

# Changes in Slovak countryside human potential during the transformation period

## *Zmeny ľudského potenciálu vidieckych obcí Slovenska v období transformácie*

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**Abstract:** The paper points out the importance of exploring human potential not only in countryside, but also of local communities as such. We emphasize the significance of the endogenous model of territorial development for the development of countryside and human capacities as the decisive factor of territorial development. Second part of the paper focuses on changes happening in the characteristics of human potential since 1989 in Slovak municipalities. It points out to the transformation changes overcome by local communities during the important social changes. It compares situations in various types of municipalities as well as various regional differentiations in this area.

**Key words:** human potential, transformation of society, endogenous development, rural municipalities, territorial and social differentiation, urbanisation, de-urbanisation, educational potential, demographical changes

**Abstrakt:** Príspevok poukazuje na dôležitosť skúmania ľudského potenciálu nielen vidieckych obcí, ale lokálnych spoločenstiev ako takých. Zdôrazňuje význam endogénneho modelu rozvoja územia pre rozvoj vidieckych obcí a ľudských disponibilít ako rozhodujúceho faktora rozvoja územia. Druhá časť príspevku sa zameriava na zmeny, ktoré sa udiali v oblasti charakteristík ľudského potenciálu od roku 1989 vo slovenských obciach. Poukazuje na transformačné zmeny, ktorými prešli i prechádzajú lokálne spoločenstvá v období významných spoločenských zmien. Porovnáva situáciu v rôznych typoch obcí i rôzne regionálne diferenciacie v tejto oblasti.

**Kľúčové slová:** ľudský potenciál, transformácia spoločnosti, endogénny rozvoj, vidiecke obce, priestorová a sociálna diferenciácia, urbanizácia, dezurbanizácia, vzdelanostný potenciál, demografické zmeny

## INTRODUCTION

Slovak society has recently undergone significant social changes. The period from 1989 is often defined as a period of social transition, social transformation or post-socialist transformation. This social transformation in Central and Eastern Europe started after 1989. The beginning was marked by significant political changes. Turnovers in political institutions were quickly followed by those in economic institutional arrangements as well as cultural institutional arrangements and those in human potential.

The basic potential of the region contains its social or human capacities. It is a decisive area since human (social) potential represents the main source

of territorial development, but also the factor of regional disparities (the others are economic structure and its diversification, geographical situation and environmental status (Blažek 1997). This regional development factor is being strongly accentuated even in some regional development strategies and it is clear that its significance will grow.

Various studies focus their attention on changes happening globally in the entire country, or possibly on regional changes. However, only little is being explored about local level, significance of which has been expressed by several authors of regional development (Garafoli 2002; Ray 1998), and about the concrete initiatives of regional development. The balanced development of rural and urban areas is

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also one of the objectives of the European regional policies.

Administratively determined municipality was taken as a basic unit for analysis<sup>1</sup>, while it is also taken into consideration that municipality is a reflection of local, regional and social characteristics and its development is enhanced not only by the development potential of the municipality itself, but also by the capacities of its region and the entire society. Rural municipalities are thus understood as local communities characterised by features like: social solidarity, common social standards, impersonal interactions, elements of local government, existence of social institutions, complex of intentional co-operation and relations with location encompassing physical environment and differentiating local communities from the ones without territorial dimension.

The paper focuses on qualitative characteristics of rural municipalities as local communities: changes in the number of inhabitants, qualification, population quality and their broader context. Changes in the abovementioned areas are happening over a longer period, therefore, if we want to discuss the current status, we need to start with the data from 2001. We chose this year since this period provides the most complex database due to the Census of Inhabitants, Houses and Apartments. That is also why the year 1991 was selected as comparative year (as a period in which regions, municipalities and their human potential entered into the transformation period).

