

Regional and legal aspects of transport services in the Czech Republic, with special regard to peripheral regions

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Abstract: The transport accessibility is the significant factor in the effort for the balanced development of the regions and preservation of the internal cohesion of the Czech Republic, the real form of which is the result of a number of components, often staying against each other in the conflict positions, economic, political, legal, population and others.

The analysis of the transport accessibility of larger settlement centers, which are municipalities with extended powers (ORP) and regional cities, was done during the solving the project, within which this article was created. The transport accessibility of the ORP was expressed cartographically through the number of public transport connections during working days (Wednesday was chosen) and during non-working days, respectively free days (Saturday was chosen). The results obtained here were, of course, influenced by the fact that at the time of this analysis, the restrictions related to the fight against COVID-19.

Keywords: Transport services, transport, legal aspects, regional aspects, Czech Republic

JEL Classification: K19, R50, H70, H73

1 Introduction

The transport accessibility is the significant factor in the effort for the balanced development of the regions and preservation of the internal cohesion of the Czech Republic, the real form of which is the result of a number of components, often staying against each other in the conflict positions, economic, political, legal, population and others ones.

When so-called inner peripheries were established in the territory of today's Czech Republic during the period before November 1989, the deterioration of living conditions was associated with a declining state of the infrastructure, limited supply of the shops and services and even only very limited public cultural and social life.⁴¹ The limited scope of the public transport played its role there, which provided primarily only the possibility of way from and to work. At the same time, the limited scope of the public transport did not allow or made it very difficult to travel for missing services, shops or culture beyond the territory of the peripheral areas. Even visiting a doctor, dealing with official matters or buying consumer goods outside the place of residence were associated with considerable time requirements for the inhabitants of these areas, and daily commuting to school or work by public transport for some groups of the population was "greater than usual ballast".⁴² The insufficient volume of the public transport thus contributed to the fact that the peripheral areas were considered largely to be the trap, wherefrom especially younger people tried to move to the areas with more favourable living conditions.

⁴¹MUSIL, J. Urbanizace českých zemí a socialismus (Urbanization of the Czech Lands and Socialism). In: HORSKÁ, P., MAUR, E. and MUSIL, J. *Zrod velkoměsta: urbanizace českých zemí a Evropa (The Birth of the Big City: Urbanization of the Czech Lands and the Europe)*. 1st edition Praha (Prague): Paseka, 2002, p. 272

⁴² See to the topic Musil, J. Urbanizace českých zemí a socialismus (Urbanization of the Czech Lands and Socialism), p. 272 456

As it turns out, these problems can be reproduced or even reproduced in the current, although completely in different, political and economic conditions.⁴³ The extent to which living conditions actually worsen in peripheral areas in fact depends significantly on the political decisions and the willingness to invest the resources into maintenance of infrastructure and the provision of the public services, including public transport.⁴⁴ Not only in purely peripheral and economically declining areas but also in general in rural areas not adjacent directly to larger agglomeration and economic centers, there is a need to find a reasonable balance between the two approaches, which should be balanced rather rationally than one of them should prevail clearly. It deals with a conflict between the requirement to guarantee the same level of services (or ensuring the highest possible standard of the services in the largest possible area) and economic rationality, which arises in the sphere of standards of transport services of the peripheral areas and rural areas farther from the larger centers quite lawfully.⁴⁵ Lower population density is typical logically for the rural areas. Especially where it would also deal with the areas with a relatively more fragmented settlement structure (a larger number of smaller settlements separated from each other), the question of public transport congestion and thus economic efficiency arises logically. The costs are high for it and it is necessary then to cover them partly from the public budgets. At the same time, the costs are high and there is little to be covered from the public budgets, because only a small share of the costs for ensuring the service can be covered from the selected fare under these conditions, with regard to the low occupancy.⁴⁶

⁴³ It is also possible to point out the fact that peripheralization led to a deterioration of the living conditions, for example in the territory of the former GDR after year 1990. Naumann and Reichert-Schick note the impact of peripheralization on the decline of the infrastructure and the extent of the provided services in the case of the Eucker-Randow region at Germany's north-eastern border, and also the sharp reduction in the extent of the public transport that happened there was one of the factors worsening significantly living conditions in the region (cited by Bernard J. and col.: Nic se tady neděje: Životní podmínky na periferním venkově. Publishing Slon, 2019, p. 34-35)

