



DRIVE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

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Annotation

Sustainable development will only occur if society also follows Sustainable Land Use, Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) practices. Delivering of the urban or rural development agenda is substantially within the hands of local communities, whose pro-activity, leadership and decision making abilities can make a lots of difference. But to be able to deliver SUD or SRD communities have to acquire many new skills. Such new skills are needed especially on the self governing side of the local authorities. However in the Czech Republic, there is no qualification or continuous education demands on this part of the local administration. Missing skills are then one of the main barriers for the local authorities to be able to develop workable SUD and SRD strategies or to invoke and lead an IUR approaches.

Small and medium local authorities therefore need help with their SUD or SDR skills. This can be done in several ways:

- *by providing freely relevant information to all who need to know (web source on SUD and SDR)*
- *by publicizing example of best practices (web source and other forms of publicity)*
- *by direct training and coaching of selected groups (local authorities, NNOs, consultants, est...)*
- *by aiding consultants and trainers to offer a direct help to local authorities (national/regional programs)*
- *direct help to small authorities by regional or district development agencies*

Presently in the Czech Republic there is no SUD dedicated web source, very little training is offered for the relevant SUD or leadership skills and little multidisciplinary orientated literature is accessible to this user's group s. The SUD support and initiatives are slow being considered on the national, sectoral and institutional levels, as well as on the local authorities or their representing organization level. But despite all of these difficulties, there are examples of local excellence, where even a small forgotten community succeeds against all the odds.

Keywords

*Sustainable development, local
authorities' development skills*

1. A renaissance of the Urban Agenda

Within the EU, there is a marked renaissance of the Urban Development and the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) agenda over the last three years. Sustainable urban environment is drawing a special attention in number of EU policy documents and papers, as towns and cities are, where over 70% of the EU population lives. It is also the highly urbanized environments that produce valuable synergies, innovations, networks and economies that drive the EU competitiveness. But not all urban development occurs in highly urbanized locations. In the Czech Republic, there are number of medium and smaller size communities UUR Brno (2005) and majority Czech Regions are by the EU standards described as rural regions. These communities also need to stride for SUD or for the Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). German presidency further emphasizes the importance of the SUD in its Leipzig Charta draws onto previous EU urban initiatives such as the Bristol Accord 2005 UUR

Brno(2006) or the Urban Acquits from Rotterdam 2004. It was the Bristol Accord that has identified the need though out the EU for improvements to local authorities' development and SUD skills.

In the new members' states the development of a coherent urban policy was suspended for more then a decade. This was a partly due to their EU accession process and partly due to the countries own political reasons. The accession process has not required a land use or an urban chapter or to be included in the accession talks. This is because land use and urban issues have fallen not under the EU but under the national, regional and local government's responsibilities. Potential new members' states attention was therefore very strongly drawn mainly on fulfillment of their other 30 chapters, which were a condition of the EU membership and which have incorporated all the other EU regulations into the national law.

The EU pre-accession and even post accession funding generally only financed the areas, which were related or important for the accession discussions, and later to the Objective 1 priorities. In the past (2003-2006) run of Structural funding (SF) Objective 1 had a very little urban dimension and its emphases were orientated mainly onto environment and infrastruccion

improvements. Consequently, the new members' state cities have experienced an impaired access to gaining urban skills as well as to the international exchange of urban knowledge. One must however admit that this was not their only barrier. Substantial language skills deficiencies still exists at the local authority level of the new members' communities. This prevents the new members' communities benefiting from current EU urban initiatives as well as from accessing the web based information sources. But sometimes reasons preventing local authorities to achieve appropriate SUD/SRD skills lay also in their own states omissions. For example Czech Republic is not a member of the EUKN or INTA and it actually does not have an urban development orientated institution which would for example push for such a membership or to develop country suitable knowledge resource. Such luck of country suitable institutional setup (public or private) then hinders the transfer of best practices and also of the relevant urban skills and the development uptake. It also impairs harnessing and sharing of stakeholders' experiences and contributions. All this then hinders building up, delivering and communicating a wider urban know-how though out the country.

