



HEALTHY CITIES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

INTERVIEW



An interview with chairman of Association of Secretaries of CZ Municipal Offices (ASMO) and secretary of the Municipal Office of the City of Děčín, Mr. Jaromír Zajíček

We hope for further future development of collaboration between “secretaries” and “Healthy Cities”

At a recent conference to quality in public administration you stated that development of collaboration with Ministry of Interior will be your priority as a chairman of ASMO. Can you tell us what this primarily consists in?

When I took up the function of the chairman in June 2007, I set myself several targets. One of them was just the extension of collaboration with Ministry of Interior. The main reason for this was that secretary is the key person in a local self-administration office who in a way guarantees the realisation of performance of transferred force into the area – he is a certain “extended arm” of state administration. The importance of secretary has further grown after a part of performed activities had passed from former district authorities to local administration. On the other hand it is important that central bodies know the problems faced by us on everyday basis and it is in this area that I see the important role of ASMO that unites approximately a half of secretaries in the republic. Most importantly, the results of effective collaboration should be in their final consequences felt by every citizen.

The Association of Secretaries collaborates with Healthy Cities in particular activities. Which ones do you consider most important and how do you view the further future collaboration?

In order that Healthy Cities and Municipalities were really healthy, we need a collaboration of all sectors that a given city (municipality) comprises of. I.e., in addition to self-administration and the public we also unsubstitutably need that of municipal office. ASMO as a professional association of office heads and activity of HCCZ have more in common than it might seem at first sight. We try to find common areas of interest and work at specific targets, as we share the belief that only a well managed office can facilitate quality development of municipalities. The current priority is seen in the area of implementation of modern management methods at offices. At the level of equal partners we have been preparing a project of systematic quality model implementation within the framework of the whole Czech Republic. We hope that towards the future the areas of mutual collaboration will develop to the benefit of Association of

Secretaries, Healthy Cities as well as in favour of public administration as a whole.

You are one of originators of benchmarking method implementation in the Czech and Moravian cities. What most significant changes were helped to launch by this comparative method in your City of Děčín?

When we “clawed our way” to the pilot project and found out what this method amounts to, I was personally enthused. After my entrance to the function of former District Office, now Municipal Office secretary, I found it very complicated to optimise the number of employees. Hiring some external company to perform personnel audit would have been a quick way, however, also a very expensive one, moreover with an uncertain outcome. I had many years of experience in organisation management, which is why we relied on our own powers and used methodological help provided within the pilot project. Through employment of benchmarking method we managed to slim the office by one third within two years – from 372 employees to 242, without suffering from any negative impacts on quality of work performed.

Completion on page 2.

TOPIC OF THE MONTH: “QUALITY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION”

The probability that there may meet two people who would completely agree upon the question of what a quality public administration looks like, is very low. While one may put emphasis on the quality of services provided, the other may find the availability of these services more important. The result would very probably contain a



certain mix of these qualities. Nevertheless, exactly this problem, i.e. what in fact defines the quality of public administration, has been employing experts and practitioners for over half a century. While in the beginning we mostly monitored quality in a sense of following procedures and legal standards, the later period was characteristic by its emphasis on efficiency, mostly as a result of adoption of large industrial enterprise models. Quality of public administration in the last decade has been evaluated mostly on the basis of its ability to meet the needs of its customers, citizens. Even in this respect of its development the public sector to a certain degree follows the private one, even though approaches in a number of countries vary. Regardless of what the approach of individual states used to be or what it is like currently, it is a fact that methods capable of measuring the efficiency, quality of processes and outputs at least to a certain degree reliably gradually find their way into the public administration and that of the Czech Republic is no exception. A number of experts however claim that concentration on provision of higher-quality services is not enough. Quality public administration must be also able to win the trust of its clients, communicate with them and convince them that their participation in administration of public affairs is important. In other words, not even the best public services can assure clean streets, unless people stop throwing rubbish wherever they feel like at the moment.

The approach of Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions to improvement of public administration quality therefore focuses not only on quality methods within an office as such but also on development of its ability to communicate with public regularly and on support of participative democracy, i.e. on citizens' active participation in public life.

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Completion from page 1.

