the impact was seen in “improve equipment”. On the other hand, the least impact was detected in “create new firms” and “attract entrepreneurs”.

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