

# The Beginnings of Regional Policy in the Czech Republic

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December 2001, December 2006

## Introduction

One activity of the EastWest Institute Prague and the Center for Community Work (hereafter CpKP) was a research project NGOs and the Decision-making Process in Regional Development in the year 2000. It was the next activity of these institutions oriented at two neglected issues of Czech society: public administration reform and regional policy. An aim of the project was to draw public's attention to them and encourage different actors to discuss these two problems; a way of their solution and the solution itself will influence social and economic situation of the country. The text introduced here was developed for the most part in relation to the mentioned project during 2000 and 2001. Some parts were already published<sup>1</sup> but the text as a whole was not. A charting the events of 90's that led to the specific solution of those problems how we know it now in 2006, presents a missed link in a chain of works dealing with the same theme.<sup>2</sup> The text was adjusted and departed into the chapters that follow events on regional scene.

1. Regional Issues prior to the Passage of the Constitutional Law Establishing the Higher Territorial Self-Administrative Units in the autumn 1997
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The text is classified as belonging to the project The Challenge of Socio-Economic Cohesion in the Enlarged European Union (SOCCOH). It serves as source information to regional policy of the CR.

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<sup>1</sup> Vajdová, Z. 2001. „Krajské volby v roce 2000.“ SoÚ,edice *Data Fakta*, <http://datafakta.soc.cas.cz>;  
Vajdova, Z. (ed.) 2001. *Volby do zastupitelstva Ústeckého kraje - 2000*. Ústi n.L., FSE UJEP, 167 str. ISBN 80-7044-381-2;

Vajdová, Z. 2001. „Birth of Ustí Region in November 2000: General Regional Context and Local Political Scene.“ In Šašek, M. (editor): *Regional Interests in the Ústí nad Labem Region and their Holders*. Ústi nad Labem, FSE UJEP. ISBN 80-7044-382-0.

<sup>2</sup> F.e. the project NGOs and Regional Development, contractor CpKP; it was an analysis of cooperation of the NGOs and public administration during the regional development documents preparation and the other documents relevant to the EU; field work June 2003, author Gabal, Analysis & Consulting.

## **1. Regional Issues prior to the Passage of the Constitutional Law Establishing the Higher Territorial Self-Administrative Units in the autumn 1997**

The higher territorial self-administrative units (hereafter VUSC) were established by an act of Parliament in the number of 14 regions, including the capital city of Prague. Each region is composed of several existing districts. The vote took place on October 23, 1997 in the Chamber of Deputies, and very shortly thereafter, on December 3, in the Senate. The consensual opinion of the parliamentary debate regarding the bill, which occurred in the second half of 1997, is that the most controversial issue connected with the bill was not the ultimate number of regions to be established, but the degree of decision-making to be devolved to the self-administrations in the territories.<sup>3</sup> The vote in fact determined to what degree the government powers and resources should be decentralized, and to what degree there should be a strong central government.<sup>4</sup> The arguments that were voiced in the debate were either in favor of the bill justifying it as a step, towards fulfillment of the Constitution, which presupposes such regional arrangement, or favored postponement of or withdrawal of the reform. Interestingly, no political party deputies prevailed in one or the other opinion group. Only the heads of districts for the most part argued in favor of the postponement of the Act on Regions.<sup>5</sup> And yet, it took five years since the adoption of the Constitution, which enacted the regions. Why did it take so long? What was the role of the Parliament, the government, the local administration and the public in that regard?

Admittedly, the Czech Republic government has for five years shown little or no interest in establishing the regions, despite the fact that such was one of the objectives of the program statement of the government in 1992, and similarly in 1996?<sup>6</sup> What does our claim that the government shows no interest in a particular matter mean? For instance, that the number of documents drafted or filed in connection with such a matter is limited, or that there are no such documents. A limited number of documents mean that there are fewer documents in comparison with those produced by other players, such as deputies, the president and all those who may propose bills to the Parliament. Taking a close look at the list of legislative bills, pertaining to the establishment of self-administration in the regions, presented to the Chamber of Deputies between 1993 and 1997<sup>7</sup>, one may conclude that a greater number of such proposals was filed in 1994. These include a total of five proposals by the government and five by individual deputies. The first government bill was submitted in January 1994, and is an outline of underlying principles for the constitutional law on regions, whereas the last two proposals by the government, submitted in September 1994, were a draft of the constitutional law on the jurisdiction of the regions, and the government plan of the public administration reform. In 1993 and again in 1995, one proposal by a member of the Parliament was submitted. Thereafter, all activities ceased in both the government and the Parliament until June 1997, when the debate on establishment of regions was reopened. Two proposals by deputies to enact the regions preceded a proposal submitted by the government, and were followed by another proposal by deputies in July. The government proposal was eventually approved.

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<sup>3</sup> Michal Prokop in the Chamber of Deputies during the second reading of the bill.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Hampl during the expert seminar on the Act on Regions, November 20, 1997 in the Senate.

<sup>5</sup> Heads of the district offices during the expert seminar in the Senate.

<sup>6</sup> According to Josef Ježek, deputy until 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Background study for National Forum on Regional Self-Administration in the Czech Republic, 31. 3. – 1. 4. 1999, published by EWI, Prague.

However, regardless of the quality of the government bills, they certainly were not fewer than proposals by the deputies. Of the total number of bills submitted by the government for instance in 1994, the bills on public administration reform represent only a fraction. That is, however, of no significance for the present study. The number of such bills alone does not indicate that the government (i.e. the cabinet of Prime Minister Klaus between 1992 and 1997 when the coalition disintegrated and the cabinet resigned) showed no interest in the issue of regional administration. The program statements of the government implies otherwise. The 1992 program statement of the new government includes as one of its tasks a „reform of the government administration and its decentralization“. The 1996 statement of the Klaus' cabinet lists among its priorities „optimization of the public administration“ by way of establishing regional self-administration „based on proportionate decentralization of decision-making, on respect to natural regional ties within the Czech state and on substantial reduction of red tape.“

Another indication of the lack of interest in the regional arrangement on the part of the government may be seen in the fact that the Office for Legislation and Public Administration was abolished in October 1996. The mission of the above Office was to propose a concept of the public administration reform and to carry it out. Since 1993, the Office produced 26 drafts of reform concept and proposed legislation. According to Olga Vidláková<sup>8</sup>, many of these documents were never reviewed by the cabinet. However, during those same years, the cabinet submitted 5 documents to the Parliament regarding the reform of the administration. Vidláková considers the abolishment of the Office to be unwise and justified by false arguments. (Although Olga Vidláková was the deputy director of the Office, her interpretation should not be regarded as biased). It was the Ministry of Justice which took over the legislative responsibility from the Office upon its abolishment. The responsibility for public administration was not passed upon any single ministry in view of the fact that the agenda was considered cross-ministerial. It was not until 1998 that the Ministry of Interior was charged with the responsibility over the public administration reform.

After the 1996 elections, the government headed by Václav Klaus was a coalition government. A member of the coalition was the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), a political party whose program was to reform the public administration and whose leader was the head of the Office for Legislation and Public Administration. Perhaps, it was just some members of the cabinet who demonstrated little or no interest in the public administration reform.

Given the above facts and circumstances, we may conclude that until 1997 there were no persuasive reasons for the government to pursue the reform. Moreover, with the 1996 general elections approaching, discussions and debates over controversial issues in both the cabinet and the Parliament were suspended, in particular where differences in opinions did not follow the borderline between parties. In mid-1997, the debate on regional governments resulted in a solution, whereby the powers and jurisdictions to be vested in the regional governments were no longer subject of the proposed constitutional law. All four bills provided merely for the establishment of the regions, whereas the powers and systems at the regional level remained open. In this way the government and the Parliament circumvented the key problem: what type of public administration system should function on the regional level, and which powers should be vested in the regional governments.

The opinions voiced in the Parliament regarding the establishment of regions continued to be very diverse since the adoption of the Czech Constitution by way of Act No.1/1993 Coll.: some parliamentarians opted for the highest possible number of regions to be created, some favored postponement of the whole process, and some even argued that the respective

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<sup>8</sup> Olga Vidláková: Public Administration Reform in the Czech Republic, 1990-1998.

provisions of the Constitution should be revoked. This diversity of views is apparent when we look at the minutes from debates held in the Parliament prior to the adoption of the Act on Regions in 1997. It seems that for quite a long time there was no single force on the Czech political scene, which would unify the Parliament and lead it to a consensus. The only political party, which prioritized the public administration reform and the establishment of the regions, was the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA). However, in the course of time and due to some compromising events, ODA disappeared from the political scene and later lost the support of the voters in the general elections in 1998. What caused the revived interest in the issue of regions in mid-1997? What new political agents came to play resulting in the consensus needed for the passage of the law? The answer may be found in the explanatory reports attached to the bills on establishment of regions (hereafter „bill“ or „Act“) in 1994, 1995 and 1997.

The first such document is the explanatory report to the government bill submitted to the Parliament in July of 1994. The report states as the main reason for the Act to be adopted the fact that it would become the chief legal instrument upon which *the continuation of the territorial administration reform* in the Czech Republic is conditional. According to the report, the reform had been launched in November 1989 by abolishing the system of so-called „national committees“, by introducing local self-administration and by establishing the district offices, as government bodies with general jurisdiction located in the districts of the Czech Republic. The reform is referred to in a similar manner in other government documents, and is deemed necessary due to the fact that the government committed itself to *the reform and decentralization of the administration* in its Program statement from 1992, and wishes to *endorse the fundamental principle of democracy* by „placing the decision-making rights and responsibilities close to the citizen“, which should be done through an appropriate system of territorial bodies of administration. No reference is made to the fact that the Constitution should be satisfied.