BOX 1

An institutional leadership - From not knowing to focusing on land recycling (Czech republic 2006) - Project "Brownfields 3000"

Prepared from an information provided by the CzechInvest, www.czechinvest.org

This example illustrates how helpful is to have an institution (even a wrongly focused institution) to deliver an agenda. In absence of any other suitable institution the CzechInvest, whose remit is so far limited only to an industrial and services investment support is taking a lead on supporting recycling of an already urbanized land. This example also shows how a support for brownfields reuse was won in the Czech Republic. It proves, that identifying the issue and placing a political order, supported with a little funding gets things done. Well, gets them eventually done Jackson, J., Garb, Y.(2001). Similar political and an institutional support, but underpinned by a broad coalition and consensus of local and regional authorities needs also to happen when promoting SUD/SRD and delivering the missing sustainable development skills.

In the Czech Republic several brownfields reuse projects were financed from the PHARE funding Bergatt Jackson, J., Hermann, ,G (2007). The beneficiary to this aid was not an urban orientated institution (as such an institution still does not exists) but mostly it was an investment promoting agency CzechInvest, whose sole emphases were on reuse of industrial properties for new industrial or services uses. This is perhaps why in the Czech Republic it took more than 6 years, since a full realization of an unsustainable land use practices to any focused action, which would enhance general brownfields reuse. After the analyses of only recently gathered brownfields data many assumptions about the Czech brownfields were diametrically changed. This data is shoving substantial brownfields problems especially in small communities, where there is no market. Also the origin of these brownfields is predominantly non industrial. But the national systems and also various SF programs are mainly orientated onto development and not as much onto a sustainable development or on long term mitigatory measures.

In the summer 2005 the Czech government was actively preparing for the next wave of the structural funding and had requested number of policy documents and number of strategies J Bergatt Jackson, J., Hermann,G (2007), one of them was also the Brownfields Strategy. The Brownfields Strategy preparation was supposed to be coordinated and delivered by the Ministry of Industry and was delayed for various reasons. Finally in 2006 the CzechInvest (the Ministry of Industry development agency) was appointed to prepare and deliver a nationally supported brownfields reuse action. Project „Brownfields 3000“ developed in a response to an inventorying study of brownfields, which was carried out by the CzechInvest in 2006. This study have provided data on 3096 locations covering an area of 11 060ha, with a buildup area of 22 609m². But surveyed were only sites above 2ha or 500m² of building space. Smaller brownfield Votoček, J.(2006) (cc another 6-10 000 Parsons Brinckerhoff (2004),) remained unidentified. The enclosed diagrams illustrate these findings.

Figure 1 Division of the 3096 brownfields by the size of community

51% communities up to 2000 inhabitnats,27% communities 2000-10000 inhabitants, 13% communities 10000-50000 inhabitants, 9% communities above 50000 inhabitants