Systematic approach in enforcement of quality in public administration has many characteristics in common with the Healthy City Project. This begs the question of when Děčín would become the Healthy City?

I had a chance to see the gradual growth of Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic during presentation of individual Healthy Cities at the last year's seminar held in city of Ústí nad Labem (HCCZ Summer School) that I attended. The City of Děčín already collaborates with the public in realisation of activities related to sustainable development, health and quality of life. There has been prepared a Community Plan of Děčín City Social Services for the period of 2006-2008, for which we have been awarded by the Ministry of Interior as an Organisation that Improves the Quality in Public Administration in 2007. I will leave the decision of whether Děčín would join the Healthy Cities up to elected representatives. Personally, I am convinced that both the city and municipal authorities already meet all the criteria and Děčín de facto already is a healthy city.

QUALITY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ITS FUTURE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

With the gradual development of quality methods in public administration there also take place a number of modifications and innovations that unify their implementation. The prizes of the Ministry of Interior will also undergo quite a significant change, as far as both their awarding and status are concerned. In general this should lead to a certain standardization and

gradual modification of evaluation criteria leading to higher level of quality.



MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Prizes for quality will be unified

Probably the greatest change within the framework of awarding municipalities and ministries for implementation of methods of increasing quality in public administration lies in the agreement between the Ministry of Interior and CZ Quality Council on the fact that the prize of the MoI will be connected to the National Quality Prize, which would replace the current so called Gold Prize. Conditions of prize awarding will also undergo changes. "As the ranks of those who implement the most widespread method CAF (Common Assessment Framework) have been growing, a change in evaluation scale towards stricter conditions has also taken place" as Martina Jalovecká of the department for regulation and quality in public administration reform of the MoI elaborates on the news. The **new status**, containing a number of minor or major modifications will be posted on the MoI website in the course of March 2008. Updated information is continuously published on website www.mvcr.cz/kvalita. "For instance there is another novelty that everyone who competes for a bronze for the CAF method will have to register in the EIPA institute international database that associates all realizers of this method," M. Jalovecká adds. Find more about EIPA at www.eipa.nl.

Unification of evaluators both for the prize awarded by the Ministry of Interior and for the National Quality Prize are another step on the way to a more objective and better-quality evaluation of CAF implementation. In practice this means that there will be a list of qualified CAF evaluators and their official database.

The ministry of Interior also decided that implementation of EFQM Excellence Model will no longer be awarded.

Quality implementation will have its own national conception and financial support

Methodical guidance and financing are important aspects of implementation of quality in public administration. Important innovations are being prepared in both cases by the Ministry of Interior. Preparation of a new project directly focused on implementation of quality methods in local self-administrations, of which the Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic will be an important partner, belongs among the fundamental innovations in this direction. "If this project proves useful, we intend to create a similar model also for state administration, which has been using methods of quality in a very limited scope" M. Jalovecká describes the outlook. A **conception of quality methods' implementation** that should be ready until the end of this year is being prepared in order to achieve an overall unification of quality methods' implementation in the Czech Republic. "The up-to-date development was quite uncoordinated and to a high degree dependent on the initiative of mayors or secretaries. For this reason, we would like to process a certain recommending framework in order to be able not only to monitor, but also direct this development at the national level" Jalovecká adds.

The **financial framework** for implementation of quality methods in cities and municipalities will consist of **Operational Programme "Human Resources and Employment"**, where almost 5 billion Crowns have been earmarked for quality in the period of 2007-2013. The financial resources will be available for drawing within the framework of **Integrated Operational Programme** – so called IOP.



The public will state their opinion also to preparation of governmental documents

The framework for involvement of the public was provided in 2007 by the governmentally approved **"Proposition of procedure for implementation of methodology for public involvement in governmental documents' preparation"**. Along with this proposition, three state institutions have been also selected and methodology started to be verified at these – the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finances and Czech Statistical Office. Public discussions have already been held to all included documents (MoI, MoF, CSO) within



the framework of state pilot project for involvement of the public. There is another public discussion, dedicated to the MoF material, to be held approximately in April to May. *"The MoI nevertheless also tries to convince other offices that plan a public discussion to participate in testing of public involvement methodology. The MoI prepared an opinion poll for the public as such. The results will be released soon"*

M. Jalovecká outlines the nearest development. The objective is to obtain feedback from the public to the whole project and use the opinion poll information for governmental report (its submission has been imposed with deadline until the end of 2008) in order to achieve maximum evaluation objectivity possible. For instance the material "National Action Plan of Fight against Terrorism" has been tested in practice within the framework of public discussion. *"The material has been completed on the basis of observations received from the part of the public and other departments and submitted to the government who approved it at its meeting of 11th February 2008"* as Jalovecká gives a particular example.