The second document is the explanatory report attached to the bill submitted by deputy Josef Ježek and others in October 1995. This report states as the chief reason for the adoption of the Act the fact that such Act is „essential for further progress in *the territorial administration reform*“. In addition, references are made to the fact that the Act would be a fulfillment of the *Constitution of the Czech Republic*.

It was thanks to the proposal of the deputy Dušan Kulka and others that the government reopened the issue of regions in June 1997. It may be assumed that the proposal was in fact initiated by the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA). At the first sight, it seems that the explanatory report did not offer anything new, same reasons were reiterated as in the two preceding proposals. The Act is an important precondition for the continuation of the *public administration reform*, which should allow for *decentralization of decision-making* in regional matters and for *restructuring of the system of administrative bodies*. As a result, red tape should be largely eliminated or limited. In addition, the *respective provisions of the Constitution of the Czech Republic would be thus implemented*. There seems to be no change in the rational or in the content of the reform, the only change is that of the term of reference. Instead of the „*territorial administration reform*“ of the explanatory reports of 1994 and 1995, we now hear about the „*public administration reform*“. This is an evidence to the fact that only during the course of time the parliamentarians, but not only they, began to understand what the notion of public administration means, what processes are involved when public administration reform and decentralization are referred to. Accustomed to the rule of the communist „national committees“, most of us forgot or never understood what self-administration means. Because the „national committees“ were „themselves bodies of the government power“, and the objective was to make sure „that they do not become mere local

representative bodies, dependent on the central government, but that they themselves become the central government."<sup>9</sup> The abolishment of the system of „national committees“ and establishment of the local administration, endowed with exclusive and assumed powers, was not only the first step towards the public administration reform, but also the first step towards the recognition what state administration is as opposed to local self-administration, and what these two components of the public administration represent and how they relate to one another. Mayors and local council-members elected in local elections in the autumn of 1990 were among the first to go through this recognition process. In their day-to-day practical experience they had to learn to distinguish between responsibilities for specific decisions: in case of their exclusive powers, they were only accountable to law, in case of assumed powers, they were accountable to the district office.

The next proposal was submitted in June of 1997 by the deputy Václav Grulich and others. The explanatory report states that the proposal was initiated by the deputies of the Social Democratic Party. The main reason is the *political necessity to carry out the Constitution*. The proponents further state that no other reasons needed to be mentioned as they are contained in the program statement of the government. The reference made to the „*political necessity*“ may be construed as a legitimate feeling of responsibility for the Constitution and a reminder of the same to the others. The purpose of the proposal is to „initiate practical legislative and other *activities of the respective government bodies to carry out the overall reform of the public administration*.“ It is to be noted that the proposal was submitted by then opposition Social Democratic Party, and that the term *public administration reform* already became commonplace.

All the explanatory reports have used the same rational and language over the course of several years. This is why one has to conclude that neither the government nor the deputies felt urged to move forward in the matter of establishment of the regions. Reasons underlying the necessity to adopt the Act, and derived from the core of the matter, were not strong enough to instigate activity. Fulfillment of the Constitution, creation of the conditions to facilitate the public administration reform and to decentralize the government power did not present strong enough incentive for the representatives of the central power to move to action and arrive at a consensus on the issue of the regions. It may be speculated that the legislators and the government felt bound by the Constitution only mildly, and that the paternalistic attitude prevailed which resulted in a lack of willingness to limit their powers on the central level. It was only the Social Democratic Party, which has demonstrated more respect for the Constitution and less paternalistic attitudes.

The last proposal to be discussed herein is a government bill submitted also in 1997. In addition to repeated references made to the Constitution, this proposal presents new rational, one that lies not in the actual substance of the matter, but is derived from the Czech Republic's relation to other countries: „In most European countries“ exists a multiple-tier system of „administrative, territorial self-governing bodies“. Though not explicitly said so, it is implied that the Czech Republic should adopt a similar system. To build such a system is conditional upon the Act on Regions. What purpose is that going to serve? „... it is of key importance *for our functioning in the Council of Europe, and in particular vis a vis the Czech Republic's accession to the European Charter of Local Self-Administration*. Equally important is *cooperation with self-governing bodies of the neighboring countries.....*“, which do not have their counterparts in the Czech Republic. Such language seems to indicate that the new activity has something to do with the process of accession to the European Union. It

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted from the address of comrade Dubský, Communist Party deputy, for the assembly of the national committees representatives held in Prague in September 1947.

seems that it was the „external“ reasons that made the government act. It also appears that the very same reasons made the parliamentarians debate the bill and pass it as a constitutional act. Pragmatic approach prevailed.

What role was played by the local governments and the public during this long process?

In the spring of 1997, only one-third of mayors considered the absence of directly-elected, self-administrative bodies standing in between the central government and the local administration a problem<sup>10</sup>, whereas 59% did not see that as a problem, and the remaining number did not know. As a result of closer scrutiny, it turned out that some common attitudes prevailed in the group of mayors who consider that absence problematic. These mayors would welcome potential mergers of smaller municipalities, would favor higher number of elected representatives in their municipality, did not consider political partisanship and right contacts at the central level important. In other words, they are prepared to cooperate in a larger group, prefer broader democratic control, and do not consider favoritism and partisanship desirable for the effective functioning of the local administration. Interestingly, such attitudes do not seem to be different by region, by size of the municipality or by size of the budget.

The Union of Cities and Municipalities has always acted as progressive force with respect to the issue of public administration reform. During the ten years of its existence, it won respect as a legitimate advocate of municipal interests and as a counterpart to the government administration. Its opinion was often sought when proposals were debated regarding the public administration reform. In the summer of 1997 when the activities towards the public administration reform revived, the Union took a very matter-of-fact position. Its recommendation was to set a deadline by which the district offices would cease to exist, and to see to a proper transfer of powers and responsibilities with underlying funds.

It is our belief that the public was inadequately informed about the public administration reform, and that the communication between the government and the Parliament on one hand and the public on the other was insufficient to win the support of the general public for the public administration reform. The general public view may be only grasped through public opinion polls. However, it is always an individual acting in the community of other people.

There was a lively public debate, i.e. debate in the media, on the issue of public administration, which took place shortly after 1989. The key issue was the arrangement on the central level (union, federation, confederation, Moravian land), but also autonomy of municipalities on the local level. Various representative studies conducted at that time indicated that people had little or no knowledge of the issue, and often supported two opinions, which contradicted one another. As far as local self-government is concerned, 67% of respondents supported it, not only in theory but in real activities. Autonomization of municipalities continued, and was completed by January 1, 1992, with the number of municipalities settling at 6 237 (formerly 4 120 in 1989). This number has changed only slightly ever since. The issue of the territorial arrangement of the government still continued to be important for 56% of citizens.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, 1993 was the last year in which such question was asked in research surveys. Thereafter, respondents were only asked their opinion regarding the importance of regions, and that was for the most part in public opinion polls rather than in scientific surveys. The fact, that the public administration reform's objective is to decentralize decision-making process and establish self-governing regions as a third tier between the central and the local administration, became lost on most of the public. The

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<sup>10</sup> According to the survey conducted among mayors from municipalities with over 2000 inhabitants in the spring of 1997. Vajdová, Z., 1999. Mayors in Cities and Municipalities in the 7th Year of Existence. Cahier du CEFRES, No. 16, Prague, pp. 31-46.

<sup>11</sup> Attitudes to Environment and Local Politics, 1993 survey, Sociological Institute.

reduced interest in territorial and administrative division was apparent. Prior to the split of the country in 1992, the issue of the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovak Republics personally affected each and every citizen though all consequences might not have been quite clear at the first sight. Therefore, the related issue of public administration arrangement was considered pressing by about 45% of the Czech citizens.<sup>12</sup> Until February 1997, this number dropped to 20%. In 1995, most respondents stated as a reason for the urgency of the problem the fact that „it needs to be taken care of, so that we are not kept from dealing with other issues“. After the Act on Regions was passed at the end of 1997, the Public Opinion Research Institute (IVVM) included in its regular poll the question, whether the new regions will be to the advantage or disadvantage of the average citizen. 62% of respondents were undecided on the issue. This indifferent attitude of the voters did not change: in the fall of 2000, an average of 33,6% of voters took part in the elections to the regional governments.

In addition to the „general public“, there is also the non-government sector to be considered an important player in the society, i.e. a group of non-government, non-profit organizations which are established on voluntary basis and are self-administrative and self-organizing. Whereas in democratic countries the non-government sector is diverse and rich, it is often suppressed or liquidated in authoritarian regimes. Since the early 1990's the non-government sector in the Czech Republic has developed under the influence of a mixture of traditions left behind by the alternating authoritarian and democratic regimes,<sup>13</sup> as well as under the influence of the European context to which Czech Republic became open. The relation between the government and the non-government sector has evolved as well from the negative perception in the early 1990's, resulting from the fact that the transformation of the society was considered to be mainly economic transformation, for which no NGO's are needed, to a more welcoming approach. The principle of partnership between the government and non-government sectors, which comes across as a matter-of fact in the EU documents, and the internal development within the non-government sector caused to government to take the NGO's seriously. Verbal support by the central government to the non-profit sector is one thing. However, it is for a fact that the government has for decades supported NGO's economically and that the practical cooperation between the government officials on the central, district or local level has been considered quite good.<sup>14</sup>

In 1996, the Center for Community Work (CpKP), was established as a civic association, with the mission to increase the interest of citizens in public affairs and decision-making, and enhance their feeling of responsibility for their community.<sup>15</sup> This is the kind of organization that helps convert the „general public“ into a civic society capable of taking part in public affairs not only at the time of elections.

