Abstract

The issue of rural areas in the Czech Republic concerns about 5,800 municipalities, what is 93 % of all municipalities in the CR. These municipalities cover more than three-quarters of the CR territory where live over 3 million inhabitants, more than one third of the total population of the CR. Although there is consensus that the countryside faces a lot of problems which affect the lives of many people on a large territory, the adequate attention to this topic is still not given by official authorities. This confirms the facts that the CR has not adopted a clear definition of rural areas yet and the rural policy is not a priority of programs of political parties.

But the urgency of solving problems in recent years stepped up. Quantity of scientific teams that focus on countryside problems increased. They are defined different typologies of rural areas, are seeking methods for dissolve disparities among different areas, there are efforts to measure the development potential of municipalities.

This work is in accordance with these initiatives and by mixed research methods defines Development Potential Index (DPI). The DPI consists from 10\(^1\) individual indicators. Verification of created index was done on data of 18 small villages located in three different regions of the Czech Republic, for which were made case studies in research design. The verification allows proclaim that DPI and the individual values of 10 separate indicators satisfactory describe the current status of communities in key areas for their development. Comparing individual municipalities according to the DPI can determine which community has bigger and which has lower development potential. Based on the values of the indicators it is possible to diversify specific policies to the specific communities. In one village it may be necessary to support social life, in the neighboring village of the same size it will be necessary to invest in infrastructure (public facilities), in the next village may be neccessary to help a mayor to expand his/her social network contacts.

The research mainly used the theory of social capital, which, together with empirical data helped to define five indicators within the DPI, which describe both individual and collective social capital and together form the Social Capital Index of municipality (SCI).

\(^1\) Some of these indicators are compound from several other indicators, so the index takes into account 19 indicators at all.