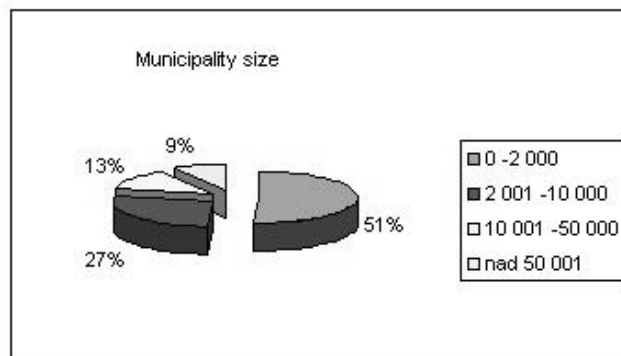


Figure 2 Division of the 3000 brownfields by the ownership

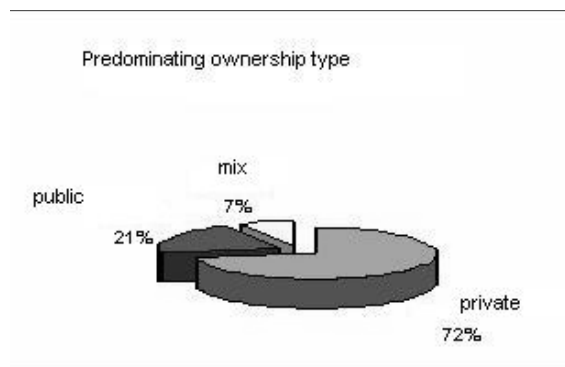
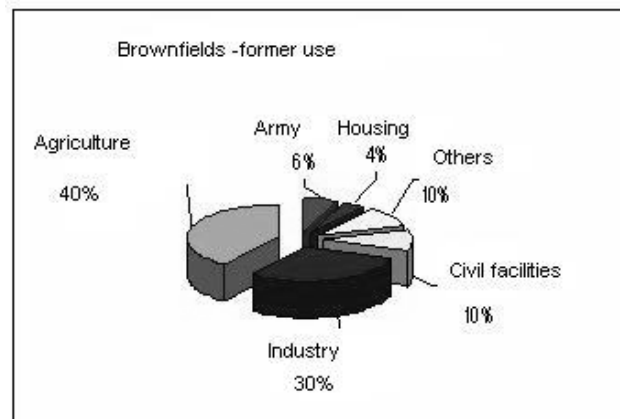


Figure 3 Division of the 3096 brownfields by its use



Based on these findings following goals were set for the project Brownfields 3000:

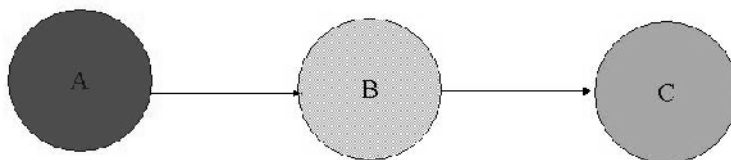
- to guarantee a supply of realizable projects,
- to guarantee public co-funding for projects
- to initiate suitable amends to legal framework,
- to initiate and assist preparation of realizable projects.

The outcome of project Brownfields 3000 should be the Czech Strategy for regeneration of brownfields and setting up an implementation system that would enable its deliverance.

Step A – Present situation- 3 000 brownfields

Step B –Year 2013 revitalized 25 % from these brownfields

Step C –Year 2025, revitalized maximum of brownfields



Strategy Mod I - Metod how to get there:

- systematic support for revitalization of a larger number of brownfields.
- support to socioeconomic development of most effected regions,
- retaining the cultural, historical, urban and social values of these sites,
- make brownfields more attractive to investors then greenfields,
- realize functional communication platform for supporting brownfields regeneration.

2. Present situation in new members' states

For the reasons described in the previous paragraph, in the new members' states the urban agenda and SUD are still not in the centre of national policies, as the local development and also the SUD are considered to be a local issue. That is despite that in the Czech Republic since 2004 exist a Strategy for Sustainable development and from 2006 a Spatial Strategy and a Regional Development Strategy (both the latter reflect horizontal theme of sustainable

development), there is yet not a "real" political will or commitment to it¹. And when any agenda does not have a sufficient political support it usually follows, that the funding which it needs, is also lacking. This then is placing further limitation on

¹ In the Czech Republic the sustainable development agenda is supported mainly by the NSZM (The National Union of Healthy Towns, an NGO initiated under the WHO Healthy Cities project). Members' communities are those, who have benefited by transfer of some or SUD skills (for example strategic planning and aspects of financial management). But majority of Czech communities are not members.

the willingness of various stakeholders to look for workable SUD solutions on a national or on a local level. A long absence of an urban agenda from the national policy of new members' states also paid other tolls. One of them is for example the void of suitable and modern SUD skills. The other is that its absence has prevented a creation of modern urban tools, which are usually vested in national or regional programs or reflected in countries legal frameworks. It also hindered a development of suitable institutional and educational formats and consulting skills. This all have left the new members' states local authorities to be the sole and unaided holder of the "urban development baby". With a limited dowry of grants or tools, and a minimal or no support, courses, books, local web sources. Also and with a limited or none urban development experience!