The first condition for the continuation of the public administration reform was met – the territories of the regions were determined. What followed were negotiations about fiscal issues, jurisdictions and powers, staffing and buildings, but also about what offices and bodies will be elected and how. Regions were not welcomed with great enthusiasm, neither in the Parliament, nor by the local governments. Self-administration is not an automatic guarantee of democratic management of public affairs but is an essential precondition thereof. The higher territorial self-administrative units represent a hope that the democratic development in the country will be sustained and that the political elites will be cultivated to demonstrate democratic virtues.

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<sup>12</sup> This as well as other facts are taken over from the IVVM press releases from 1992-1997.

<sup>13</sup> Pavol Frič, 1999. Government and Non-government Sector, Cahier du CEFRES, No. 16, Prague, pp.47-58.

<sup>14</sup> See note 11.

<sup>15</sup> CpKP documents, [www.cpkp.cz](http://www.cpkp.cz)

## 2. Regional Context in the Years 1998 – 2000

After the emergency elections in the spring of 1998, the Czech Social Democratic Party formed the new cabinet. It declared joining of the European Union as its priority number one. At that time, the Czech Republic was one of the candidate countries, and serious negotiations began in the spring of 1998. It became apparent that the government will have to complete a number of tasks, which will be annually reviewed by the European Commission. The Czech Republic began to receive financial assistance from the EU as early as in the 1990, mainly through the Phare program through which 629,1 million Euro flowed into the country in the years 1990 – 1999. In addition to other projects, the Phare program became instrumental in development of civic society and in regional development. The Phare program assisted in drafting of EU-compatible principles of regional policies at the Ministry of Regional Development, supported preparation of the Czech Republic for structural funds, and helped in building of several Agencies for Regional Development. In 1999, EU provided additional 29,4 million Euro to fund the CBC, the cross-border cooperation program.<sup>16</sup> Both the Phare program and the CBC project continue in 2001. Other EU instruments of support to candidate countries include pre-accession partnerships and, since 2000, also pre-accession funds SAPARD and ISPA, and support to pilot operational programs.

The first three years following the adoption of the Act on Regions, were a period of apparent chaos at the regional level. Only with great difficulties one could establish what was going on and under what order. Regional Coordination Groups were established in the regions. As it turned out these groups were appointed by the Ministry of Regional Development (hereafter „MoRD“). As soon as the regions were approved by the Parliament with great hardship, the government approved another territorial division of the Czech Republic into larger units called NUTS2, each consisting of one to three regions. The Ministry of Regional Development created new bodies, so-called Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees, in connection with these territories. Both types of bodies, the Regional Coordination Groups for the regions and the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees for NUTS2, had their coordination centers at the central level: the National Coordination Group and the National Programming Committee and Monitoring Committee for Economic and Social Cohesion. The role of all these authorities was to carry out planning for the respective territory. Great efforts were invested into various planning documents. In addition and parallel to that, the Ministry of Interior drafted a public reform concept and time schedule, which documents were offered for discussion. With respect to regional governments, the Ministry of Interior documents addressed such issues as who will manage the regions and with what jurisdiction, i.e. what system of administration will exist at the regional level, in other words what will be the relation between the government administration and the self-government, how will the regional elections be organized and what powers will be vested in regional bodies. Only careful interpretation of these seemingly chaotic events and processes in the light of „pre-accession“ activities, i.e. activities connected with the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU, gives it some sense and order. In fact, there are two parallel processes: the territorial reform of public administration – the establishment of regions, and development of the Czech Republic’s regional policies.

### **2.1. Territorial Reform of Public Administration - Establishment of Regions**

As early as in March of 1998, the public administration reform agenda was moved to the Ministry of Interior by the then „administrative“ government headed by Josef Tošovský. After

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<sup>16</sup> Regular Report 1999 from the Commission on the CR, Progress Towards Accession.



the emergency elections in the spring of 1998, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) formed the new cabinet. In view of the fact that ČSSD deputies (Grulich and others) submitted to the Parliament one of the bills on the regional reform in the summer of 1997, the expectations were great. The program statement of the government once again listed the public administration reform among its priorities, which was, however, the case with all preceding cabinets. The concrete impulse came in the fall of 1998 with the creation of an institutional framework for the reform, i.e. with the appointment of deputy Minister of Interior responsible for the public administration reform.<sup>17</sup> Headed by Yvonna Strecková in the office of deputy minister, the Ministry of Interior produced a document called Proposal of the Public Administration Reform<sup>18</sup>. The document offered several scenarios for the relation between the central government and the regional self-administration, as well as a time-table. The scenario recommended for final adoption was the one based on separation of the central government and the self-administration, i.e. the so-called dual system of public administration.<sup>19</sup> The Proposal was put up for discussion and review, which in itself was seen as a new mode of behavior on the part of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>20</sup>

The documents were discussed in the respective committees of the Parliament, particularly by the Committee for Public Administration, Regional Development and Environment. In February of 1999, the government organized an expert seminar on the public administration reform. The Union of Cities and Municipalities met with the authors of the Proposal also in February 1999, and consequently discussed the Proposal within its Presidium and during its Congress held in April 1999. The issue most frequently discussed was the relation between the central government and the self-administration in the regions, i.e. what system of public administration the Czech Republic will opt for, to what degree the central government and the self-administration will be separate or connected in terms of organization. The East West Institute became involved in the discussion by organizing a series of workshops on regional self-administration at various places throughout the Czech Republic. The Center for Community Work, as a non-profit and non-government organization helped organize these workshops.<sup>21</sup> Attended by the representatives of local or municipal governments, business community and by non-government organization of various kinds, the workshops mostly focused on the issue of powers and jurisdiction the regions should be endowed with. A parallel discussion appeared in the press, namely in the specialized journal Public Administration and Modern Municipality, and included explanatory comments by the government officials, discussion pieces on behalf of the district offices,<sup>22</sup> municipalities and other involved parties. All this resulted in an unprecedented public discussion over a

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<sup>17</sup> Olga Vidláková, as quoted above.

<sup>18</sup> Proposal of the Public Administration Reform. Ministry of Interior, Public Administration Reform Division, January 1999

<sup>19</sup> Each existing public administration scheme follows one of the three existing models based on the the relation between the central government and the self-administration: 1. dual or separate model, whereby the administration is carried out by government offices and institutions which operate parallel to self-administration bodies in a given territory; this model exists for instance in Slovakia, 2. combined model, in which the self-administrative bodies carry out the functions of the central government in a given territory such as the cities and municipalities in the Czech lands, and 3. mixed model, whereby there are only government bodies on one level, and self-administration bodies on another level, or one of the two above mentioned patterns is used at one level and the other on another level. Leemans, A.,F., 1970. Changing Patterns of Local Government. The Hague, the Netherlands

<sup>20</sup> Y. Strecková, Municipality and Finance 1/1999, or in Public Administration'99 No. 12.

<sup>21</sup> This NGO was mentioned earlier. Established in 1996 with the objective to enhance transparent decision-making and access to information, this NGO has local offices in Western Bohemia, Central Moravia, Southern Bohemia and the Moravian-Selesian Region.

<sup>22</sup> Press analysis by Lenka Buščíková in: Background study for National Forum on Regional Self-Administration in the Czech Republic, 31. 3. – 1. 4. 1999, published by EWI, Prague.

document produced by the government. Deputy Minister of Interior Strecková responsible for the public administration reform was determined to adhere to the deadline included in the proposed time-table irrespective of the outcome of the discussion: i.e. to establish regions by January 1. 2001.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the Phare project funded some of the public administration reform work. Carried out by the National Institute for Education, many of the analytical studies resulted in the Proposed Strategy for Public Administration Reform in the Czech Republic,<sup>24</sup> published in November 1998.

The outcome of the 1999 public debate was a recommendation to the Ministry of Interior to develop the combined model for the Czech Republic, and to submit respective legislative bills to the Parliament. This was a whole package of laws related to the establishment of regions. Some of the bills were entirely new, some were just amendments to existing legislation. Various pieces of legislation covered either organizational or jurisdictional issues under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, or financial and property issues under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance.<sup>25</sup> The relevant bills were submitted to the Parliament for review in the fall of 1999. In November, they went through the first reading, and on March 8 and 9, 2000, they were enacted.

### **Elections to Regional Councils<sup>26</sup>**

On Sunday November 12, 2000, the first regional elections were held in the Czech Republic, thus completing the second phase of the territorial reform of the public administration – the establishment of regional representative bodies. In thirteen regions, whose territories and capital cities were set forth by the Constitutional Act No. 347/1997 Coll., the citizens elected regional councils. In the capital city of Prague, which is an independent region, the city council functions as the council for the region of Prague. The next elections will take place in Prague in 2002.

In the proportionate election system, 45, 55, or 65 council-members were elected depending on the size of the electorate in a given region. The mandates were distributed in a single scrutinium. Only political parties, movements and coalitions thereof could run in the elections. Like in the general elections and unlike in the local elections, the voters would choose a ballot of the political party and within that ballot give four preferential votes. Those parties, which gained a minimum of 5% of the valid votes, were included in the single scrutinium. Each mandate was defined for each candidate by the number of votes won by his or her party, by the place the candidate appeared on on the ballot, and by the number of preferential votes the candidate obtained; the preferential votes could change the place of the candidate on the ballot, provided the number of such votes was higher than 10% of the total of votes the candidate's party received.