⁴⁴ If, under the conditions of Czechoslovakia before 1989, sufficient investments were made into technical infrastructure and civic amenities in the peripheral areas and a sufficient volume of the public transport was ensured too (this fact would also correspond to the principle of balancing the economic level of the individual areas of the socialist state and living standards of their inhabitants that should apply at least under the official proclamations), the lack of work opportunities and, also partly, the decline in economic activity in the peripheral areas did not have to lead to such a significant deterioration in living conditions. The investments and funds were, however, at that time, concentrated primarily into other areas that were to be developed as a priority (for the territory of today's Czech Republic, it was based on the Concept of the Development of the Settlement and Urbanization of the Czechoslovak Republic approved by Government Resolution No. 4/1976), and there were insufficient funds for investments outside the center of gravity for the intended further development.

⁴⁵ Bernard J. and col.: Nic se tady neděje: Životní podmínky na periferním venkově (Nothing is Happening Here: Living Conditions in the Peripheral Countryside). Sociologické nakladatelství (Sociological Publishing), 2018, p. 62

⁴⁶ To some aspects rather in relation to the outer peripheries see for example Jeřábek, M.; Dokoupil, J.; Havlíček, T. České pohraničí – bariéra nebo prostor zprostředkování (Czech Border - Barrier or Space for Mediation)? Praha (Prague): Academia, 2004; Böhm, H.; Dokoupil, J., Jeřábek, M. Crossing the Borders. Studies in the cross-border cooperation within the Danube Region. Case Study The Euroregion Šumava-Bayerischer Wald/Unterer Inn-Mühlviertel. Budapest: Central European Service fo

r Cross-Border Initiatives, 2016, and Jeřábek, M. and col. České pohraničí – Od periferní národní pozice ke stabilnímu prvku evropské integrace (Czech Border - From a Peripheral National Position to a Stable Element of European 457

Integration). Studie Národohospodářského ústavu Josefa Hlávky (Study of the National Economy Institute of Josef Hlávka), 1/2021. Jeřábek, M.; Dokoupil, J.; Havlíček, T. České pohraničí – bariéra nebo prostor zprostředkování (Czech Border - Barrier or Space for Mediation)? Praha (Prague), Academia, 2004.

47 Musil, J. Urbanizace českých zemí a socialismus (Urbanization of the Czech Lands and Socialism), p. 271

48 Bernard J. and col.: Nic se tady neděje (Nothing is Happening Here), p. 62

49 Although it is usually associated with higher costs compared to the public transport, it allows greater time flexibility and is more convenient, especially in the rural areas with a sparse frequency of public transport lines (typically this is the case, for example, when shopping, when it is common, that it should deal with the purchase for many days for the whole family, and the public transport stop is not directly at the house where the purchase is to be transported).

50 It also brings with it the impossibility of projecting the costs for operating public transport in the fare in a large extent, because it could lead to a further reduction of the attractiveness of the public transport compared to the individual car transport and further reduce the real occupancy of public transport connections, that is necessary to keep them, at least to a certain extent, usually in the public interest, at least as the alternative to individual car transport (with the effort for higher degree of using public transport, for example its greater environmental friendliness in comparison with the massive use of individual car transport can play a role there).

51 In the course of solving the project, within of which this article was created, the managed interviews with mayors in the selected model areas also took place. Information obtained from these interviews if they concerned the transport services, could be used as a reflection of the real relations and behavior of people in the rural areas.. This information confirms simultaneously misgivings about the low economic rationality of an excessive increase of the scope of public transport. For example, the mayor of one municipality in the Pardubice Region stated during the interview that there was a clear demand from the inhabitants of the municipality to increase the volume of the public transport. Therefore, the municipality ordered one additional bus line, which is used regularly, in reality, only by one inhabitant of the municipality. This example cannot be generalized fully and the experience of the mayors of other municipalities may differ

At the same time, the mutual relationship between public transport and individual car transport plays a crucial role in providing transport services of the peripheral and rural areas, both in relation to the question of the necessary scope of providing public transport as a service and the costs for its ensuring.

