

The Obstacles in Consolidation of Municipal Structure in the Czech Republic: Voluntary Mergers in 2002 and 2003

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ABSTRACT

Territorial fragmentation is considered as one of the most problematic characteristics of the Czech municipal system, however there is no discussion about possible reform at all. Although certain measures were introduced in last decade, there are neither effective ways of intermunicipal cooperation nor means how to encourage small units to amalgamate. This paper focuses on rare cases of voluntary amalgamation that occurred in years 2002 and 2003. Only 9 municipalities from the total of approx 6 250 units underwent the process, however it is still a higher number compared to any other year. We try to scrutinize those processes in order to pose findings which may help to understand the obstacles in efforts to consolidate the municipal structure. Through the analysis of municipal documents, data from statistical office, local newspapers and interviews with actors we examine the aspect of those mergers such as main causes, previous experience with amalgamation, process of the merger itself and actors involved. We focus on the plurality of local political system and its role in the process of merger. The analysis reveals that in most of the cases the amalgamation was not a result of long-term process but more likely an ad hoc solution of problematic situation (e.g. the lack of candidates to the municipal council, overload of administrative tasks, insufficient financial sources).

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