## ENDOGENOUS MODEL OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of local communities forms a significant factor of broader territorial development. Local communities, which form the largest part of municipalities in Slovakia and accommodate almost half of the citizens in Slovakia, tend to have the highest impetus of rural development. The model of endogenous development emphasizes the importance of decision-making process facilitated by local social actors and their ability to control and internalize the external knowledge and information. The transformation process is based on local specifics and on abilities to master basic variables. The model of endogenous development, according to Garafoli (2002), is actually based on production of “social

skills” on the level of communities operating in local sphere via progressive formation of the following characteristics and skills:

- use and introduction of local resources (work force, capital historically accumulated on local level, entrepreneurship, specific knowledge on manufacturing skills, specific professional skills and material resources),
- ability to control the process of accumulation on local level,
- control of innovative ability,
- existence (and ability to develop) of inner-sectoral and inter-sectoral mutual production dependence on local level (Garafoli 2002: 229).

Despite that, endogenous development is not synonymous to “closed to external”. The endogenous model of development is not a model of “closed economics”, it is a dynamic process with constant interaction between local and global matters. Such model is linked with progressive relationships to external matters (with external market and generation of knowledge produced mainly outside the local system).

The endogenous development according to Garafoli (2002) is mainly characterised by:

- ability to transform social and economic system,
- ability to respond to external challenges and
- ability to introduce specific forms of social regulation on the local level to facilitate both of these processes.

According to Summers (1986), the development of local community has the potential to be the most effective especially in periods of social and economic crisis in society (its significant changes) and during loss of confidence in entities outside location. However, development of local communities and subsequently even rural municipalities dwells in above-mentioned skills based on human resources. Therefore, we find it important to know what changes are those that human potential has to overcome in such social-territorial units during the significant social transformation.

## Circumstances related to transformation of local communities

In terms of local community transformation, we can generally talk about the following significant processes: loss of roots, growing individualization,

<sup>1</sup> According to the Act. 369/1990 Coll., municipality is an independent territorial administrative unit of the Slovak Republic and unites permanent residents of its territory. The most complex database from the Census of Inhabitants, Houses and Apartments carried out by the Statistical Office SR has been processed on behalf of municipalities determined in such manner.

decadence in large towns, revival of rural areas and localities as well as the growing territorial and social differentiation.

Towns, as the main elements of social development are currently facing substantial difficulties. Problems in towns are multiplying, which forces a large part of population to seek the “second home” in countryside. Such tendency is obvious in case of majority of European cities, centres of which increasingly provide refuge for marginalised and socially dependent persons. At the same time, at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the view of large towns had changed considerably. Values accredited to industrial urbanisation and quantitative concentration of citizens into towns have been suppressed. Changed values have been induced mainly by the ecological crisis (with consequences which lead according to Beck (2004) to risky society), development of communication technologies and institutional changes in society. Quantitative concentration of human, social, economic and infrastructural potential in towns ceased to motivate development in society and became substituted by qualitative approach reflecting diversity of human communities. Countryside and localities underwent renaissance. These processes are specifically important in so called post-socialist countries (see e.g. Illner 1992).

Apart from that, the deepening social, cultural and economic differentiation of social-territorial units is becoming a significant issue, too. Locality is a space for mobilisation of local activities and potential which, at the same time, is limited by structural influences hindered to a certain extent by local actors’ potential (Giddens 1984). That is why the growing differentiation becomes a significant problem mainly in relation to endogenous development of localities (see e.g. Garafoli 2002). Present localities are typical by their social and territorial stratification linked not only with ownership of riches, but also of other disposable resources (social and cultural capital).

### **Local communities in Slovakia**

Local communities in Slovakia are also marked by these processes. Apart from the above-mentioned ones, they are also affected by the overall transformation in society. Today’s transformation efforts not only in Slovakia, but also in other post-socialist countries, which started after 1989, are driven by “press–pull” process (Müller 1998) “Pressure” is exerted by the modernisation lead of developed countries, whereas

the ability to “pull” is determined by the capacity of transformation strategy in the country to mobilize available technical-economic and social-cultural resources (see the above-mentioned source). This process is significantly influenced by the role of local communities, since (Müller 1998) it is claimed that the importance of locality, cultural mobilisation and subsidiary behaviour in relatively open framework conditions becomes an important aspect of power.