In the case described above, the insufficient volume of the public transport in the peripheral areas of our state before 1989 forced the inhabitants of these areas to buy cars and secure transport by using them, however it was more expensive for them, the financial resources of the inhabitants of these areas were limited and there was a lack of the cars on the market.⁴⁷ After year 1989, the degree of motorization was roughly doubled and the wide possibility of using individual passenger transport influences strongly the patterns of behavior of the rural population.⁴⁸ With regard to the advantages

from the user's point of view⁴⁹, individual car transport represents today a real competition of public transport. This fact reduces to some extent the need to ensure transport services of the area by public transport, without coming to an end entirely the need to provide public transport in the rural areas. The need for "competition" with individual car transport can reduce then at the same time the economic rationality of the public transport (and increase the costs for its ensuring), when it influences the real occupancy of public transport connections and the economic efficiency of their operation logically.⁵⁰ Under the low economic rationality of the excessive increase of the volume of the public transport in sparsely populated areas, as this increase would probably run into the problem of low occupancy of public transport connections⁵¹, the logical question arises how to ensure relatively the most possible high level of ⁴⁵⁸

in this respect. However, this example was used here to illustrate the problem that may arise in the case of increasing the volume of the public transport in terms of its economic rationality.

⁵² This legal definition should then be used wherever special laws and other regulations refer to the transport services, without determining its content in any way. This is the case, for example, the Act on Regions (Act No. 129/2000 Coll.), which entrusts generally in its section 35 to the regional council to determine the scope of the transport services within the independent competence or in its section 50 of the Act on Municipalities (Act No. 128/2000 Coll.), according to which the subject of the activity of the union of the municipalities may be the introduction, expansion and improvement of the system of public passenger transport for ensuring the transport services of the given territory of this union. Another example of a general regulation is the Decree of the Ministry for Regional Development No. 501/2006 Coll. on general requirements for usage of lands, which stipulates that the provision of transport services should be taken into account when making decision on the location of buildings. An exception in this respect is rather the Education Act (Act No. 561/2004 Coll.), whose sections 178-179 requires for the regions to provide transport to and from the catchment school, respectively kindergarten within the transport services on their territories, if the distance of the catchment school from the pupil's place of permanent residence exceeds 4 km..

⁵³ The Act was adopted as a tool of the adaptation of the Czech law to Regulation (EC) No. 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on public passenger transport services by rail and by road and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No. 1191/69 and No. 1107/70, whose purpose, under the Article 1 of the Regulation, is to define how the competent authorities of the Member States may, in accordance with the rules of Community law, intervene in the public passenger transport sector, for the purpose to ensure the provision of the services of general interest which are, inter alia, more frequent, safer, better in the quality or cheaper than services that individual market mechanisms could offer.

⁵⁴www.mdcz.cz/Dokumenty/Strategie/Dopravni-politika-CR-pro-obdobi-2014-2020-s-vyhled

the transport services, respectively the level of the services, in peripheral and generally rural areas farther from larger centers, that should be ensured by the transport services (and especially public transport), with the maintenance of the economic rationality.

2 Material and Methods

2.1 Legal regulation and conception documents

From the point of view of the researched problem, the fundamental importance belongs to the concept of transport services. According to section 2 of the Act on Public Services in Passenger

Transport and on Amendments to Other Acts (Act No. 194/2010) (hereinafter the Public Transport Act), the transport services are defined as “provision of the transport for all days of the week, primarily to the schools and school facilities, to the public authorities, to the employment, to the medical facilities providing basic health care and to the satisfaction of cultural, recreational and social needs, including transport back, contributing to the sustainable development of the territorial district”.⁵² From the point of view of legal regulation, the provision of transport services is thus considered to be one of the tools of the regional development, when its conceptual feature is that it serves for the sustainable development.

