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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15407/ugz2022.04.057>| **Błaszke, Małgorzata**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7806-6710>, | **Nowak, Maciej J.**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6437-3226>.

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## Objectives of Spatial Planning in Selected Central and Eastern European Countries. Analysis of Selected Case Studies

The aim of this article is to determine how spatial planning tasks are addressed at the central level in the spatial planning systems of selected Central and Eastern European countries. The article is of a review nature. Based on the literature review, the central-level approaches to spatial planning in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania are characterized. Countries that are members of the European Union and countries where there is in-depth scientific literature on the indicated issue were selected. At the same time, for each country, the approaches analyzed were selected in a slightly different way, adapted to the systemic framework. The focus was on a synthetic content analysis of spatial planning documents at the central level.

**Keywords:** *Spatial planning, Central and Eastern Europe, planning documents.*

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## Цілі просторового планування в окремих країнах Центральної та Східної Європи. Аналіз вибраних прикладів

Метою цієї статті є визначення того, як завдання просторового планування вирішуються на центральному рівні в системах просторового планування окремих країн Центральної та Східної Європи. Стаття носить оглядовий характер. На основі огляду літератури охарактеризовано центральні підходи до просторового планування в Чехії, Словаччині, Угорщині, Литві та Румунії. Було відібрано країни-члени Європейського Союзу та країни, де є поглиблена наукова література з зазначеного питання. Водночас для кожної країни аналізовані підходи вибиралися дещо по-іншому, адаптовані до системних рамок. Основна увага була зосереджена на синтетичному контент-аналізі документів з просторового планування на центральному рівні.

**Ключові слова:** *просторове планування, Центральна та Східна Європа, планова документація.*

### Introduction

The discussion on comparisons of national spatial planning systems is, on the one hand, highly relevant, but on the other hand, demanding to take into account numerous barriers. The barriers identified boil down to the serious diversity of national spatial planning systems. This differentiation has

a wide scope. It includes not only different legal regulations but also the use of different terminology and even different approaches to individual spatial planning instruments. However, the above does not change the fact that the discussion of comparisons is necessary. Firstly, it has a serious theoretical

dimension. Secondly, there is also a practical dimension. The fact that there are certain solutions or a certain approach in a particular country can inspire discussion of changes to the spatial planning system in another country.

The approach to comparisons across spatial planning systems can vary. However, relatively fewer barriers are present when comparing similar systems. One criterion may be the geographical proximity of countries and a common (or at least similar) historical tradition. The indicated criteria seem to be fulfilled in the case of Central and Eastern European countries [1]. This article is a continuation of previous research on the countries indicated. In particular, common features and differences related to spatial plans at the local level have been analyzed [2]. Other research shows that there are serious systemic problems in the individual countries of the region (Ukraine and Poland were analyzed in detail) [3]. These include the central scale and the inability to properly define spatial tasks at this level. The best example is Poland, where for several years no spatial act has been in force that would define the indicated tasks on a

central scale. Undoubtedly, this aspect needs more verification.

*The aim of the article* is to determine how spatial planning tasks are centrally defined in the spatial planning systems of selected Central and Eastern European countries. The article is of a review nature. Based on the literature review, the central-level approaches to spatial planning in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania are characterized. Countries that are members of the European Union and countries where there is in-depth scientific literature on the indicated issue were selected. At the same time, the approaches analyzed were selected slightly differently for each country. This is because it required adaptation to the legal framework of each system. The following research questions were formulated:

- Which key sectoral themes are associated with the objectives of spatial planning at the national level? Which key thematic scopes are associated with spatial planning at the national level?
- What analogies and barriers exist in defining at the central level the tasks of spatial planning in the countries studied?

### Literature review

The issue of the objectives and tasks of spatial planning at the central level in each country is widely reflected in the literature. The key issues in this area are summarized above.

Central planning documentation in the Czech Republic includes the zoning plan enacted for the entire national territory and the zoning rules [4]. Amendment No. 403/2020, effective from January, 1, 2021, added a new spatial planning instrument to the law—the zoning plan. It constitutes a new type of planning documentation, which can be understood as analogous to land use rules in the national context. The introduction of this instrument was intended to address previous problems with the enforcement of state interests. In particular, these problems are related to public transport and technical infrastructure projects [5, 6]. A similar purpose is to be served by the ‘spatial development policy,’ which is a binding instrument for the related spatial planning documentation. However, according to the explanatory memorandum, especially in the case of spatial decision-making, “the degree of detail (of the land use policy) makes its binding character practically impossible” [7].