The analysis of transformation impact on local communities needs to take into consideration present the transformation situation, as well as status of local communities in which they entered into transformation process. At the beginning of the transformation period (90-ies), various territorial communities found themselves in diverse stages of modernisation managing various levels of disposable resources.

The major influence on rural municipalities came in the form of social changes in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century resulting from urbanisation process, scientific and technological changes, deepening centralisation of political power in the first stage and its later decentralisation, as well as due to global problems of our planet.

### **Rural municipalities prior to 1989**

The most striking process influencing the character of rural municipalities in 20-th century Slovakia was artificially accelerated industrial urbanisation. This process brought significant changes in the sphere of social-demographical characteristics of citizens in municipality linked with mass immigration of inhabitants from Slovak rural municipalities into cities<sup>2</sup>. Villages witnessed an outflow of inhabitants, which worsen the quality of human potential in rural areas (this period is described in more detail e.g. by Gajdoš 2002; Pašiak 1990)

### **Rural municipalities after 1989**

A significant process starting after 1989 as a response to preceding period was the process of separation of municipalities; on one hand by separation of rural municipalities and on the other hand by division of rural municipalities. The legal and political identity of municipalities started to slowly revive. Municipalities strived to show their independence and sovereignty (e.g. by presentation of coat-of-arms). At the same time, this period brought about a significant slowdown in the quantitative orientation of urbanisation,

<sup>2</sup> The most significant growth of citizens in towns was recorded in 1970–1980, when number of inhabitants living in towns raised by 650 thousand.

which formed prerequisites for qualitative orientation of municipal development and communities. These processes are, however, located in various areas.

On one hand, persons tended to leave towns for countryside, which showed the revival of values of rural local communities such as longing for more transparent social environment, better quality of natural environment, return of traditions as well as economically more accessible housing than in cities<sup>3</sup>. That mainly applies to municipalities around larger towns. On the other hand, in more retarded regions of Slovakia, urbanisation tendencies are still prevalent.

Significant social demographic changes appeared in characteristics of various types of local communities in different locations. The population in towns had been more or less stabilised for some time already. The quantitative orientation of growth disappeared, or it turned to opposite tendencies.

A crucial problem is ageing population which negatively influences the development of local communities, weakens participation in resolution of public problems and issues of these communities. The largest

portion of the post-productive population can be found in the smallest rural municipalities up to 1 thousand citizens, where it is connected with small number of economically active citizens and low educational level. All these facts are linked with the high share of unemployed, decrease of living standard and expansion of poverty. Such social situation negatively influences the development of local communities. Problems of small municipalities deepened even due to the continuing decentralization and transfer of competencies to municipalities which often fail to manage such situation. Problems of local communities which accompanied them in the transformation period were extensive, deep and multidimensional. Such problems persisted along with others caused by the "pressure" from macro-structural processes. Despite this, local communities started to "wake up" again. This is proven by various activities of municipalities, civil initiatives, efforts to continue with the interrupted continuity in the area of cultural capital (many examples can be found e.g. in the publication Mederly 2002).

Table 1. Numbers and percentages of individual size categories of municipalities and citizens in structure of settlements in 2001 in SR