The Public Services Act deals only with the issue of ensuring the transport services by public transport⁵³ and in this sense also uses the term "provision of transport services" as a legislative abbreviation. However, individual car transport is also taken into account when providing the transport services. This fact is also reflected in the fact that in the conceptual material *Transport Policy of the Czech Republic for the Period 2021 - 2027 With a View to 2050*⁵⁴ distinguishes four 459

levels of the transport service in the Czech Republic by public transport. In the first two levels, public transport is only a supplement to individual car transport. These two lower levels will also apply especially in the areas with lower population density (which will affect at least a large part of peripheral and father-off rural areas). In level No. 1, the basic transport service is provided by individual car transport. In this case, we can speak about some kind of self-service, because it lacks an important defining feature, namely its provision by public services.⁵⁵ Public transport is focused on satisfying on, as a general rule, the narrowly specifically defined needs of the inhabitants (commuting to the schools, to the health care or to the authorities). At level 2, the public transport ensures already wider range of population needs, "but for the economic reasons, it cannot provide the necessary standards in terms of quantity". The independence on the individual car transport is assumed in this division only in levels No. 3 and 4. At level 3, individual car transport and public transport are understood as mutually full-fledged alternatives. That one at level 4 is even the basis of the transport service system, which ensures all the needs of the population throughout the day and throughout the week, and, conversely, the individual transport becomes a complement to the public transport.

⁵⁵ For example KOVALČÍKOVÁ, D, ŠTANDERA, J. Zákon o veřejných službách v přepravě cestujících a o změně dalších zákonů, Komentář (Act on Public Services in Passenger Transport and on Amendments to Other Acts, Commentary), cited by ASPI.

⁵⁶ 4th level should apply particularly to larger cities, where, especially in their historic cores, the priority of public transport can help to solve the problem with the lack of parking space, prevent the formation of convoys, etc.

⁵⁷ The reason for this analysis was, due to the fact, that the solved project is focused on the peripheral areas, the transport accessibility of these settlement centers means good or poor accessibility of public and private services for the residents of the peripheral areas - whether it deals with health care sector (specialized medical facilities), education (secondary, higher and university education), services from the banking and insurance sector, accessibility of the business network (specialized shops, shopping centers), culture and sports, availability of the transport services (long-distance bus connections, high-speed railway, or fly connection).

The transport policy of the Czech Republic counts with the fact that the 1st level of the transport services provided by the public transport should be reduced in the future, the 3rd level should prevail

in the most areas,⁵⁶ and the 2nd level should be maintained in sparsely populated areas. In these areas, with regard to economic rationality, the character of public transport should be preserved only as a supplement to individual car transport, despite the fact that the Transport Policy of the Czech Republic also admits that at level 2 of the transport services provided by public transport, the groups of those people, who do not have their own car, are disadvantaged (especially women, children and the elderly), and the insufficient scope of the public transport and poor interconnection ultimately "contribute to the outflow of the population from the peripheral areas to larger agglomerations and have a significant negative impact on the demographic development in these areas".

2.2 Analysis of the transport services of larger centers

The analysis of the transport accessibility of larger settlement centers, which are municipalities with extended powers (ORP) and regional cities, was done during the solving the project, within which this article was created.⁵⁷ The transport accessibility of the ORP was expressed cartographically through the number of public transport connections during working days (Wednesday was chosen) and during non-working days, respectively free days (Saturday was chosen). The results obtained here were, of course, influenced by the fact that at the time of this analysis, the restrictions related to the fight against COVID-19 disease (public transport frequency analysis in November 2020) were in force, and smaller movement of the inhabitants ⁴⁶⁰

during this period was reflected also to the reduction of the transport services provided by the public transport. This fact is also reflected in the maps, which were created based on the results of the analysis. It is necessary to take into account the existence of a certain "distortion", if it deals with the extent of the public transport captured in the maps, in areas around Prague or other large agglomeration centers (eg. Brno or Pilsen) when trying to interpret these maps.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The project, within which the analyzes were processed, is focused on the peripheral areas of our state, and with regard to this fact, the extent of public transport to the ORP in the administrative district of this ORP was determined within the analyzes. The existence and sufficient capacity of this transport is relevant particularly in rural areas away from other large agglomeration centers. However, in the areas with the immediate proximity of large agglomeration centers, the same function, as in the rural areas is usually performed by the transport accessibility of the relevant ODP, ie. the access to services, opportunities for shopping, etc., is fulfilled also by the transport services of these large agglomeration centers, even in relation to the territory not falling within their administrative district as ORP.