The aforementioned spatial development plan identifies infrastructure areas and corridors of

international and national importance or infrastructure areas and corridors whose importance extends beyond the territory of one region, according to the spatial planning policy. It also identifies, for example, public facilities for which land and building rights can be expropriated [8]. A spatial development plan is compulsorily drawn up by the Ministry of Regional Development on the basis of an update of the spatial development policy or on the basis of a government decision (§ 35c of the Building Code), for the entire territory of the Czech Republic [9]. It is accompanied by an impact assessment for the sustainable development of the territory. This instrument is binding both when establishing and issuing spatial development rules and spatial and regulatory plans, and when making decisions on the territory (Section 35a of the Building Code).

The Spatial Development Policy of the Czech Republic defines the basic conditions for the implementation of spatial planning tasks. The purpose of the spatial planning policy is to ensure the coordination of spatial planning activities of regions and municipalities, coordination of policies and strategies, and other documents of ministries and other central administrative bodies. It is based, inter alia, on the currently valid Regional Development

Strategy of the Czech Republic and serves to coordinate spatial and strategic planning. It also establishes framework tasks for further spatial planning activities and for setting conditions for future development plans in order to increase their benefits and minimize their negative effects. The Spatial Development Policy of the Czech Republic also serves to coordinate other public administration instruments affecting spatial development, such as, for example, the Regional Administrative District Development Program and the Municipal Administrative District Development Program. It is based, inter alia, on documents intended to support regional development and documents affecting the use of the national territory in the international and national context, e.g. policies, strategies, concepts, plans, programs, projects, and reports on the state of the environment.

The Slovak Republic has a hierarchical planning system with four levels of plans. The long-term strategic document for spatial development at the national level is the Slovak Spatial Development Perspective [10]. It is closely linked to the National Regional Development Plan, which deals with regional disparities. The Slovak Spatial Development Perspective defines the hierarchy of localities and their national and international linkages. It also outlines the main directions of urban planning within the Slovak Republic. In addition, it gives directions that aim to create equal living conditions throughout the country and to preserve natural and cultural heritage [11]. The Slovak Spatial Development Perspective contains binding and guiding parts. Lower-level spatial development plans must comply with the binding parts of the said document. The Slovak Spatial Development Perspective places a strong emphasis on the application and implementation of sustainable development principles and the enforcement of the state's environmental policy. Territorial planning is the basic instrument of the state's environmental policy for optimizing spatial structures. The main objectives of the Slovak Spatial Development Perspective are those which, from the point of view of spatial planning policy tools, can contribute as much as possible to the development of the economic and social sphere in accordance with the requirements of sustainable development. This requires the creation of such settlement and spatial conditions for the development of society, which will be conducive to the development and use of existing regional features and will lead to the reduction of existing undesirable disproportions between individual regions [12].

In relation to the basic objectives of other European countries, the main objectives of the current spatial planning policy in Slovakia are:

- promoting the development of the economic base and strengthening its competitiveness and efficiency [13];
- promotion of sustainable settlement development, including rural development;
- ensuring equal access to infrastructure;
- protection and creation of environmental, natural, and cultural heritage;
- promoting integration and cohesion;
- ensuring sustainable development.

Hungary has a hierarchical planning system with three or four levels of spatial plans (depending on the region) [14]. At the highest level is the National Spatial Plan [15], which contains a mixture of general guidelines, strategic plans, and small-scale spatial plans. These are legally binding documents approved by a vote in parliament [16]. The National Spatial Plan sets the long-term spatial structure and land use system of the country and protects the natural and cultural heritage of national importance. It defines:

- the spatial structure of the technical and road infrastructure systems;
- the long-term spatial structure of the area;
- appropriate land use for the individual parts of the area;
- regional tasks in the field of environmental, landscape, and nature protection.

The most important objectives defined in the National Spatial Plan of Hungary are the definition of the conditions for land use and spatial order, the coordination of infrastructural networks, the strengthening of effective economic and spatial development, taking into account sustainable development, including the protection of natural, landscape, ecological and cultural values. The analytical part of the plan defines the concept of spatial development in Hungary. In addition to highlighting important dimensions of Hungary's spatial integration with the European Union, the document defines the following functional spaces: recreational space around Budapest; spaces with economic and technological character; spaces with predominant settlement functions; spaces with tourism functions; spaces with near-natural development; spaces with high agricultural potential.

The purpose of spatial planning in Lithuania is to ensure balanced territorial development and rational urbanization by defining the requirements for the decision-making system of the territorial planning

process and the requirements for the compatibility and interaction of documents of different levels [17], as well as to enable the consistency of the natural and anthropogenic environment and urban quality by preserving the valuable landscape [18,19], biodiversity and the value of natural and cultural heritage. The Spatial Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania is one of the main and comprehensive spatial planning documents executed at the state level. It establishes the spatial structure of the planned territory of the country and obligatory regulations and requirements for the use of the territory, as well as rules for its protection. It is a legally binding document [20]:

- mandatory for state government institutions making decisions at the national level related to the use, management, and protection of the territory, the formation of regional policy, and integrated spatial policy;
- creating planning conditions for special plans, programs and long-term strategies at the national level, comprehensive and special plans at the lower level;
- for the development of strategies for economic sectors, other strategic plans, and programs of state institutions.