| Size category of municipality | Municipalities |      | Inhabitants |      |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------|-------------|------|
|                               | number         | %    | number      | %    |
| 0–199                         | 368            | 12.8 | 45 808      | 0.9  |
| 200–499                       | 805            | 27.9 | 276 280     | 5.1  |
| 500–999                       | 786            | 27.3 | 556 289     | 10.3 |
| 1 000–1 999                   | 547            | 19   | 767 561     | 14.3 |
| 2 000–4 999                   | 252            | 8.7  | 743 307     | 13.8 |
| 5 000–9 999                   | 53             | 1.8  | 368 623     | 6.9  |
| 10 000–19 999                 | 32             | 1.1  | 460 574     | 8.6  |
| 20 000–49 999                 | 29             | 1    | 850 194     | 15.8 |
| 50 000–99 999                 | 9              | 0.3  | 646 054     | 12   |
| 100 000 and over              | 2              | 0.1  | 664 765     | 12.4 |
| Total                         | 2 883          | 100  | 5 379 455   | 100  |
| Urban municipalities*         | 138            | 4.8  | 3 022 106   | 56.2 |
| Rural municipalities          | 2 745          | 95.2 | 2 357 349   | 43.8 |

Source: Census of citizens, houses and apartments in 2001, 1991. Statistical Office of SR, Bratislava

\* Urban municipalities are those which were declared as towns on the day of census by the National Council of the Slovak Republic pursuant to the Act 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment as amended, the rest of municipalities are regarded as rural. The number of inhabitants is calculated based on the permanent residents' number.

<sup>3</sup> It is marked by the results of research performed as a part of research and development tasks: Regional differentiation, regional development in the Slovak Republic in the context of integration impacts. SAV Institute for Sociology, 2003–2005.

## CHANGES IN THE RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE AND ITS HUMAN POTENTIAL IN THE TRANSFORMATION PERIOD

The residential development in the transformation period is characterised by changes in rural and urban areas, and not only in terms of human potential, but also in conditions of residential development, economic structure, mutual relationships between municipalities (establishment of partnerships), etc. A significantly broader contextual factor operating in this period is the transition of Slovak society from industrial to post-industrial society (see e.g. Müller 1998), which is linked with several qualitative changes in municipalities' human potential.

The current status of the Slovak residential structure reflects the historical development of settlement. Slovakia is known for a very dense structure of settlement reflected in very tight linkages between settlements and various types of municipalities such as rural and urban ones. Dominant types of settlements in the residential structure of SR are rural municipalities forming more than 95% of the overall number of Slovak municipalities.

From 1991 to 2001, we have recorded a 2% growth in the number of rural municipalities. These changes were linked with decentralisation, separation and division of municipalities – processes which were most significant from 1991 to 1993. The most radical influence of these changes was recorded in rural municipalities (up to 200 inhabitants), the growth of which represented more than 7%. Municipalities of rural type accommodated almost 44% of all citizens in 2001, while the majority of them lived in municipali-

ties over 1 thousand inhabitants. This portion has not changed dramatically since 1991. The distribution of citizens into size categories of municipalities in 2001 is shown in the Table 1.

Regional distribution of citizens in rural municipalities is depicted on the map. We can identify districts (NUTS IV) with the largest number of inhabitants living in rural municipalities – Košice surrounding, Námestovo, Gelnice, Poltár, Sobrance, Senec and others, where more than 60% of permanent residents live in rural municipalities (in municipalities with less than 5 thousand inhabitants). The most urbanised districts are, on the other hand, Banská Bystrica, Zvolen, Ilava, Detva, Martin, Skalica, Poprad and others (where in rural municipalities, there are less than 40% inhabitants) (Figure 1).

As far as the development of the number of inhabitants is concerned, the years 1991–2001 are characterised by the word stagnation. After 1989, the rapid growth in the number of inhabitants was interrupted. Relatively the largest increase was recorded in Eastern Slovakia, whereas the smallest growth appeared in Central and Western parts and Bratislava even recorded a decrease in the number of permanent residents. The development in numbers in rural and urban areas differed.

During the transformation period, the portion of citizens living in rural areas mildly increased. This share raised in majority of Slovak regions, with the exception of Žilina and Trenčín region.