Frequency of public transport connections - Wednesday (November 2020)

The map 1 shows the problematic accessibility of the municipalities with respect to the central, respectively marginal position of ORP within the catchment area (SO) ORP and position of the municipalities of main and secondary roads, respectively railway tracks. In the case of the eccentric position of the ORP within SO ORP, the states occur for the farthest municipalities, respectively for the municipalities out of the main roads and railway tracks, when no line of public transport goes to the municipality or only minimum number of the lines (1-4) goes to them even during the work days.

Map 1: Frequency of public transport connections – Wednesday (November 2020)

Source: Project TA ČR number TL03000527 „Internal and external peripheries in the regional development of the Czech Republic – from genetic determination to territorial cohesion“, 2020-2023.
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Frequency of public transport connections - Saturday (November 2020)

However, a significantly worse situation occurs on Saturday, when the number of municipalities without a connection or with only a minimum connection increases enormously. In the above cases of analyzes of the transport accessibility of SO ORP centers by public transport, it is not possible to define unambiguously the peripheral areas that have a location at the internal (interregional) and external (state) borders. However, data were obtained during the pandemic situation (Covid - 19) as of November 2020. Therefore, especially for the number of public transport lines on Saturdays, this may not be long-term relevant information – Map. 2.

Map 2: Frequency of public transport connections – Saturday (November 2020)

Source: Project TA ČR number TL03000527 „Internal and external peripheries in the regional development of the Czech Republic – from genetic determination to territorial cohesion “, 2020-2023.

Time availability of the regional city by car

The transport accessibility of the regional cities was expressed by their time availability by car, while the accessibility of the regional cities from municipalities according to administrative jurisdiction was analyzed (availability of the regional administrative office and its departments) and the accessibility of the nearest regional cities (availability of the centers with higher services). There can be also see the problematic accessibility of municipalities with respect to the central, respectively marginal location of the regional city within the region + location of municipalities on the main or secondary roads. The map shows the location of the peripheral areas on the interregional borders, while the number of the municipalities with a peripheral location is increasing in the large regions, respectively regions with an elongated shape of the territory - especially the southern border of the Pilsen region, the western border of the Ústí nad Labem region, the eastern border of the Pardubice region, the northern border of the Hradec Králové and Olomouc regions and the northwestern border of the Moravian-Silesian region. The analyzed data can be considered relevant from a long-term perspective. Map. 3. 462

Map 3: Time availability of the regional city by car

Source: Project TA ČR number TL03000527 „Internal and external peripheries in the regional development of the Czech Republic – from genetic determination to territorial cohesion “, 2020-2023.

3 Results and Discussion

The scope of the transport services according to section 3 of the Public Services Act is determined in the independent competence of the municipality and the region. The municipalities and regions also ensure the transport services (the only exception is given in its provision of trains by national transport by transport, which has a supra-regional or international character). The fact that the municipalities and regions determine the scope of the transport services in their independent competence, ie. within the exercise of the right to self-government of municipalities, gives the state only a very limited space for the possible ingerencido of this decision. Especially in the case of the areas with low population density, the question of setting the standards of transport services provided by the public transport arises. These standards should define the scope of the transport

services in terms of the frequency of the lines (and, where appropriate, also their capacity) and the maximum permissible walking distance to public transport stops. The need for such standards is currently reflected in the transport service plans of some, but not all, regions. The approaches of the individual regions to set these standards differ from each other, which, in addition to the objective factors influencing the need for the scope of the transport services, also reflects the fact that setting these standards is essentially a political decision of individual regions.

When determining the scope of the transport services by public transport, the requirement of economic rationality also appears, both in the form of the requirement for municipalities to participate financially in providing the transport services in an above-standard scope,⁵⁹ as well

⁵⁹ It can be referred there, for example, to the transport service plan of the Liberec region (accessible is here: <https://silnicni-hospodarstvi.kraj-lbc.cz/Dokumenty-odboru-dopravy/plan-dopravni-obslnosti-lk>) or in the effort to set the standards of the transport services from the part of the Central Bohemian Region towards the municipalities in its territory (see to it for 463

example: https://www.idnes.cz/ekonomika/doprava/standardy-dopravni-obslnosti-stredocesky-kraj.A210616_094327_eko-doprava_cfr).