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<sup>23</sup> Y. Strecková, in Public Administration '99 No. 12, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Proposed Strategy for Public Administration Reform in the Czech Republic. "Improving Czech Republic's Public Administration", Phare Project. NVE, October 1998

<sup>25</sup> Acts and their respective Parliament reporters:

- Act No. 128/2000 Coll., On municipalities, Tom Zajíček (ODS)

- Act No. 129/2000 Coll., On regions, Jiří Drda (ODS)

- Act No. 130/2000 Coll., On elections to regional councils, Miroslav Beneš (ODS)

- Act No. 131/2000 Coll., On the capital city of Prague, Tomáš Kvapil (KDU-ČSL)

- Act No. 147/2000 Coll., On district offices, Radko Martínek (ČSSD)

- Act No. 157/2000 Coll., On the transfer of some property, rights and liabilities from the holding of the Czech Republic to the holding of regions, Vlad. Doležal (ODS)

<sup>26</sup> Vajdová, Z. Regional Elections. Web site of the Sociological Institute, Data and Facts, February 2001.

A total of 41 parties ran in the elections (in average 11 – 14 in a region): 28 political parties or movements and 13 coalitions with a total of 7 760 candidates. 33,64 % of voters took part in the elections. In the outcome, the mandates were divided among 9 political parties and movements and 1 coalition. A total of 675 council-members in 13 regions were elected. Preferential votes made a change for only 8 candidates. The composition of regional councils may be interpreted from various points of view:

- a) from the point of view of social representativeness,
- b) from the point of view of previous experience in public administration,
- c) from the point of view of association with the given regions.

a) How is the demographic make-up of the country reflected in the composition of the regional councils? Are particular demographic groups, such as men and women and young and old, equally represented? *Among the candidates, there were 78% of men and 22% of women; in the councils, there are 86% of men and 14% of women*, making the ratio between men and women among the council-members less proportionate than that among the candidates. There are, however, significant regional differences. In the region of České Budějovice, there were 25% of female candidates, whereas in the Karlovy Vary region, there were only 17% of female candidates. Differences occur also in the percentage of women on the ballots and with actual mandates – mostly there is a drop between 50% and 65%; however, in Ostrava region the percentage remained the same: 20% of women among candidates and council-members. Representation of women ranges from 29% in the Pilsen region to 7% in the Zlín region.

*The average age of candidates was 46,9, ranging from 18 to 86 years of age. The average age of council-members is 47,1, ranging from 24 to 73 years of age.*

Again, regional differences may be observed.

As far as education or professions of council-members are concerned, the most successful were candidates with higher professional education, which may involve both secondary and college degrees. 85% of council-members fall into this category and are people in employment. 11% are business-owners and self-employed individuals. Regional differences occur in this regard as well, in particular in how the elections changed the representation of various occupations and educational levels among council-members as opposed to among candidates.

However, it has to be noted that the success of a particular subgroup in the elections – whether men or women, age groups or professions – was largely predetermined by the political parties, which formed the list of candidates on the ballots and their order.

b) How many candidates with previous experience in public administration were elected?

*Those who had previous experience in government administration were largely successful in the regional elections. 22% of candidates, who were mayors or heads of district offices and other functionaries, were elected, which means that 34% of new council-members have previous experience with public administration.*

An interesting perspective may be gained by looking at the number of such experienced candidates on the ballots of those parties, which succeeded in the elections, and how many of those candidates appeared on the first few places on the lists. The Coalition of Four and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) had on their ballots 52% of candidates with previous public administration experience, the Communist party (KSČM) had 33% and the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) had 16% of such candidates. The Coalition of Four ran a candidate with previous public administration experience as a number one in 11 regions, ODS in 7 regions, ČSSD in 6 regions. The Communists ran no such candidates as number one, only in 3

regions they had such candidates in the third position on the ballot. The Independent political movement ran in six regions with 38% of candidates from public administration, out of which they were number one in 3 regions; and the Independent Association, which ran in 3 regions, had 60% of candidates with previous public administration experience as number one in all three regions.

c) Out of the 41 entities, which ran candidates in the regional elections, 8 were regional parties. *There is a striking difference between the Moravian and the Czech regions: there were more regional parties in Moravia.* In all Moravian regions, the coalition of Moravian Democratic Party and the Movement for Self-Administration of Moravia and Silesia – Moravian National Unification (MDS a HSMS-MNS) put up their candidates, though they registered under different names: in the Jihlava region as Prosperity of the Highlands, in central Moravian regions as Moravian Coalition and in Ostrava region as Moravian-Silesian Coalition. However, the coalition won no seats in either of the regions. In addition to that, there was a political movement known as Non-Partisans for Moravia, which ran in the Brno region and gained one seat, the Independent Movement of Zlín, which ran in the Zlín region and gained a seat, and the New Chance of Olomouc movement, which ran in the Olomouc region and won no mandate.

The situation in the Czech lands was quite different. There are only two regions in which regional entities ran: the Alliance for Pardubice in Pardubice regions, which gained two seats, and three regional entities – Liberec Union for Sport and Health, Regional Democratic Party and Party of the Free North – in the Liberec region, which gained no mandates.

*The new identity of the regions is still very weak, perhaps stronger in the Moravian regions.*

**Regional Councils** (as well as boards and chief executive officers) – the key bodies for the decision-making in the region – have been elected. There are, in addition, other bodies that will be involved in the regional decision-making. The councils appoint **committees**<sup>27</sup>, as their initiation-making and controlling bodies, always chaired by member of the council. The boards appoint **commissions** as their initiation-making and advisory bodies. Because of the comprehensiveness of the regional development, particularly during the period of accession to the EU, it is expected that the committees and commissions will appoint ad hoc working groups to tackle particular problems. It is important that members of all these bodies are not appointed only from among the council-members. It is, however, up to the council and the board to choose the right mechanism for appointing the members of these advisory and control bodies. *Apparently an opportunity presents itself for the involvement of the non-government sector directly in the bodies of the regional administration.* Similar bodies newly exist on the local level pursuant to Act in Municipalities presenting an alike opportunity on the local level.

## 2.2. Developing Czech Republic Regional Policy

The European Union does not have its own regional policy but it supports regional policies of the member states through the structural funds. During the pre-accession period, the candidate country is entitled to so-called pre-accession help from the EU. The Czech Republic became a candidate country in 1997. For the Czech Republic to be eligible for pre-accession help from the EU as of 2000, and for programs SAPARD and ISPA in the years 2000-2006, it became necessary to develop *own regional policy, own planning and programming documents and to build institutional background for their preparation, implementation and control.* At the same time, it was necessary to include in these documents principles of regional policy which are

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<sup>27</sup> In compliance with the Act on Regions, the council always has to appoint a financial committee, a control committee and a committee for education and employment.

either general principles of law or common practice in the EU countries. These principles are that of subsidiarity, partnership, solidarity and additionality.<sup>28</sup> Under the auspices of the Ministry of Regional Development *works on the Czech regional policy* began in 1998. At that moment, there were two determining factors: there was a constitutional law which set the number of regions at 14, and the date for the elections into regional bodies was set for the end of the year 2000. It turned out that the sizes of the regions are too small with respect to eligibility for structural funds and that there are no regional bodies at that point which could produce the planning and programming documents compliant with the EU principles. Thus, the development of regional policy began to run on two tracks, and continued to do so until 2001:

- *A. Activities in connection with the Czech Republic own regional policy* (planning documents for CR) and
- *B. Activities in connection with eligibility for structural funds from EU in the year 2000 and thereafter* (planning documents for EU).

#### ***A. Czech Republic own regional policy and its institutional background***

Czech Republic regional policy principles were adopted by the government in early 1998 with the main objective to observe fundamental principles of the regional structural policy of the European Union. This document was, however, only of provisional nature. In 1999, works on the legislative bill began with the objective to regulate the regional policy. The bill was enacted as Act On Support of Regional Development in 2000, taking effect as of January 1, 2001. At the same time the need to draft strategic and programming documents arose. These documents included the **Strategy of Regional Development of the Czech Republic**, drafting of which was coordinated and methodologically lead by the **National Coordination Group**, appointed by the Ministry of Regional Development.

At the initiation of the Ministry of Regional Development, the **Regional Coordination Groups** were established in 1998 for each respective region in compliance with the Act on Regions. *These groups temporarily substituted the regional governments.*<sup>29</sup> Under the principle of partnership, various entities were to be invited to delegate representatives into the Regional Coordination Groups. Members of the groups, as well as members of related working groups, were nominated by the Ministry of Regional Development. The principle task of these groups, one for which they were indeed established, was to analyze the regional situation and propose a **Strategy of Regional Development**. Such strategies then served as a background and resource for the **Strategy of Regional Development of the Czech Republic**, which document is considered to be a foundation block of the regional policy concept in the Czech Republic. Each region proceeded somewhat differently in this context: not all the Regional Coordination Groups were formed at the same time, for instance the Jihlava region was the last one to establish the group, and they took a different pace in drafting their strategies. The composition of the Regional Coordination Groups also varied (representatives of district offices, business community, Agencies for Regional Development, Universities, NGOs).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> As noted above, the EU provided assistance to the MoRD in connection with ensuring compatibility with the EU legislation and common practice.