The growth in the number of rural parts' inhabitants was mainly related to larger rural municipalities over 2 thousand citizens. The decline in the number of inhabitants was, on the other hand, linked mainly

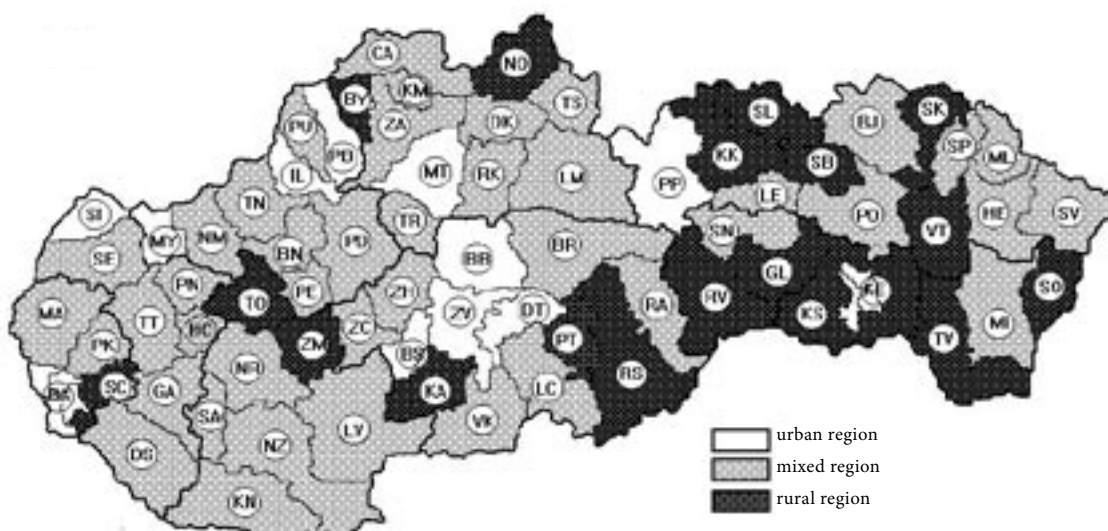


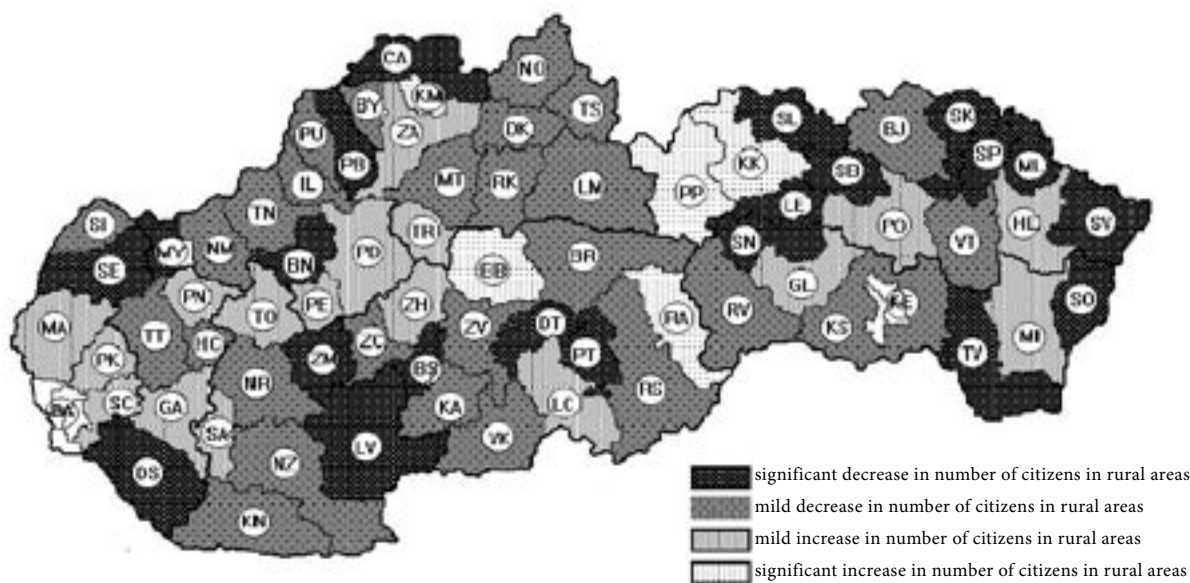
Figure 1. Regions of Slovakia (NUTS 4) according to the number of inhabitants in rural areas (up to 5 thousand citizens), year 2001