⁶⁰ The current plan of the transport services in the Central Bohemian Region does not regulate explicitly the scope of transport services provided by public transport. The previous plan of the transport services for the years 2016-2020 set this scope, but at the same time stipulated that it is given for each municipality (guaranteed by the region) "only with justifiable demand in the time distribution of the operating day according to transport needs and local conditions" (see <https://www.kr-stredocesky.cz/web/doprava/dopravni-plan>). This formulation can be difficult probably to interpret otherwise than in relation to the fact that while areas at the "inner" regional border with the Capital City of Prague show a high degree of economic activity and the need for high public transport capacity, areas at the "outer" regional border are characterized, according to current Development Strategy of the Territory of the Region, by so-called "inner periphery" (strategy is accessible from: <https://www.databaze-strategie.cz/cz/sck/strategie/strategie-rozvoje-uzemniho-obvodu-stredoceskeho-kraje-2019-2024?typ=download>).

⁶¹ The current development strategy of the Central Bohemian Region states in this context, for example, that "connecting the inner periphery with the centers in the neighboring regions is often more important for these areas, because it will enable increased availability of job opportunities and education". However, the same thing, at least when it deals with the job opportunities, also applies in the case of the so-called external peripheries on the borders of the regions with the neighboring states.

⁶² The largest number of these contracts was concluded in the years 2018-2020 by the Central Bohemian Region, which concluded them with all neighboring regions. Concluded contracts are available at: <https://smlouvy.gov.cz/vyhledavani>.

⁶³ Pursuant to Section 3, Paragraph 2 of the Public Services Act, regions may also provide transport services on the territory of another region, with the consent of that region. The Czech legal system does not regulate more detailed regulation to it. The contracts thus differ, inter alia, in their designation, some of them are designated as public coordination agreements, ie. pursuant to Section 160 (4), others are designated only as agreements pursuant to Section 24 of the Regional Act. A closer analysis of this issue goes beyond the purpose of this article, but it must be mentioned that

the public contracts may be concluded by territorial self-governing units only if it is set by law, and no special law gives them such authority (see for example POTĚŠIL, L. HEJČ, D., RIGEL, F., MAREK, D. Správní řád. Komentář (Administrative Procedure. Comment), Praha (Prague): Publishing C. H. Beck, 2020, p. 784-785.

64 Based on these agreements, the interregional lines are included into the integrated transport systems of both regions and both regions undertake to provide transport services to the other party by a carrier with which they have a public service contract in transport also for the other

as in the various scope of the transport services in the individual parts of the territory of the region. The areas with lower level of the economic activity and population density, and thus especially in peripheral and rural areas, will be on the worse level logically.⁶⁰

In connection with the fact that peripheral areas are typically located along the regional borders and sufficient transport services of these areas, including public transport, can be understood as a condition for their development, the question of ensuring transport services by public transport across the regional border also arises.⁶¹ That one is unsure currently on the basis of the agreements on the interregional cooperation in providing transport services between the individual regions.⁶² The contracts are concluded in the independent competence of the regions and are not identical in content, but they have⁶³ certain common features, which follows from their purpose, which is the interest in the development of that part of the territory adjacent to the common border between the regions.⁶⁴ 464

region and they should compensate mutually the resulting financial costs. Contracts are determined generally as frameworked, so determining on which tracks respectively lines this transport shall be provided, is specified in them only exceptionally, it shall happen usually on the basis of a specific order of each region, which shall determine where the transport service will be provided.

65 The provision of the transport services by public transport is imposed by the Public Services Act authoritatively by the statement “regions... provide transport services...”, but at the same time the legal system lacks the tools, how to force them to do it if they do not do it in reality.

66 It has been already stated above that the Transport Policy of the Czech Republic draws attention to the disadvantages of these persons in the areas where the 2nd level of the transport services is through public transport, while acknowledging that this disadvantage has significant negative impact on the demographic development in these areas.