3. Aiding the SUD skills

In the new members' countries the development of new urban skills and know-how therefore needs an urgent help and a suitable assistance. Such help ought to address two levels.

The national level needs to be assisted in order to produce skills that will create workable tools and develop suitable legal and institutional frameworks. At this level, the language barriers are lower and it is therefore possible to access international sources, share international experience and best practice examples. At the local level all support to local authorities has to be in their local language and supported by local language resources (webs, books, courses est.). Any support however should be structured in such a way that it promotes partnership formats of working between the national, regional and local levels and also between the various stakeholders. Program that does just that in the Czech Republic is a local adaptation of the EU LEADER program. The Czech LEADER type initiative will run already for its third period (ISPA funding was the first). To cope with the language barrier, the local version of the program is run in a local language and only with local partners. For the period 2007-2013 the Czech LEADER type initiative will be operated from the Operational Program Agriculture, financed by the EAFRD fund

BOX 2

Program LEADER - how to "force" a partnership by a suitable program

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/pdf/library/methodology/139_en.pdf

Program Objectives

The new initiative will complement the mainstream programmes by promoting integrated schemes conceived and implemented by active partnerships operating at the local level. The aim of Leader+ is to encourage and help rural actors to think about the longer-term potential of their area. It seeks to encourage the implementation of integrated, high-quality, original strategies for sustainable development designed to encourage experimenting with new ways of:

- *enhancing the natural and cultural heritage,*
- *reinforcing the economic environment, in order to contribute to job creation,*
- *improving the organisational abilities of their community.*

Cooperation in the broad sense of the term will be a fundamental component of Leader+. Cooperation must be created within rural areas, between such areas in the same Member State, between rural areas in several Member States and even beyond if necessary. As a result, Leader+ will continue its role as a laboratory which aims to encourage the emergence and testing of new approaches to integrated and sustainable development that will influence, complete and/or reinforce rural development policy in the Community. Member States are asked to participate in this experimentation effort when presenting their proposals. These new rural development models will be exploited and disseminated through a major networking exercise.

Actions

Leader+ will be structured around three actions:

action 1: *support for integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature based on the bottom-up approach and horizontal partnerships,*

action 2: support for interterritorial and transnational cooperation,

action 3: the networking of all rural areas in the Community, whether or not beneficiaries under Leader+, and all rural development actors.

Beneficiaries

Financial assistance under Leader+ will be granted to groups of partners known as local action groups. (LAGs). The local action groups will draw up development strategies and be responsible for their implementation. Local action groups must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socioeconomic sectors in the territory concerned. At the decision-making level the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50 % of the local partnership. The members of a LAG must show that they are able to devise and implement a development strategy for the territory together. The relevance and effectiveness of the partnership is to be assessed in terms of the transparency and clarity in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities. The capacity of the partners to carry out the tasks assigned to them, and the effectiveness of the operational and decision making arrangements must be guaranteed.