<sup>29</sup> In May-June, 1998, the MoRD issued instructions regarding the make-up of the Regional Coordination Groups. Most likely, these guidelines were passed down to district offices in regions and these offices proposed membership.

<sup>30</sup> Non-government sector was represented in the Regional Coordination Groups only scarcely. NGOs were involved only in the Ostrava, Olomouc and Pilsen working groups. In mid-1998, when the groups were formed, the district offices most likely did not know who to approach from among NGOs.

The Strategy of Regional Development of the Czech Republic was presented to the government of the Czech Republic in June 1999. The government acknowledged the document and asked for an upgraded version to be presented in June 2000. In July 2000, the cabinet approved the Strategy of Regional Development of the Czech Republic by resolution no.682. The Strategy is a medium-term program vision, formulating the government's policy of the regional development.

The Strategy became a starting point for another important document, the Program of Development of the Regions, which is defined as a strategic document „specifying strategic objectives and developmental activities of the regional development through concrete measures and projects, appointing their agents and setting forth the way of financing and implementation“.<sup>31</sup> In 2000 and until the regional governments are elected, these programs are drafted by Regional Coordination Groups.

### ***B. Creating conditions for eligibility for EU structural funds in the year 2000 and after***

Because of the size of the regions in the Czech Republic, talks very soon began about the NUTS2 regions. The NUTS2 regions are territorial units set for three particular purposes: they serve as regional units for EU statistics, they serve as comparative units for demographic, social and economic analyses, and finally they serve as units in the EU regional policies.

The European Union, specifically the Eurostat, was prepared to adopt as NUTS2 the eight regions, which existed in the Czech part of then Czechoslovakia since 1960. After the Act on Regions was adopted with 14 regions, it became necessary to design new regions NUTS2, following the Eurostat criteria. Eight territorial units were delineated and approved by the Czech government (resolution from 26. 10. 1998 no. 707) and the European Commission. Structural funds will be channeled to the Czech Republic exclusively through the NUTS2 regions.<sup>32</sup> Background documents for NUTS2 included the Regional and Sectoral Analysis of the Czech Republic drafted in 1998 and 1999, and the Economic Strategy for EU Accession. In addition to designing the NUTS2 regions, it was also necessary to build institutions responsible for drafting the program documents for the European Union. The chief document to serve as a tool for negotiating support from the EU structural funds was the **National Development Plan**.

**Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees (RSMC):** By resolution of the government dated 17.6.1998 no. 417 regarding the institutional framework for the Czech Republic participation in the EU structural funds the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees were established with respect to NUTS2. Members of the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees include representatives of all important regional players: local administration, government institutions operating at both central and regional levels, business community, educational institutions and the non-profit sector according to the partnership principle. The MoRD appointed members of the committees. Their task was to produce the **regional consultation documents** – for each NUTS2. These documents were supposed to follow the strategies of regional development already drafted by the Regional Coordination Groups in each region. In 1998, the central bodies were appointed: the **National Programming Committee for Economic and Social Cohesion (NPC-ESC)** and the **Monitoring Committee for Economic and Social Cohesion (MC-ESC)**.

In January 1999, the NPC-ESC approved the Methodology for Drafting the National Development Plan.

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<sup>31</sup> PRK Methodological Guidelines, Prague, February 2000, final version.

<sup>32</sup> In the terminology of Eurostat, NUTS1 are the countries, NUTS3 regions, NUTS4 districts and NUTS5 municipalities.

**Preparatory Committee:** As of February 1999, preparatory committees under the auspices of various ministries began to work on so called **sectoral consultation documents** for 7 particular sectors: human resources development (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports), industry (Ministry of Industry and Trade), transportation and telecommunications (Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications), environment (Ministry of Environment), multifunctional agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture), development of rural areas (MoRD), and tourism (MoRD)<sup>33</sup>.

**Implementing Team:** The tender for implementation of the National Development Plan was won by the consortium of the Prague School of Economics and Terplan. This team was responsible for developing the overlapping parts of the plan and for interconnection of the territorial and sectoral documents. On the basis of consultation documents for sectors – endorsed by respective ministers, and consultation documents of the regions – endorsed by the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees of respective NUTS2,<sup>34</sup> priorities were set in the comprehensive document *Proposed Sectoral and Regional Priorities of RDP for the Period of 2001-2006*. The proposal was debated at respective ministries and later by the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees. In June 1999, the National Programming Committee made a recommendation to the government to approve the proposal.

The resolution of the government of July 14, 1999 no.714 acknowledged:

- proposed sectoral documents drafted by preparatory committees of various ministries, and regional consultation documents drafted under the auspices of the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees appointed by the MoRD;
- proposed sectoral and regional priorities, i.e. 5 priority sectoral axes + axis of the specific priorities of individual NUTS2: Development of the economic base and its competitiveness, Development of the technical infrastructure, Human resources development, Protection and improvement of the environment, Development of rural areas and multifunctional agriculture, Specific priorities of NUTS2 regions;
- proposed pilot operational programs: regional operational programs (ROP) for NUTS2 North-West, Ostrava region and Central Moravia, and sectoral operational programs (SOP) on „competitiveness“ and „human resources“.

The government requested that the upgraded version of the National Development Plan is drafted by September 15, 1999. The English version of the National Development Plan was submitted to the European Commission. The next version incorporates the comments of the Commission, and reflects new versions of the regional planning documents for which it served as a background in its first version. National Development Plan becomes the cornerstone document for the **regional operational programs (ROP)** and **sectoral operational programs (SOP)**, which also reflect the Plan of Development of Regions. The final version of the National Development Plan is expected by June 30, 2002.

In the second half of 1999, a tender was organized for the „*Environmental Impact Assessment of the National Development Plan*“ study. The contract was awarded to the consortium of the Regional Environmental Center and the Academy of Science of the CR, and the consortium produced a document of the same title.

### 3. Regional Scene – Recent Developments – Year 2001

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<sup>33</sup> According to Mgr. Tomáš Nejdil (<http://WWW.mmr.cz/cz/rdp/priprava.html>, downloaded 26.4.2000) “In August (1999) the public debate over the sectoral and regional documents took place, with the objective to identify and remove conflicts which would prevent review from the perspective of environmental impact”

<sup>34</sup> As noted by René Wokoun, the guarantor of the NDP on behalf of the implementing team, in VS'99 č.36.

In the course of the year 2001, the regions were busy securing their material and technical base: building, communication networks and personnel. After a conflict with the Ministry of Interior regarding the computer equipment early in the year, the chief executive officers established the Association of Regions. At the present time, each region operates its own web site, though at a different level of detail and with different content. All regional councils founded the mandatory committees, some regions established additional committees, such as the Moravian-Silesian Region (7 committees), and the South-Moravian Region (9 commissions established by the board). Furthermore, four regions applied for the change of name and these changes were approved: South-Bohemian for České Budějovice region, South-Moravian for the Brno region, Vysočina for the Jihlava region and Moravian-Silesian for the Ostrava region. Some municipalities or micro-regions, which had previously expressed discontent with their affiliation with a particular region, asked to be moved to another region. The Act no. 248/2000 Coll., On Support of Regional Development, is in effect since 1.1.2001, defining the NUTS2 regions as „**regions of cohesion**” and setting forth their bodies:

**Regional Board:** operates in the region in compliance with the rules on assumed jurisdiction; the ten members of the board in each region are elected by the councils from among its members. In the event the NUTS2 region is equal to one single region, then the council of that region serves also as a board. This mechanism in effect means that those representatives, who were already elected, will be also members of these boards.<sup>35</sup> The regional board appoints the **Regional Development Committee**, comprised of representatives of the regions, municipalities, administrative bodies, business community, trade union, NGOs and others. (see Section 17(2) of the above Act, compliance with the partnership principle). Yet another opportunity for the non-profit sector: *NGOs may aspire to direct participation in the bodies of the regions of cohesion.*

The Ministry of Regional Development is in the process of drafting the bylaws of the regional boards, and the bylaws are in the review process. All documents referred to above, including the Regional Development Strategy, the Strategy of Development of Regions and the Program of Development of Regions, the National Development Plan, the Regional Operational Programs and Sectoral Operational Programs, claim that they were „drafted in broad cooperation of public, interest and non-profit organizations, business and professional associations and other organizations“ to quote once again René Wokoun (Wokoun - annex VS'99 č.36). At the end of his article, Wokoun reiterates: “The broad partnership in which the documents were drafted, and the extensive consultation process between ministries, their regional offices, cities and municipalities, district offices, labor offices, universities, agencies, economic and social partners and the general public, which took place on the Internet, need to be stressed.”

## **4. Non-government and non-profit organizations and the regional development**

### **4.1. Involvement of the NGOs in the regional decision-making from the historic perspective**

The non-profit sector came to realize the importance of the regional development very early on. The non-profit sector conference of local, regional and community groups (OKAMRK) was founded in 1998, as an open platform for networking and exchange of information among non-profit organizations. The Center for Community Work (CpKP) initiated foundation of other organizations involved in regional development. The „NGO and regional development“

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<sup>35</sup> According to the Ústí daily, the first meeting of the Regional Board for the North-West region of cohesion was held.



working groups began to meet in 1999 in two formations: the working group for regional development attached to the Government Council for Non-Profit and Non-Government Sector, and the OKAMRK working group specifically concerned with the role of NGO in the regional development. Regular working meetings of these groups helped to overcome the initial confrontational relation between the public administration and the NGO, and lead to open communication and cooperation. Appointment of NGO representatives into the central and regional bodies responsible for developing the planning documents for regions and NUTS2 was a practical outcome. However, talking about „broad partnership in drafting documents“ sounds a bit far fetched.