With regard to the fact that the provision of the transport services in their territorial district and across the regional border is provided by the regions in their independent competence, the determination of the extent to which they will provide it is based on their political decision.⁶⁵ Financial coverage is thus the important limit in this decision-making. Since 2005, when the financing of the transport services was transferred to the independent competence of the regions, its provision depends on the financial resources available to the region for this purpose, which can be always basically an argument why a certain location was not included in the order, optionally the range of the transport services by public transport is limited significantly there. Even with a high degree of motorisation, it seems necessary (or perhaps desirable) to have the minimum standards of the transport services provided by public transport, which would also apply to peripheral and sparsely populated areas, in order to eliminate at least the disadvantage of non-car owners.⁶⁶ The transfer of the determination of the scope of the transport services (and optionally its provision) by public

transport into the transferred competence of the regions could be one of the possible solutions, thereby the state obtain the possibility to intervene in it. However, such an interference into the regions' right to self-government would be difficult to enforce politically. With the political will to take this step, an agreement between the state and the relevant region on what standard of the transport should be provided in a given area (or an unsurpassable standard could be set by law) would seem much more feasible, while the provision of the transport services in sparsely populated areas could be subsidized by the state.

It seems appropriate to seek further solutions to provide functions that would otherwise be provided by public transport, given the impossibility of relying only on individual car transport in peripheral and sparsely populated areas and the necessarily limited scope of the public transport for the economic reasons. The Transport policy of the Czech Republic sets in general the goal for optimization of the needs for mobility (not to waste with traffic), when the limitation of a very need to use the transport should be counted, in particular, as a reduction of the negative impacts of the transport on the environment. It can be achieved it even in sparsely populated areas, for example, by subsidizing the permanent shops and service establishments, or optionally with the help of the mobile shops and service establishments that will go around the individual settlements (this solution could also be cost-effective, with regards to the savings that this optimization of the need for mobility could bring in the sphere of the subsidies for public transport). However, as the suitable complementary solution, it seems to be desirable the support and help in the organization of a carpooling system during using privately owned cars and also ensuring the transport services aimed as the social services adressed to the concrete groups of people (for example taking people from the individual municipalities in a sparsely populated area 465

for a specific service that they cannot draw directly at their place of residence, such as medical treatment).⁶⁷

67 The voluntary associations of municipalities could play an active role there. They could fulfill mainly an organizational function in the carpooling system, when, for example, the co-driver would get in the car to the car owner during the journey to the destination, for example also in another municipality on the way to the destination. In the case of ensuring transport services as a social service, the voluntary association of the municipalities could also be the customer.

5 Conclusion

The nature of the public transport as a positive element enables to reduce regional disparities, provided that the function is defined properly and the nature of this transport is determined, and thus contribute to the cohesion of the territory. Within the Czech Republic, the solution of the problem of the transport services is hampered by multi-directional spatial relations of the individual municipalities and regions and a settlement structure with a large number of the small settlements.

However, with regard to the current situation in the Czech Republic, it can be stated that transport accessibility is ensured for all regions, but not in sufficient quality. This is one of the reasons for the unequal position between the regions, because the quality of transport accessibility is one of the aspects of the regional competitiveness.

The analyzes done by the research team of the project (TA CR number TL03000527 "Internal and external peripheries in the regional development of the Czech Republic - from genetic determination to territorial cohesion", 2020-2023) show that according to the analysis of the transport accessibility,

in comparison with the Czech and Moravian regions, the transport accessibility becomes better in the Moravian regions, and thus the transport accessibility of the centers generates fewer spatial peripheries, with the exception of the northern to northwestern area of the Olomouc region.

We consider as essential that the regional borders concentrate hard-to-reach, far-off municipalities, and thus a higher proportion of spatial peripheries, with the exception of the regional borders of the Ústí Region, the regional borders of the Hradec Králové and Pardubice regions and the internal borders of Moravia in general. Differences can also be noticed at the state borders, where the worse situation is at the borders on the former "Iron Curtain", and parts of the Czech-Polish border significantly far-off from the regional centers. In essence, this is a systemic problem that should be solved centrally and at the regional level.

When ensuring the transport services in the peripheral areas, it is necessary to look for a compromise between the requirement of economic rationality and the effort to achieve the same (or at least still acceptable) level of the services on the territory of whole state. Although it will continue probably to be based on individual car transport in the future, it is necessary, so that certain minimum standards of the transport services were defined provided by public transport. In addition, however, it seems effective in these areas to choose other ways of achieving the level of services that transport services (and in particular public transport) should provide.

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