with the smallest rural municipalities up to 200 inhabitants, however, that did not relate to all regions or districts (the increase was recorded in Trenčín, Trnava a Žilina regions).

## URBANISATION AND DE-URBANISATION PROCESSES IN SLOVAKIA

towns. The growth in the number of citizens living in towns applies to approx. 21 districts (more than 1% growth). The second group is typical for stagnation or decline in the number of inhabitants living in towns which are linked with the de-urbanisation tendencies.

Several regions in Slovakia are marked by the de-urbanisation process (reducing the number of urban citizens, or a potential interruption of growth in the number of urban citizens and the interruption in the decline or possible growth of rural municipalities). The decreasing number of urban inhabitants occurs in half of Slovak districts. Such decline is either accompanied by the dropping number of inhabitants in rural areas (e.g. the districts of Nové Zámky, Partizánske, Lučenec, etc.), the growing number of inhabitants in both types of municipalities, however,



more significant in rural municipalities (districts of Vranov nad Topľou, Poprad, Revúca, etc.) or by the decrease in number of inhabitants in urban or the increase in rural municipalities (e.g. the districts of Kežmarok, Topoľčany, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Liptovský Mikuláš, Banská Bystrica, Prievidza and others) (Figure 2).

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN RURAL MUNICIPALITIES OF SLOVAKIA

As a result of the present trends in demographical development (a strong decline in birth rate and a mild decrease in mortality rate), age structure of Slovak citizens changed at the end of 90-ies. First, these tendencies were towards the economically active population, whereas nowadays, they reflect the population ageing, i.e. the increased portion of the eldest citizens in society.

Despite a certain delay, the process of demographical ageing correlates with the European trends. The population is getting older mainly due to the lower portion of children, i.e. citizens aged 0–14 (in 1991 to 2001 from 24.9% to 18.9%). The relative number of inhabitants in productive age is now relatively high (62.3% of population in 2001 were aged 15–59).

Transformation changes made a different impact on different territories and types of settlements. In 1991, Slovak towns entered the transformation period with the higher portion of children in population (26.5%) than rural areas (22.8%). This situation was a result of the significant urbanisation process in 70-ies and 80-ies when a lot of young people moved to towns.

At the end of the monitored period, the situation was opposite. The share of children in rural areas was higher (20%) than in urban parts (1.2). This was caused by the slowed-down trends which could be observed throughout the past period as well as by the lower birth-rate in towns than in the countryside. Decline in the number of children in the population was significantly linked with the size category of towns; the larger the urban municipality, the greater the decline.

In this period, the portion of persons in post-productive age increased. This increase was not significantly differentiated in terms of territory, the differences deal mainly with the impacts on various types of municipalities. The increased number of persons in

post-productive age applies only to urban areas. Some categories of rural municipalities even recorded a loss of the post-productive population, mainly small municipalities up to 1 thousand inhabitants.

Rural municipalities entered into the transformation period with a clearly ageing population. Based on the data accessible to us, we can state that this negative trend had not continued. Several regions recorded a mild decrease in the number of post-productive population in rural municipalities (mainly in the regions of Banská Bystrica, Košice, Nitra, Trenčín and Bratislava). At the same time, the number of children in rural areas dropped in the population. This decrease was not identical in all regions, it grew from Eastern regions to the Western ones. Zero-decrease (more of a growth by 0.1 percentage point) was recorded in rural areas of the Prešov region, the largest decrease in the number of children was in rural areas of the Bratislava region (decrease by 4 percentage points).