The members of the LAG shall be locally based and must:

- *either, select an administrative and financial leader with the ability to administer public funds who will be responsible for the satisfactory operation of the partnership,*
- *or, come together in a legally-constituted common structure, the formal constitution of which guarantees the satisfactory operation of the partnership and the ability to administer public funds.*

4. Braking the barriers

As a rule until today, local authorities in the new members' states do not have a web source on SUD or other know-how in their own language available to them. There is certainly none in the Czech Republic or in Slovakia. Local educational systems so far have not offered products and courses that would enhance the local authorities' skills in urban development, not to say in SUD/SRD. This is also due to the fact, that the modern SUD/SRD skills are highly multidisciplinary and highly cross-professional and that the cross subject teaching does not have a large

tradition in the new members countries. For example in Prague this sustainable urban development know-how sits in 3 separate Universities. And it was only this academic year that these Universities are experimenting with a cooperation on cross subject courses. But suitable forms of urban development skills are also rare in the local consulting market. This is because for more than a decade there was a very limited call for such skills and services from any of local authorities. Local authorities often believe (and their countries' laws are usually keeping them in that believe) that "planning" is all they have to do to achieve development!

BOX 3

Powers and skills of Czech local authorities

In the Czech Republic local² and regional authorities carry out their activities under two different sets of powers. The first are their "own legal powers", which are guaranteed by the law³. The second are those powers, which were delegated to them by the state⁴. The Czech

² There are over 6000 self governing local authorities in the Czech Republic and their size vary from 1.2 million to as low as 100 inhabitants.

state had delegated to the local and regional authorities a number of powers mainly to deliver the state administrative functions directly to its citizens. State also provided a civil service law, which regulates the employment of staff engaged to deliver services delegated to the local authorities by the state⁵. These employees have to obtain appropriate qualifications and they do have to be updating them with further professional development programs. Employers have to provide a time and funds to these employees to keep up their education and know-how. The pre-accession funding was used to prepare basic certified educational packages⁶ and these are now being updated and delivered often by the private providers.

On the other hand employees and elected representatives who engage in the activities carried out under the local authorities “own legal powers” do not fall under this administrative law. There is therefore no duty on them to obtain or to maintain an appropriate education. All requirements onto these employees and onto their education upkeep are therefore at discretion of a particular local authority.

Local authorities are delegated by the state various levels of administrative responsibilities, usually depending on the size and type of a local authority. Only the state delegated functions are affected by the local authority size (for example permitting, construction regulation, environmental regulative issues, technical requirements est.). On issues falling under “own legal powers” there is no size limitation. As the local development agendas and to that extend the SUD/SRD are fully within the “own legal powers” and under direct responsibility all the local authorities⁷ (irrespective if they are large or small).

In the Czech Republic it is also so far not too clear who actually could, or should help the local authorities to exercise their own development powers to their communities’ best advantage. It is not clear who should help them to gain the appropriate know-how and skills that would enable them to deliver SUD/SRD. The Czech Ministry of Interior generally oversees or certifies educational courses orientated on strengthening the local authority know-how in the field of their powers delegated by the state or those set onto them by the law. It however things, that it has no remit to assists local authorities where the agendas (like for example the local development, urban agenda and SUD/SRD) falls under local authorities own responsibilities. Similar is a position adopted by the Ministry of Regional Development, which although it for example assists local authorities heavily with discharge of their state delegated powers related to planning implementation, so far it offers no aid to local authorities in the field of urban development or SUD. Similar is the position of the Ministry of Agriculture who presently has a program support responsibility for the rural development.

It is quite surprising that the SMOCR (The Czech Union of Towns and Villages⁸the main institution representing local authorities) does not sufficiently addresses the urban development, or the local authorities missing SUD/SDR skills. Although individual aspects of SUD/SRD such as environment, housing, transport, social and educational issues est., may be addressed, generally there is not an integrated approach to solving the urban issues or those issues related to SUD/SRD. It was only recently that some of urban issues come to the interest of the Chamber of the Statutory (larger) towns, which is an offshoot of the SMOCR. Czech educational institutions hardly teach SUD/SRD and urban management as a distingue study subject, nor do they offer (and this would be of much more use) a suitable continuous education courses on SUD/SRD. The other sustainable development initiatives⁹ (for example Agenda 21) are still mainly concentrated on the environmental aspect and their development

³ See the OECD Economic department paper 499/June 2006: “Improving public efficiency in CR regions and municipalities” for a description of the Czech local authorities and their powers.