The document sets the framework for further spatial planning and regulation and creates the legal environment for ensuring sustainable development [21] and the development of territories and infrastructure [22]. Its purpose is to define the principles and directions of spatial development for the whole country.

The National Spatial Plan in Romania has a directional character and is a synthesis of medium and long-term national sectoral strategic programs [23]. All the provisions of the National Spatial Plan are binding for the provisions of all other spatial

planning documents, which are in fact intended to detail the provisions of the national plan for different specific territories [24]. The National Spatial Plan consists of several thematic sections covering: communication networks, water, protected areas, settlement network, areas vulnerable to natural hazards, areas with tourism resources, and rural development [25]. The section on transport and communication networks consists of a list of investments in the modernization, rehabilitation, and expansion of different segments of transport infrastructure. All modes of transport are included. It also takes into account European guidelines concerning, among other things, pan-European transport corridors.

The water section consists of a list of short-term (1998–2005), medium-term (2006–2015) and long-term (2016–2025) works divided into three sections: water for the population, water for industry, and water for drainage [26]. Among the several hundred projects listed, there is detailed information on the district, locality, and waterway concerned. Other information includes works to improve drinking water supply, the development of sewerage systems, the rehabilitation of areas with water resources polluted by industry, and the rehabilitation or expansion of drainage systems [27]. Another section on protected areas mainly consists of an inventory of designated natural protected areas as well as cultural heritage sites [28, 29]. The settlement network section touches on important aspects concerning, among other things, criteria for distinguishing between areas designated as rural or urban, a ranking system to distinguish the perceived degrees of importance assigned to different localities (the rank given is expected to influence access to different types of investment programs as well as local fiscal rules), and recommendations on policy approaches for peripheral, rural areas [30].

## Conclusions and Summary

Based on the compiled overview, some important synthesizing conclusions can be proposed. There are spatial planning documents at the national level in the countries studied. These documents attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of national conditions, related to spatial planning. The overall thematic scope is very similar in this respect. Apart from the sphere directly related to urban planning issues, the most frequent sectoral issues are:

- technical infrastructure;

- road infrastructure;
- public transport;
- environmental and nature protection;
- protection of cultural heritage.

In addition, the emergence of the following issues can be noted:

- the shaping of public facilities;
- ensuring equal living conditions;
- tourism;
- rural development;
- water management.

The detailed content of the documents at the national level obviously varies in the countries studied. Nevertheless, the key relationship of the indicated (separate, common) issues with spatial planning should be recognized. This requires the adaptation of spatial planning instruments (also at the local level) to the postulates indicated. This necessity is confirmed by the noticeable (also indicated above) attempts to translate the provisions of the national documents into the provisions of the documents (especially spatial plans) of a lower level. It may be added that the linking of the indicated issues with spatial planning requires certain barriers to be answered. These barriers are as follows. Technical infrastructure issues include estimating the costs of new settlements, including responding to investment pressures (e.g. especially those occurring around large cities). Linking spatial planning to road infrastructure and public transport, in turn, requires the development of an appropriate approach to supra-local planning. On the one hand, supra-local planning must have appropriate effects on the local level, but on the other hand, it must not be based on solutions that challenge the national planning order (especially so-called 'specs'). The latter tendency is found in some central and eastern European countries. Environmental, natural, and cultural heritage

issues, on the other hand, require terminological adaptation to the planning sphere. Indeed, spatial plans addressing environmental, natural, and cultural issues need to be precise precisely from a sectoral perspective (i.e. in this case, from an environmental, natural, or cultural perspective). In other words, spatial planning must ensure that the different perspectives, viewpoints, and ways of looking at these issues are reconciled.

Other studies that have been carried out show that there is a significant problem with the implementation of spatial plans at the local level in a large number of countries [2]. The studies show that these plans are not coordinated with other spatial planning instruments, and even less so, with strategic planning instruments. Thus, it can be assumed that the common ground identified above regarding spatial planning objectives in the countries studied (formulated at the national level) is currently implemented to a limited extent. Nevertheless, the commonality of the priorities identified above, formulated at the central level, warrants further in-depth scientific debate. In particular, this debate should identify broader, cross-country attempts to respond to the barriers identified. This will require adapting spatial planning instruments at local, regional, and national levels.

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