All information about the pilot project is available at www.mvcr.cz/konzultace.

National quality conference for the fourth time

The national conferences of quality in public administration are held regularly each year within the agenda of the Ministry of Interior and in collaboration with Czech Council for Quality. The choice this time fell to the Karlovarský Region and its capital. The objective of the national conference is to organise meetings of experts from the area of quality in public administration, to share information and best practices of quality methods' implementation. Awarding of Prizes of the Ministry of Interior for Quality and Innovations in Public Administration is also an important part of the conference.



In addition to the chance of obtaining new information and share one's experience, the conference is an opportunity to award self-administrations for application of quality methods in their offices. The Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions won **17 awards** in the course of 2007, mostly for application of CAF Method and Local Agenda 21 (more in balancing HCCZ Bulletin 2008). The meaning of awarding was also to identify the situation in individual cities, municipalities and regions in the field of implementation of quality methods and also create healthy competitive environment in the public sector, where competition as such is missing. The motivation of those who have not dealt with quality methods at their offices and have the

opportunity to find a good and experienced partner for the first steps is another important aspect. *"For this reason we are pleased that year's conference has been attended by a record-breaking number of interested parties and that it has been successful in all aspects – we have positive feedback from all sides,"* says Martina Jalovecká. *"For the first time have we managed to secure the participation of central state administration representatives with interesting presentations, appraised as the best by the participants. The presence of the Minister of Interior Mr. Langer, who handed over the awards personally, also added prestige to the whole event,"* adds Martina Jalovecká.

An interesting collection of conference contributions and other inspiring information can be found at www.mvcr.cz/kvalita.

The fifth conference on quality in public administration will be held in Olomouc at the beginning of 2009.

Quality will be also presented in Paris

The annual international conference dedicated to quality in public administration, where every EU member country can present two best-practice examples, will be this year held in attendance of Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic. The Healthy Cities along with the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs have been chosen by the Ministry of Interior committee to represent the Czech Republic at this prestigious event. In Paris, HCCZ will introduce its activities and services for members, thematically focused on quality in cities and offices, will also introduce an information system for quality and transparent city management – DataPlan and will mention the successful applications of this tool of its members.



The opening word of the conference in Carlsbad has been presented by the deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Zdeněk Zajíček.

BEST PRACTICE

Quality of public administration is not only about good work within the office

Improvement of quality in public administration at the local level is often wrongly interpreted as implementation of quality methods in a municipal office in order to increase its efficiency. However, the quality of municipal authorities' work is also defined by their ability to communicate with the public and in creating space for active collaboration in municipal development, be it in a form of discussion or involvement in particular activities or projects.

The question "Would you like the city to become a better place for life?" could be heard by the inhabitants of a whole range of Healthy Cities and Municipalities. This question is actually traditional for the regular annual public meetings within the framework of Healthy City/Municipality Forum, as a part of discussion on actual issues related to life in a given place. These annual events are, however, also held in some cities on the occasion of particular projects such as the case is in the Healthy City of **Chrudim**. For instance, in the course of this year's February there were three planning meetings dedicated to the subject "Hockeyball playground on U Valchy Street" or to the subject "The future appearance of rest area in the Pod Požární Zbrojnicí housing estate". The results from the very first February meeting dedicated to the subject of "**Transportation, capacity and parking in Slovenská and Slezská Streets**" have already been known: some streets need to become one-way, other will remain two-way, the road signs indicating no parking will need to be renewed and many others. Similar round tables and discussions on particular plans with the public have been regularly taking place in all Healthy Cities.



The photograph depicts the atmosphere from the planning meeting with citizens, focused on the issue of transportation and parking in Slovenská and Slezská Streets in Chrudim.

