

Abstract: Agglomeration of the city of Brno

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This work's aim is to analyse the opportunities for a closer cooperation between the city of Brno and the surrounding towns in the Brno agglomeration. The task was set up by the Brno City Hall and introduced to the students of Masaryk University so that they can take a part in the affairs related to the city they study in.

Why does agglomeration matter? Economic, social and political development in Brno area has led to a situation where mutual cooperation and coordination of policies and activities among various municipalities involved is proving to be not only beneficial, but also indispensable. This involves a wide range of areas, but mainly transport, education, urban development and environmental protection.

Brno City Hall have put significant effort in advancing this cause in the past, such as developing its own project concerning local agglomeration in 2008 and participating in European project *Joining Forces*. Our consultations with the mayors of some of the surrounding towns also revealed, that they are aware of challenges brought up by recent developments in local urban area and find hypothetical collaboration beneficial. Despite clear demand for more cooperation, no significant progress has been achieved to this date.

The aim of this work is to discover areas for collaboration that would be mutually beneficial for all involved parties. Its approach is pragmatic and functionalist in its core: by fostering area- or subject-specific cooperation between Brno and neighbouring towns it aims to help build an environment of mutual trust and responsibility, in which a general and long-term collaboration can take place. Shared problems of the region are opportunities in perspective of this work, because they allow "win-win" relationships to emerge and prevail.

But why does the student point of view matter? First of all, young educated people often provide an out-of-the-box views, ideas and solutions. The fact that none of the authors of this work were involved in issues of urban governance allows them to think about the problem unconventionally and provide original answers to it.

Secondly, the authors come from different backgrounds – mathematics, law, economics, social sciences and humanities, medicine and even sport studies. This enables combination of various perspectives and experiences. In fact, authors did often engage in "clash of ideas" that brought new and innovative solutions while writing this work.

The Structure of this work is as follows: the first part looks at the issue of Brno agglomeration from a more broad perspective. It discusses legal and political issues of cooperation, presents a stakeholder analysis and analyzes strategic plans of municipalities. Building upon the first part, the second part presents specific projects for starting and accelerating collaboration in Brno agglomeration.

One of the first challenges was the legal organization of an agglomeration in general. The Legal order of Czech Republic does not explicitly recognise agglomeration as a part of Czech law. However, it does recognise limited forms of co-operation among cities. Building upon this we propose three possible ways of achieving agglomeration's goals. Firstly, the work suggests informal co-operation without any legal basis to create an environment of trust and discuss common problems. However, the co-operation on such level has disadvantages in terms of efficiency and goals, while it promotes only discussion among the members and does not set specific common goals that are to be achieved. This form of cooperation is not recommended as a long-term alternative.

Other two forms of co-operation are based in Czech legal norms. The first is "The Agreement

about Specific Goal” and second is “Voluntary Union of Municipalities”. Both of these legal forms offer different sets of advantages and are not dependent on each other. It is up to municipalities which one they will choose. One of their shared advantages is that their legal status makes them eligible for various subsidies and funds. Legal status of cooperation will also facilitate potential adoption of common goals and development of joint projects. Because of this, we recommend that the cooperation should eventually move to more formal setting.

Stakeholder analysis is a part of the text as well. It identifies organisations and groups affected by advancing collaboration in Brno agglomeration and it sorts them by their importance and impact on the action.

The first part concludes with an analysis of strategic plans of municipalities in Brno’s surroundings. Its aim is to identify common problems and issues of towns in the agglomeration to find the basis for future collaboration. To make closer cooperation feasible all stakeholders must be aware of each other needs and interests. The findings of this section are crucial for identifying projects presented in the next part.

The second part consists of four suggestions for cooperation in specific subjects or areas: Park & Ride, kindergartens, sustainable urban mobility plan and the promotion of tourism. In current state of affairs there is only minimal contact between City of Brno and surrounding towns. This work assumes that Brno will be the initiator of deeper cooperation in Brno agglomeration. All suggested projects have two broader goals: firstly, to solve problems both Brno and its neighbours encounter and by doing this to incentivise and facilitate permanent collaboration and serve as a cornerstone of future agglomeration.

Park & Ride is a tool for solving traffic problems in Brno. Traffic jams in the city during rush hours, crowded main roads and bad condition of infrastructure are issues affecting all citizens resident of the agglomeration. Common Park & Ride policy can substantially contribute to solving these problems and increasing the attractiveness of the City by reducing the number of cars inside of the wider city area, reducing air pollution, increasing safety and the number of free parking slots and making public transport more accessible.

Cooperation in kindergarten management also offers a lot of advantages. Currently, overcrowded kindergartens are a common issue for most municipalities. This work offers an innovative alternative to cope with this problem that is flexible, cheap and efficient: a network of mobile kindergartens supplemented by forest kindergartens. Additionally, we suggest creating common school bus system for children to provide better access to pre-school education. These two suggestions combined together offer a beneficial collaboration for both the municipalities and citizens and their children.

A sustainable urban mobility plan presents an opportunity for a platform for cooperation in areas of transportation and environmental protection. It is an EU initiative tailored for agglomerations. It aims to bring all relevant actors (e.g. municipalities, private companies, trade unions and NGOs) together to create common goals for urban mobility with emphasis on improving environment and availability of all modes of transportation. The ultimate goal of a plan is to make transportation in urban areas more sustainable, environment friendly and accessible. The initiative is part of strengthening trend in EU policy making. As a result, there is relatively generous amount of money available to support it both from structural funds and framework programmes. Such project would be beneficial for both City of Brno and other municipalities

in the agglomeration, because it offers an opportunity to improve the transport infrastructure and services.¹

Last area of collaboration is the promotion of tourism within the agglomeration. Brno is surrounded by beautiful woods and offers a lot of historical sites, but there is no strategy for attracting tourists to sites beyond administrative borders administered by the City Hall. Joint promotion of the agglomeration as a whole would benefit for all municipalities involved and for tourism in general by creating synergies: the surrounding sites would increase the attractiveness of urban space and vice versa, presenting Brno as a complex and complete experience. This creates potential for increasing the number of tourists and duration of their stay.

Main obstacle of collaboration in the Brno agglomeration was lack of communication and trust between various municipalities. This is an endless cycle: trust cannot be built without communication, but communication will hardly ever start without trust. We propose City of Brno should break this cycle by initialising closer cooperation in four areas mentioned above. Both these projects and further collaboration that will stem from it will be a substantial benefit for all municipalities in the agglomeration and will help to increase quality of life attractiveness of the region.

¹Such as building cycling routes, increasing intermodality or availability of public transport.