For instance, on January 14, 1999 a working seminar titled „Involvement of NGOs in developing and assessing the regional development strategies in the Czech Republic“ was held under the auspices of the Senate Committee for Regional Development, Public Administration and the Environment. The seminar was organized by the Center for Community Work with the objective to initiate discussion about current events, particularly in connection with drafting the regional development strategies by the Regional Coordination Groups. In order for the NGOs to „penetrate“ the Regional Coordination Groups, it was deemed necessary to obtain pertinent information on the progress of regional development strategies, to agree on the method of such „penetration“, to draft situational analysis of the individual regions, and to define their global objectives. Such were the conclusions of the seminar. NGOs arrived at an agreement that they would approach the MoRD and the Government Council for Non-Profit and Non-Government Sector, which institutions should help them become actively involved in the Regional Coordination Groups. The situation as at March 1999 was as follows:

- former Jihlava region: the Regional Coordination Group was established as the last one in the CR; it is composed of representatives of government and business sectors; number of members is strictly limited, and there is no willingness to cooperate with other entities;
- Central-Bohemian region: focuses on environmental issues only, no involvement of NGOs;
- former Ostrava region: the Regional Coordination Group has 8 working groups, at least 15 NGO representatives are involved, met with the mayor, promoted in the media;
- Prague: mayor was approached by NGOs, no response;
- Liberec region: focus on economy and business, no NGO involvement;
- Olomouc region: 3 people from NGOs in the Regional Coordination Group, 2 are members of the advisory group to the head of the district office;
- Budějovice region: 7 working groups of the Regional Coordination Group, heads of districts were invited, not NGOs; NGOs plan to contact the Group directly and become involved in drafting of the regional development strategy;
- Plzeň region: 2 NGO people represented in the Regional Coordination Group.

In the year 2001, the regional councils and board and their committees, commissions and working groups have become instrumental in the regional decision-making. At the end of 2001, the situation varied region by region with respect to NGO involvement. Some regions use strictly political criteria, and NGO members could be nominated into these bodies only by political parties or as their members. In some regions, one seat was reserved for the non-profit sector. The variety played out particularly in the Zlín region where the council appointed a committee for non-profit sector, chaired by an NGO representative, and in the Olomouc region where there are as many as 14 NGO representatives, i.e. 1-3 people in each of the advisory or initiation-making bodies. One apparent reason for the absence of NGO people from these bodies is lack of finances; the work is paid for. Other reasons include the

continuing lack of trust between the public administration and the NGO's, and the fact that the regional governments do not know who to approach for NGO nominations.

In connection with the attempts of NGOs to be involved in the regional decision-making, particular defects of the non-profit sector came into the foreground: lack of networking. Through a simple poll, opinions on that and other issues from among NGO representatives were sought

#### **4.2. May-June 2001 poll: participation of NGOs in regional planning**

The poll included five open-ended factual questions and a request for the respondent to provide personal data about himself or herself and about the NGO, again in an open-ended format. Thus, respondents had a variety of ways in which to answer: by one word, one sentence or a whole paragraph, and all these forms were used. Individual responses are quoted without giving the name of the respondent, as the poll was conceived as anonymous. However, many respondents gave their names, anyway.

Two ways of form distribution were used. First, OKAMRK participants at a meeting in Pilsen on May 19, were asked to fill out the form. Out of 80 participants, 11 responded. Second, thanks to Mr. Balek from CpKP Píerov, the form was distributed via email on the conference "regions" in June. 17 respondents sent their answers back within a week. The following remarks are a result of the analysis of a total of 28 questionnaires.

The form started with a question „Should NGOs create coalitions or associations or other such formations, and/or should they elect their representation?“ **In general and abridged terms, the answer to the above question was: „yes, but...“**

The „yes“ was voiced with great determination and supported by the following reasons: non-profit sector will be stronger, more effective, more popular, it will enhance distribution of information and resources, improve discussion and simplify communication within and without. Only few respondents mentioned the argument which seems apparent in the context of the present study and from the outside point of view: by forming coalitions and associations „...NGOs may slowly, and not surely, obtain seats in the decision-making bodies“. It was also mentioned that „if there are 6 different coalitions in the region, it can hardly be expected that they will be taken into account as important players.“ Some speak directly about the requirements placed on NGOs by the „government and the foundations“, i.e. about those outside the non-profit sector, about the need to become more organized, and about the red tape. In summary: „The positives (of forming alliances) prevail over the negatives“. For some respondents, however, the negatives are so serious that their answer is „no, it may be for the good, but ...“.

The „but“ in most of these answers is an expression of the fear that larger, formalized and permanent structures would lead to uniformity, formalism, and are prone to bureaucracy, which in effect would suppress „the good virtues of the non-profit sector, i.e. independence, flexibility and variability“. Additionally, larger associations need a strong leader and there is a potential danger of abuse of the organization by that strong leader or by a small group of individuals who assume all the power, danger of manipulation. The so-called National Front of the previous regime is a good example of such abuse and manipulation.

However, the need for alliances is clear and pressing, whereas the potential dangers are understandable and justifiable. Majority of respondents have some, though partial idea how to oppose such dangers, whether by opting for a particular form of alliance or for particular terms and conditions of their work: a) association yes, representation no („the time is not ripe yet for a „code of conduct“ of such, say, national representation of the non-profit sector“), and only when purposeful; not

necessarily an entity with legal personality, a coalition may serve the purpose;  
b) association on the basis of a region, sector or discipline to organize joint events, to seek joint solutions;  
c) organizations should retain their autonomy; association, if any, should be open and free.

The following two quotes from the poll may serve as a good summary:  
„I believe there is no need for a uniform solution for all regions and for all areas of non-profit activities. Associating and networking should evolve naturally. The need and capacity to cooperate arises in the organization at a certain level of its development. Let coalitions of activities, disciplines or regions form, interconnect, cooperate and disintegrate.“ „... In the course of time, all NGOs will be interconnected through various national networks. This should happen on voluntary basis, and should be supported by information campaigns ...“

The word “cooperation” appears in many answers; cooperation is seen as a good precondition for forming associations, in addition to sufficient number of active organizations, mutual trust and availability of finances for operation of such associations. One respondent stresses the necessity of will to cooperate: „Institutionally dictated cooperation will only be formal...“

The last bit of information to be extracted from the answers to that one question is the awareness of the common interest the NGOs have. This is not only implied in the resolute „yes“. Having in mind hundreds of volunteers who focus on the particular mission of their NGO, the following opinion is fully understandable „... most NGO workers do not identify with the large world of the whole non-profit sector, and are not advocates of the larger interests of the sector, but advocates of the particular purpose, such as of the environmental education, for instance, or of anything else.”

The issue of forming associations and alliances „for the purpose of common objectives and interests at the nationwide level“ was surveyed by RANO poll in March 2001. Out of the 162 organizations, which took part in the survey, 91% said yes. Regional or sectoral association was the form most frequently proposed. Taking into account the intention of the Pilsen OKAMRK to establish a working group to form a non-profit sector association with nationwide scope, as well as the above results, it seems that the will to organize the sector is very strong. Moreover, the need to have one single partner on behalf of the non-profit sector has been voiced by the central and local public administration for quite some time. The rapid development on the regional scene over the last three years prevents for the time to play its positive role in the development of the non-profit sector and its relation to other players. Time is what is scarce. It may be substituted by an intensive debate and information campaign to create a general consensus on the type of non-profit sector association, its mission and roles. Carefully selected form of alliance is not a guarantee, only an opportunity that certain dangers will be avoided. After all, the desired balance between rigid organizational structure and flexibility and other virtues is not a permanent condition but an ideal for which one strives. On one hand, the iron-clad rule of oligarchy prevails (according to R. Michels, the powers in the society sooner or later concentrate in the hands of a small group of active individuals). Any attempts to circumvent this result as a fact in atomization of groups (in case of NGOs, each NGO works in and for itself and its beneficiaries without mutual exchange of information and cooperation). To strive for and to maintain the desired balance will be not only up to such association but also up to all its member NGOs.

Since 1998, when the works first began on the planning documents for regional development, the non-profit sector obtained extensive knowledge, through once own practical experience as well as by looking at similar processes in the European Union, of how to find ways of penetrating these processes. This is evidenced by the publication brought out by CpKP in Přerov under the title „Public Involvement in Regional Development Planning“, which

contains direct methodological recommendations. However, such generalized methodological guidelines lack the colorful personal experience, and do not reflect the variability of situations. In our poll, we also asked about personal experience of respondents with work on regional planning documents. The answers offer a deeper understanding of what was really going on, and are a wide range of experiences from which it is possible to learn. An important part of the question was phrased as follows: „how did you happen to be involved?“ We also asked whether and how involvement of the non-profit sector should be arranged for.

The earliest experiences thus described by our respondents go back to the work of the Regional Coordination Groups or the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees, i.e. bodies appointed by the MoRD in 1998 to draft the first strategic and planning documents for the regions. The regional councils, which would otherwise be charged with the planning, were not yet elected.