The worsened population quality does not relate to all size categories equally. The most intensive process occurred in larger rural municipalities over thousand inhabitants as a result of the decreased pre-productive population. On the other hand, decline in the post-productive population was recorded by smaller municipalities up to 1 thousand inhabitants (long marked by the high share of post-productive inhabitants in population), which mildly reversed the trend from the preceding years linked with significant population ageing. Such ageing of population brings along several other social and economic issues. Slovakia is gradually becoming a country with the natural decrease in the number of citizens, even though this situation has so far been regionally differentiated. Ageing of population is deepening, which, along with other factors, creates a complicated situation in some areas.

Despite the fact that the situation on local level is stabilised to a certain extend, the status in rural areas (high portion of elderly citizens in the population persists) is not satisfactory and forms a negative impact on the development of rural communities, mainly in the area of citizens' involvement in resolution of rural issues and activation of their endogenous resources. These problems are emphasized by the outflow of young people to towns due to the job mobility, which temporarily compensates the significant population ageing in towns, even though not so apparently as in the pre-transformation period<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> This trend is outlined in the results of the research carried out as part of the research and development task: Regional Differentiation, Regional Development in the Slovak Republic in the context of integration impacts. Institute for Sociology SAV, 2003–2005.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF SLOVAK RURAL MUNICIPALITIES

The level of acquired education is one of the important characteristics of the citizens' cultural status; which mainly applies to the industrial and even more to the post-industrial societies. The achieved level of education is not only one of the basic characteristics of social status of an individual in society, but also an important prerequisite for regional, urban and rural communities. The closer the society gets to the post-industrial type (characteristics of post-industrial society is introduced e.g. by Bell 1999), the greater is the role that education plays. It mainly influences the achievement of the corresponding or at least roughly adequate level in other dimensions of other social status: job demands, share of power, income level and living standard, quality of life, etc. Our country, similarly as other countries of the European civilisation, has been going through a significant elevation of the educational level since the World War 2.

The development of educational structure in the SR has been recording positive trends for several decades now. Throughout the past decade (year 1991 to 2001), the share of citizens with completed primary education increased from 38.2 % to 26 % of the overall number of citizens older than 15 years; while the percentage of citizens with completed secondary education remained almost unchanged and the number of inhabitants with complete secondary education increased along with the percentage of persons with the University degree (from 7.7% to 9.7%).

Despite the improved quality of education, the differences between rural and urban inhabitants remain significant all over the country. In terms of quality of the educational potential, rural municipalities are below average quality (compared to the national average, the gap is -5.2 percentage point). That applies to all size categories of rural municipalities, which encompass the above-average representation of citizens

with primary or incomplete secondary education, and the below-average number of citizens with complete secondary education and mainly University degree. Moreover, the smaller the municipality is, the worse the educational quality.

Throughout transformation period educational structure (measured by index of education) of rural municipalities all over Slovakia has improved. More significantly, the educational structure improved in rural areas of Western Slovakia (NUTS II), while the most outstanding development was recognized in the regions of Bratislava a Trenčín. On the other hand, the smallest improvement occurred in rural municipalities of Eastern Slovakian regions – mainly the Košice, Prešov a Banská Bystrica regions.

The correlation between size category of the municipality and the degree of achieved education

From 1991 to 2001, the educational level improved in all size categories of municipalities. Mainly in rural areas, the number of citizens with primary education dropped.

The educational potential on all levels has improved and at the same time, differences are being mildly evened. All categories of municipalities are close to the national average. In municipalities up to 10 thousand inhabitants, the quality of educational potential (measured by the index of education) slightly increased, while in municipalities above these 10 thousand inhabitants, it slightly decreased comparing to the national average.