The Healthy City of **Prostějov** also has long-term experience in implementation of quality methods at the municipal office. The CAF System or mutual comparison within the framework of benchmarking method have been implemented in Prostějov as soon as in 2005. Both these methods are connected to the process of Local Agenda 21 and Healthy City Project and effective utilisation of results of individual procedures therefore takes place. In 2006-7, Prostějov advanced to the "C" category within the framework of LA21 and this year it will make an attempt at the highest category attained in the Czech Republic so far, the category "B".

Not only Prostějov, but also tens of other Healthy Municipalities have been ranked and proceed actively within the framework of **Local Agenda 21 Database**. Since 2006, LA21 has been one of the official public administration quality methods focused primarily on the "outer" quality of office work and its collaboration with local partners and the public. The higher level of LA21 realisation even consists of one hundred percent of Healthy Cities. More at www.nszm.cz/ma21.

Involvement of the young generation is another great chapter of improving public administration quality. Children's and students' parliaments and boards of representatives are an integral part of Healthy Cities. The Healthy Prague District of **Libuš and Písnice** can boast one of last successes. The reason for this is that the Safe Routes to School project has been realised by the local pupils' board of representatives with an assistance of local office and earned respect

not only from the part of city district representatives with whom they discussed a number of issues in transportation, but also from its coevals and other colleagues at the all-Prague seminar dedicated to this issue. Communication in Libuš and Písnice also takes place by means of multimedia MMS service. If you spot broken benches or litter in the street, you can use your cell phone or digital camera and send the photo to local district office. At the office, a specific person takes charge of the problem, posts the photo on the website and adds a commentary on how and when the problem would be dealt with.



Prostějov was one of Healthy Cities awarded for its progress within LA21 at this year's National Quality in Public Administration Conference held in Carlsbad.

The Healthy City of **Třebíč** has already become a traditional and exemplary place that actively collaborates with students' parliament on preparation of various campaigns and realisation of interesting events. Even this year there is going to take place an inspiring national meeting of students' and children's' parliaments, specifically on May 23.

Other examples of best practice from the field of public administration, including photographs and associated documentation can be found well arranged in **BestPractice Database**. For instance, only in the "public administration" category you can find inspiration in two tens of examples from thirteen cities and regions at www.dobrapraxe.cz/verejna_sprava.

Database
BEST PRACTICE

Examples of best practice from other areas can be found
in Database BestPractice – <http://www.good-practice.eu>.

Interesting information about the partners and financial resources related to the issue of public administration quality and best practice of Healthy Cities, Municipalities and Regions in this field can be also found in last year's issue of February HCCZ Bulletin at the address <http://www.nszm.cz/zprav>.

RECAP

The right way to European subsidies

The ways of obtaining needed finances for development projects focused on the fields of transportation, living environment and energetics, have been the main subjects of national conference held by the Economia publishing house in collaboration with HCCZ. An event titled **“The Right Way to European Subsidies for Cities and Municipalities (transportation, environment, energetics)”** took place in the CZ Autoclub area in Prague on 19.2. Actual information to financing has been presented by representatives of central institutions such as the Ministry of Finances or Local Development or CZ State Environmental Fund. The present have been familiarised with practical experience from the field of Regional Operational Programmes by the representatives of Regional NUTS II Moravia-Silesia Council and by others. Specific procedures of HCCZ and Healthy Cities have been presented by the **HCCZ chairman**, Mr. Petr Řezníček, project manager of **Vsetín**, Mr. Tomáš Pifka, head of **Hodonín’s** municipal development department, Mr. Jaroslav Malát and vice-mayor of **Letovice**, Mr. Bohuslav Kuda.

More than 80 conference attendants thus had an opportunity to receive many pieces of information and stimuli for preparation of their own projects for EU funds.

The conference media partners were as follows: **Hospodářské noviny, měsíčník Dotace and Moderní obec.**

Find out more information at www.nszm.cz/economia.



The vice-mayor of Letovice, Mr. Bohuslav Kuda, was one of speakers and presented the municipal procedure in the field of renewable resources' utilisation and their economy.

All website references are generally in Czech language.

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