Only in a few instances, NGO members were directly members of these bodies, for the most part, they were involved in the working groups appointed by these bodies, or functioned as „external advisors from the non-profit sector.“ All those who took part in these groups received their mandate by being elected at the regional forums of the non-profit sector, mostly at its regional conferences, or by being approved after the fact. What such mandate really meant is, as it turns out, a matter for further discussion. At that time, those who received the mandate, understood it as the authority to gain and pass on information on ROPs, SOPs, PRKs and consultation documents, to interfere with the drafting of such documents to include in them principles of the area they represent, such as environment, social care, care for youth, public involvement in decision making, and to put into perspective the „narrow professionalism“ of those groups where only same types of experts are represented. As one of the respondents put it „In each of these groups, several people should be present whose professions and focus allow for an external look at the issue in question“

To be elected by the non-profit sector regional forum clearly was not enough for actual participation in the works. It was the other side, which decided who to invite. „Our experience has been horrendous in and out. We had to force ourselves to be involved in the works. They wanted to throw us out but finally let us in after we pointed out democracy as a principle. The first problem was to get information that such groups were being formed.“ Wherever people in the public administration endorse the principle of partnership, the inclusion of NGOs was smooth: „I was invited by the secretary of the group, the district office representative.“ „I became involved thanks to the chief of the district office and other contacts I had from the past.“ Some respondents were not able to specify how exactly they became involved in the drafting of the strategic documents. The mechanism of nominating and appointing members is not transparent. It was simple to find out that it is the minister for regional development who appoints members to the Regional Coordination Groups and the Regional Steering and Monitoring Committees. Apparently, there existed a general idea what positions or functions should be represented in the commissions and committees. The partnership principle was acknowledged as well. Should the non-profit sector be invited? There was the problem. Back in 1998, the non-profit sector was not what it is today, at that time it could not show the accomplishments which today make the sector a trustworthy and valuable partner in public affairs. It seems that **the key to successful partnership in regional development are „personal contacts from the past“ which help remove the lack of trust on behalf of the government officials to the non-profit sector, as well as lack of trust to „those functionaries“ on behalf of NGOs.**

The role of temporary bodies at the regional level has been completed. Councils have been elected and appoint their committees, whereas boards appoint their commissions. The regions of cohesion also have their boards, which in turn elect their committees. Each of these bodies,

whether in regions or in NUTS2, presents an opportunity for a representative of the non-government sector. In case of commissions and committees and their working groups, the participation of NGOs is based on two preconditions. On one hand, the individual representative has to have a clear mandate, possibly by being elected at the regional or sectoral conference; on the other hand, there has to be the invitation by the public administration extended to the non-profit sector. The question is whether such decisions should be left to the good and enlightened will of the public officials who are expected to adhere to the European as well as domestic documents that endorse the principle of partnership. There is an opinion that real representation of the non-profit sector in the regional bodies should be guaranteed through a statutory regulation that would „make the sector an official partner to the regions.“ On the other hand, others voice the opinion that this is a „natural process which requires some time“ or that „the informal cooperation has to prevail.“ In between these two extremes lie opinions, which make a compromise between one and the other. The following quote is illustrative: „In my opinion the good solution would be such that individual non-profit organizations strive for representation at and cooperation with the regional bodies. A regulation would be of no help. Unless it is a law, a regulation is understood to be a „recommendation“; moreover, the respective institutions would soon learn to circumvent it“. The outcomes of all the efforts are apparent one year after the regional elections: in many commissions and committees NGOs are indeed represented. A long-term experience from the non-profit sector teaches us that there exists something like a transfer of trustworthiness. The trust that is built on the local level is transposed to the regional level: „If NGOs have trust of and are accomplished in the eyes of mayors, they can succeed in developing projects and securing their interests at the regional level.“

A very uniform and strict opinion among the respondents prevails with respect to access to information. From among the information channels, great importance is given to Internet and Internet conferences, which should be attended by all partners. Equally important and expected as a must are responses and reactions of the institutions to comments submitted upon request.

How do respondents assess the practical experience they had with the work in regional bodies? As „invaluable“, especially because it helped to remove the lack of mutual trust. Two quotes illustrate: „The lesson I learnt is simple: one has to be equipped with great tolerance and patience to bureaucracy, and be cooperative.“ The second quote takes a broader perspective on the role of NGOs in the regions: „Though there exist dozens of NGOs in each region, only few of them are willing to take part in drafting the regional strategies; this is also because the process of drafting the regional and sectoral documents is non-transparent, complicated and exposed to a number of economic and political influences. The results are not always encouraging.“

The last question of the survey was about the role of the non-profit sector in the Czech society.

The role of the non-profit sector should be “the same as in the EU countries”, i.e. the non-profit sector should be regarded as a partner.

Most of the answers, however, were much broader than the one quoted above, and contained a whole range of views on a) position of the non-profit sector in the society, b) role of the non-profit sector vis-a-vis the citizens, and c) role of the non-profit sector vis-a-vis the state. The views on the non-profit sector in the society may be summarized as follows: NGOs are an inherent and natural component of the society taking up the space which is neither organized nor managed by the government or the self-administration. NGOs occupy that part of human lives which is not claimed by the public administration or by the intimate human unit, the

family. As institutions, NGOs are an equal partner to the public sector and business community.

As regards the role of the non-profit sector vis-a-vis the citizens, "NGOs enhance the civic consciousness, involve citizens in the public life, strengthen and further democracy, and, in the name of citizens, protect democracy", Though this language may sound quite general, behind it stand very specific activities of the NGO's. The third group of answers pertains to the role of the non-profit sector vis-a-vis the state. Most frequently, it is claimed that the NGOs provide services to the public that the government is unable to provide, or provide effectively. A view worth noting is a claim that NGOs play an integrating role in the society since they serve as a platform for building trust of the citizens.

The role of the non-profit sector is not set once and for good. It will go through changes along with the entire society. The current situation, however, is best illustrated by the following quote: "... its (the non-profit sector) role is the same as that of the other sectors. It should enhance variability of views, joy of life, and awaken the society sedated by the communist regime". More specifically, the role of the non-government sector is described as serving the interests of its members, improving the quality of life, cultivating the society, creating counterbalance to the official structures, and developing activities "which are best suited to be handled by citizens rather than by the government".

Respondents felt more at home answering the question about the role of the NGOs vis-a-vis the local administration in a village or city, because this is the natural territory for most of them. **NGOs should be an appreciated and supported partner to the local governments, closely cooperating with them on the issues of public interest.** NGOs should be able to win the necessary respect through their activities. Adequate support means funding by cities or regions, and access to public contracts. Most cities and municipalities have clearly defined funding and granting policies, regions are still to draft theirs. The cooperation between self-governments and the NGO's, most frequently built on informal relations among people who share common interest to serve best their community, becomes formalized and takes on a number of forms. One of those forms is membership of NGO representatives in the advisory and initiation-making bodies or in the ad hoc working groups, which are formed to tackle a particular problem of the community. The non-government sector is in this context viewed as a source of views and opinions, which go beyond the very narrow professional judgments, and also a source of motivated experts on particular issues who may otherwise not be available to the local government. Public discussions, round tables, meetings with council-members are considered useful formal activities, in addition to participation of NGO representatives at meetings of the council. In all these forms, NGOs:

- play a role of a mediator between the problems of the citizens and the plans of the self-government;
- play the role of a loyal opposition in constructive negotiations which precede the actual decision over a certain matter;
- activate people, instigate their interest in public matters, make them aware of the common concerns.

We also asked about the relation to political parties. In brief, the answers read: it should be a **relation based on independence and cooperation.** The respondents would repeatedly state that "political parties and NGOs should remain independent of one another as partners in the public debate, NGOs should not receive money from political parties, should not represent them in political campaigns, and should not run as their candidates in the elections". NGOs should be non-partisan, however, they possibly cannot be apolitical. As regards cooperation between political parties and NGOs, "NGOs should serve as a source of information for political parties on issues that are of concern to common people, should point out to them

issues of public interest, and help them include these topics in their political programs, and finally should check on how the promises are met." In general terms, "political parties and NGOs should work together to build and develop a democratic society". Such understanding of the mutual relation is also contained in the Brandys declaration (see Grantis 10/2001). Some respondents said that NGOs can be an alternative to political parties. Can they, indeed?

Recently, we have celebrated the anniversary of independent Czechoslovakia. One of the events of that time was the foundation of the Czechoslovak National Committee on July 13, 1918. The Committee was built on political parties, i.e. it was composed of political parties members selected by a pre-determined formula, i.e. the outcome of the elections in 1911. The role of this body was to prepare the country for the assumption of independence and power. As Ferdinand Peroutka wrote in the Building of the State: "... built on political parties, the National Committee was quite solidly founded.... This was the first time that parties were given full power, and it was declared that the nation was founded on parties, and later that the state was founded on the parties, and all that is done to benefit the parties is done to benefit the state." (Ferdinand Peroutka, Building of the State, Prague 1998, NLN, p.20). This view on political parties was later finessed, and the division of labor in the political system was further enhanced." Political parties compete for the power and control over the public matters. The NGO's, on the other hand, do not strive for either profit or power. However, NGOs create an environment in which political positions of the voters are formed. The citizen, whose vote the political parties seek, is not an abstract individual, but a concrete person in the midst of others, part of a group to which he or she is loyal, such as a sport club, theatre company, civic association. If a political party regards the non-government sector as redundant, it voluntarily gives up votes of a substantial and qualified part of the society.

NGOs will never be an alternative to political parties, or their opponent, but they will always be a source of greater support than that offered by an individual abstract citizen.

Finally, let us look at the views of the respondents regarding the satisfactory versus discouraging elements of the non-profit work.