⁴ Add the relevant law here

⁵ Add the relevant law here

⁶ Accession priority “Strengthening the governance skills”

⁷ An exemption exists only in areas of national interest such as army training ground, where the community does not possess the usual local authority powers.

⁸ See www.cmocr.cz

⁹ See www.nszm.cz

and their urban scope remains very narrow and limited. The books or handbooks on the subject of urban development SUD/SRD, which are targeted on aiding the local authorities hardly exist.

This leaves the Czech local authorities in their urban development totally unaided. Situation often gets worsen by an application of the democratic principles. That means that over the time elected representatives (and some are actually employed by the local authorities) gain some understanding and some development and leadership skills needed to steer a successful local development and also SUD/SRD. When however an election comes, then these skills are often lost and a new person is starting again from the square one and without any help obviously in line. Finally, in the Czech Republic it is usual that the officers' appointments on the local development tasks also come and go with the demising politicians. This then only exasperates the skill gaps in the particular authority.

5. Too many campaigns, not enough integration

Over the last 5 years various campaigns were directed at the local authorities to improve their skills related to number of subjects. These campaigns were often internationally started initiatives supported by the international or EU donors and carried out mainly by various non profit organizations. Some of them concentrated on the health, strategic planning, and environmental quality, on improving sustainable development skills or processes of public participation est. No single campaign however was orientated on supply of missing urban development skills, on SUD/SRD skills, or on synthesizing the above singular campaigns into a holistic and integrated development approaches.

But specific conditions that are presently prevailing in the new members' states make it unlikely that a direct transfer of the know-how from the "old" EU countries would be a success. As urban or rural development issues are in all the EU countries their own responsibilities, there therefore exist different and varied national approaches to them. The degree of legal independence and local development powers that local authorities in different countries possess also does vary. Substantially varied is also a sophistications level of the local authorities and of the other local development stakeholders (institution, financing, consulting, developers, est.). Lastly is the state of the local market and the local economic, demographic and social conditions, which have a substantial influence on any development or SUD /SRD solutions.

However, the principles of what it takes to make SUD/SRD are becoming clearer, as well as the possible paths how to get there. These principles and the basic know-how and essentials pro-development, assessment and support tools, methodological support and dedicated information sources are what need to be made available to local authorities and also to other stakeholders in order that they can effectively promote and deliver SUD/SRD. Only in this way it will be possible to close their SUD/SRD skills gap

6. Where is a will, there is a way!

However, not all is as black as it seems. Where there is a will, commitment and leadership there is a way. To demonstrate what personal initiative, leadership and commitment can do even in small communities we enclose our last example.

A question however remains, how an ordinary elected representative for example in charge of a city development agenda, can from one day to the next day become proficient in it? What does he/she actually understands? What help he/she should receive? How such a help can be delivered? Is it sufficient that he/she alone will would received a suitable know-how, or is it important that the whole city development sections and also the stakeholder received an appropriate know-how and support?

BOX 4

Exceptional success of Třanovice - FROM A BULL FARM TO A RUAL BUSINESS PARK

Source: Mr. Baron, Třanovice Angel, 2005



Figure 5 Třanovice

When one looks where Třanovice are located, how small they are and how large was their problem, one would think that they had no chance from the start. And despite all these barriers - lack of development know-how, weak market, over-mortgaged property, indebted, dilapidated and contaminated site - during a period over 5 years the community and its development team (a non profit Třanovice services o.p.s) have managed to change a failing state own agricultural enterprise (a meat farm for 1000 bulls) into a showpiece of a Village Business Park. A success arrived to Třanovice despite their project initially failing to attract public funding. This is why Třanovice results are so fantastic! And if we measure Třanovice success by effectiveness of using public support funding for creation of local jobs, then their results are 7x more effective than those created by a state professional investment agency. These are some details of their success:

- Present size of the Třanovice Rural Business Park is 24 hectares with a room to grow.
- 9 medium to small entrepreneurs own their premises there .
- Other 14 small entrepreneurs are resident in so far heavily oversubscribed local business incubator and that is why no 2 incubator is being build.
- 359 new jobs were created.
- Public support for 1 new job was 0,68 mil Kč compared to the CzechInvest Kč CzechInvest 4,5 mil. Kč / job).
- When it was possible in tiny Třanovice, why it can not succeed in a similar manner elsewhere? This is the Třanovice secret:
- Their brownfields problem “really” threaten whole community.
- The local authority really wanted and actually sort and supported a solution.

Třanovice have found an experienced business angel in a form of an ex patriot - consultant Mr. Baron, who have sufficient business and development expertise to deal with the complex issues and mainly had a habit not to take “no” for an answer.

- In Třanovice they have implicitly trusted their consultant and supported him with a young and capable team.
- The local authority was able to accept and support innovative solutions proposed by their consultant.
- The local authority continually politically supported this project

- *A suitable institutional structure (Třanovice služby o.p.s a Tispol s.r.o). was created by the local authority for their project execution.*
- *Help, support and assistance to private and local investor was of prime importance to the project.*
- *In Třanovice, there was no problem with complicated land ownership itself. The seller was a state enterprise and local authority main interest was to prevent the enterprise falling into a bankruptcy, as this would have locally for a long time into the a condition of preventing any meaningful development.*
- *Public institutions which held most of the bad debts (social, health insurance and taxes) were able to change their thinking and accept novel and previously untried solutions.*
- *During a half a decade the Třanovice služby o.p.s became a leading development agency of its area, which today sources the funding and promotes development project not only in the Třanovice but also in surrounding communities.*

Conclusion - How to aid and accelerate solution

Strong vision, strong leadership, new governance styles, an integrated regeneration approaches, partnerships, cross disciplinary working and sufficient skills are the paradigms of successful SUD/SRD. Delivering a successful, sustainable and integrated urban/rural development is however a complex issue comprising of many disciplines. It needs an experience, sufficient know-how; creativity, strategic foresight, technical skills, management's skills and leadership to delivered SUD/SRD to the community best advantage. It also needs an input and support by numerous urban stakeholders. Its delivery therefore relies on full synthesis of all the above named attributes. A single attribute or a combination of only a few of them is unable to do deliver a successful solution. This is what we perceive is needed in the Czech Republic to achieve successful SUD/SRD skills acceleration:

- A "real" political support for SUD/SDR issues on the national level need to be demonstrated.
- A local political support for improvements in SUD/SRD skills needs also to initiate from the local level.
- A coordinated action on a national level in consultation with a broad spectrum of stakeholders needs to establish what are the missing skills, how they can be improved and who is responsible for an action related to organizing and delivering such skills improvements and how and by when all this can be achieved .
- A political support for delivering the missing skill (including also the priming finance) needs to be demonstrated by the national level.

- A coordinator for delivering the solution should be selected and at least partially funded.
- Where possible, SF should be used for co-financing delivery of missing SUD/SRD skills and tools.
- Stakeholders' participation, involvement and experience should be continually harnessed.
- The drive for improving skills should be "sweetened" by suitable program incentives rewarding those, who increase their skills and demonstrate exceptional SUD/SRD success.
- Eventually a public and pier pressure may succeed even in areas where the law is so far impotent!

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IURS

IURS is a non-profit advocacy, research and project implementation organization, working to forward sustainable development practices. IURS aims to foster broad coalitions that enhance the competitiveness of accessible city centre development and redevelopment (retail, residential, and other) relative to out-of-town “greenfield” developments, which tend to be sprawling, car-based, and wasteful of resources that undermine city centre vitality. The NGO is strongly focused on issues of underused urban land and the containment of sprawl in the Czech Republic and Poland. IURS members are local and international experts in various fields touching upon the urban land reuse agenda.

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