"I like to do what I believe is right and needed; the lack of balance between means and ends is sometimes discouraging." "I find the fact that there is so much to do and so little time a bit stressful. "It is the sense of being useful and needed, the purposefulness of the work." "To serve and help people in need is motivating." Also, the flexibility of time schedule, opportunity to materialize one's own ideas, contacts with people of the same nature, „the sense of common objectives given the differences in views“ are encouraging.

Various questionnaires, regulations and other forms of bureaucracy, supposedly essential for the operation of the organization and required by the government, are referred to as „annoying“. As respondents have put it: „This is like fighting the windmills – politicians and institutions - from the unequal position NGOs have...“ But, as is the case anywhere else, every improvement has to be worked on with patience; obstacles, mistakes, ignorance and fatigue are part of normal life.“ „The fact that our organizations bring people together, motivate those who would otherwise be passive, give sense to many lives, is extremely encouraging.“ “Uncertain funding which prevents us from long-term projects or cross-border cooperation is discouraging.“ Moreover, one cannot make a living as a professional employee of an NGO.

Some aspects regarded as unsatisfactory stem from the non-government sector itself: „... inability of NGOs to unite in the matters of common interest, such as legislation, funding, etc.“ And also „conflicts with colleagues, jealousy of other NGOs.“ „I am upset by the fact that many people from the non-government sector cannot keep their word....“ Often it is just a „mere talk“. „I am depressed over the passive attitude of many NGO workers.“

Work in the non-government sector is time-consuming, financially unrewarding, under-esteemed, done by „only fools“. So why do people do it? The answer may be found in a story of one woman who founded a civic association „Help in Unemployment“. She insists that her life changed dramatically since then. She is able to utilize all her life positive and negative experiences in working for the organization. She says: „I love it. You have to love it when you want to work with people“

Let us give the last word to another respondent: „What I like about this work is to see people taking decisions about themselves into their hands. It upsets me when someone tries to take advantage of the fact that they may not always know who to go about it... I am happy when I can help someone succeed with his or her project.“

## 5. Chronology of administrative steps

Podzim 1997 - schválení ústavního zákona č.347/1997 Sb. o vytvoření vyšších územních samosprávných celků.

8. 4. 1998 usnesením vlády (č.235) schválený dokument Zásady regionální politiky vlády ČR. V tomto dokumentu je poprvé pojata oblast regionální politiky a regionálního rozvoje komplexně. Usnesení ukládá ministru pro místní rozvoj ve spolupráci s vybranými rezorty, přednosty OkÚ a primátory velkých měst předložit do 30.6. 1999 návrh Strategie regionálního rozvoje ČR.

11. 6. 1998 rozesílá MMR přednostům OkÚ v sídle kraje dopis obsahující organizační pokyny k zabezpečení přípravy Strategie („ OkÚ a výše zmíněná statutární města musí v dohodě s řadou dalších regionálních aktérů zabezpečit ...“). Dopis obsahuje pokyn k ustanovení Regionálních koordinačních skupin – RKS: „ Jednotlivé OkÚ , sdružení obcí a další regionální aktéři (v úrovni VÚSC) vytvoří RKS, která bude odpovídat za organizační a věcné zajištění prací spojených s přípravou strategie. Vytvoření skupiny nutno organizačně zajistit do konce července 1998. RKS musí sestávat ze zástupců:

- OkÚ (za každý jeden zástupce), případně i dalších zástupců státní správy v regionech (zejména Úřady práce);
- zástupců obcí a měst (sdružení měst a obcí, euroregiony-cca 1 zástupce za každý okres);
- podnikatelské sféry (HK, AK, sdružení podnikatelů, RPIC aj.);
- RRA (pokud byla v regionu ustavena);
- případně i ze zástupců dalších struktur v regionu (např. vysoké školy aj.).“

Dopis dále obsahuje pokyn o „výběru zhotovitele strategie“ (zakázku pak získal Wokoun), o ustavení Národní koordinační skupiny do konce srpna 1998; členy budou zástupci všech regionů (byli to pak předsedové RKS), zástupci vybraných rezortů, SMO, HK ČR, Parlamentu ČR.

17. 6. 1998 vláda rozhodla (usnesení č. 417) o ustavení Regionálních řídicích a monitorovacích a výborů pro úroveň NUTS II k zabezpečování institucionálního rámce účasti ČR na programech Strukturálních fondů EU.

26. 10. 1998 přijato v Usnesení vlády (č. 707) o vymezení jednotek NUTS II.

Leden 1999 Ministerstvo vnitra dalo k diskusi Návrh koncepce reformy veřejné správy. Zpracoval Úsek pro reformu veřejné správy MV.

11. 1. 1999 vláda uložila (usnesení ( č.40) - zpracování Národního rozvojového plánu na rok 2000 – 2006 a - zřízení Národního programového výboru pro oblast hospodářské a sociální soudržnosti = NPC-ESC, který má činnosti na NRP koordinovat a také



- zřízení Monitorovacího výboru pro oblast hospodářské a sociální soudržnosti = MC-ESC. Vypracování Národního rozvojového plánu je základní podmínkou pro získání předvstupní pomoci Evropské unie.

Květen 1999 Parlament ratifikoval Evropskou chartu místní samosprávy.

14. 7. 1999 vláda vzala na vědomí (usnesení č.713) návrh Strategie regionálního rozvoje ČR a uložila předložit upravenou verzi do 30. 6: 2000 Strategie regionálního rozvoje je základní koncepční dokument regionální politiky. Dokument má v tuto chvíli 5 svazků (zveřejněno na [www.mmr](http://www.mmr)) a je zde 14 Strategii rozvoje krajů, které byly zpracovány pod vedením Regionálních koordinačních skupin, byly metodicky a obsahově vedeny MMR jmenovanou Národní koordinační skupinou.

14. 7. 1999 vláda vzala na vědomí (usnesení č. 714) - návrh sektorových dokumentů, které byly zpracovány pod gescí Přípravných výborů několika ministerstev a regionálních konzultačních dokumentů, zpracovaných pod gescí Regionálních řídicích a monitorovacích výborů, jmenovaných MMR; - návrh sektorových a regionálních priorit (5 prioritních os sektorových + osa specifických priorit jednotlivých NUTS II); - návrh pilotních operačních programů (regionální operační programy pro NUTS II Severozápad, Ostravsko a Střední Morava, a sektorové operační programy „konkurenceschopnost“ a „lidské zdroje“, a - uložila zpracovat NRP do 15. 9. 1999.

26. 8. 1999 Národní programový výbor projednal 1. verzi NRP a doporučil předložit na jednání vlády v září 1999.

27. 10. 1999 vláda vzala na vědomí (usnesení č.1140) první verzi NRP a harmonogram přípravy konečného návrhu; - uložila zhodnocení sociálních a ekonomických dopadů NRP, vypracování finanční části NRP a - předložení konečného návrhu do 31. 12: 1999.

1. 1. 2000 začalo platit územní členění ČR na 13 + 1 kraje podle ústavního zákona č. 347/1997 Sb.

5. 1. 2000 vláda vzala na vědomí (usnesení č. 14) znění NRP a uložila - předat NRP Evropské komisi v angličtině - pokračovat v přípravě NRP podle výsledků posouzení vlivů NRP na životní prostředí a podle předběžného hodnocení a stanoviska EK.

Schválení zákona č.59/2000 Sb. O veřejné podpoře. Reguluje poskytování státních podpor, určuje, které státní podpory jsou přípustné a které nikoliv.

9. 3. 2000 byly schváleny zákony ustavující krajské zřízení.

29. 6. 2000 byl schválen zákon č. 248/2000 Sb. O podpoře regionálního rozvoje s účinností od 1. 1. 2001, definující NUTS II jako „region soudržnosti“.

12. 7. 2000 vláda schválila (usnesení č.682) Strategii regionálního rozvoje. Je považována za střednědobý programový dokument. Který formuluje přístup státu k podpoře regionálního rozvoje.

12. 11. 2000 se uskutečnily krajské volby podle zákona č. 130/2000 Sb. O volbách do zastupitelstev krajů.

18. – 21. 12. 2000 se uskutečnila první zasedání zastupitelstev krajů a byli zvoleni hejtmani.

14. 5. 2001 vláda bere na vědomí (usnesení č.470) aktualizované znění NRP a ukládá  
- jeho předání EK do 30. 6. 2001 se žádostí o stanovisko  
- dopracování NRP podle stanoviska EK a předložit vládě do 30. 6. 2002  
- vymezit obsah jednotlivých operačních programů a  
- předložit ho vládě do 31. 12. 2001.

7. 5. 2001 Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí rozeslalo dopis řadě institucí o přípravě Monitorovacího výboru programů rozvoje lidských zdrojů (sektorová priorita); součástí dopisu byl Statut výboru a Jednací řád. 24. 5. Měla být ustavující schůze tohoto výboru.

21. 5. 2001 první jednání vlády o dokumentu „Zpráva o přípravě a realizaci II. fáze reformy územní veřejné správy“ a uložila MV rozpracovat tři dokumenty.

25. 7. 2001 vláda schválila dokumenty v květnu uložené k vypracování:  
- „Věcné řešení návrhu sídel obcí s rozšířenou působností“  
- „Návrh věcného řešení přenosu působností okresních úřadů“  
- „Návrh transformace státních příspěvkových organizací a organizačních složek státu zřizovaných okresními úřady na příspěvkové organizace a organizační složky krajů a obcí“ (transformace má být realizována do 31. 12. 2002)

7. 11. 2001 vláda projednala soubor zákonů ke II. fázi územní reformy veřejné správy, spočívající ve zrušení okresních úřadů.