We can already notice a clear correlation between the structure of citizens and size category of municipalities. With the growing size of municipality, the number of inhabitants with primary education decreases, while the percentage of inhabitants with complete secondary education and percentage of persons with the University degree increases. The correlation between educational level of citizens (measured by the achieved qualification degree) and size category of municipality persists throughout the entire monitored period. Out of four monitored

Table 2. Values of Spearman's coefficient of sequence correlation between variables of the level of achieved education and size categories of municipalities

| Year | Education |                      |                   |                     |
|------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|      | primary   | secondary            |                   | university graduate |
|      |           | without leaving exam | with leaving exam |                     |
| 1991 | -0.794**  | 0.137                | 0.802**           | 0.810**             |
| 2001 | -0.704**  | -0.353*              | 0.741**           | 0.769**             |

\*\*Correlation is significant on the level 0.01



degrees of education, the strongest functionality exists between the representation of persons with the University degree and size category of municipalities, and then citizens with the complete secondary and primary education.

Such tendencies have been lasting for a long period; however, the intensity of correlation has decreased in the past decade (Table 2).

Despite lasting differences in the educational structure in rural and urban areas, we can talk about positive trends. The educational level of both types of municipalities is improving, and the fact that in some municipalities the number of persons with primary education decreases faster than in urban parts causes a mild levelling of differences. The long obvious correlation between the growing number of inhabitants in municipality and increasing level of education is slowly diminishing, too. This rule is being broken also due to the fact that the given processes are taking place in a territorially differentiated manner, and the fact that the transformation process included communities of municipalities and regions with various dispositions.

#### **Educational structure of Slovak municipalities and further correlations**

The analysis<sup>5</sup> on the level of size categories of municipalities enabled us to reveal other facts and correlations, which cannot be obtained by the analysis performed on the level of higher territorial units. The analysis also points out to the fact that education is linked with several socio-demographical characteristics of human potential in municipalities of Slovakia and significantly influences differentiation between rural and urban municipalities of Slovakia.

There is a clear positive correlation between the achieved level of education and other characteristics of the level of municipalities, such as the portion of the University graduates (University students) who are permanent residents of the given municipality, the portion of productive citizens in the given municipality, jobs in services, share of the economically active citizens and share of entrepreneurs in given municipality. With such characteristics, the achieved level of education by citizens in the municipality records a significant statistical growth (towards higher level of education) along with share of the given characteristics in municipalities. If we notice these characteristics, we can observe that such factors contribute to the

enhancement in communities of municipalities in several economic and social areas. Equally, it is evident that there is a positive correlation between achieved level of education and Slovak national identity. Such socio-cultural characteristic of citizens is specific and requires a more detail monitoring and analysis.

Based on the monitored facts, we can state that Slovak towns show a very clear tendency to grow into the post-industrial type of society. There is a clear new correlation between persons working in industry and education – with a growing number of inhabitants working in industry, the level of achieved education falls. Such tendency has not been observed in rural municipalities, yet.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The paper pointed out to the inevitability of focusing attention on the local circumstances linked with regional development issues. Human potential is a decisive factor for the development of rural municipalities, therefore when seeking suitable means of endogenous development, it is inevitable to closely monitor its characteristics as well as orientation. It is extremely important to recognize the status of human potential, as an initiator, facilitator and beneficiary of development. Despite the fact that we have focused on several partial characteristics only, we can state that the status of characteristics of human potential on local level is in a very difficult position. Transformation of society has had a different influence upon the communities of municipalities and regions. Slovak towns followed trends leading to the post-industrial type of society, while rural areas' regional developments differ very much in the way they follow this trend. Such developments are related to various processes potentially contributing to the development of Slovak rural municipalities (increased level of education of citizens, de-urbanisation tendencies and increased attractiveness of rural municipalities), but on the other hand, possibly endangering their further development (e.g. decreased number of children in population). Even though some tendencies point out to the improved situation in rural municipalities' status, which was complicated prior to 1989 as a result of interventions, differences in the status of human potential on the level of regions, countryside and town remain very significant and contribute to the disproportionate development in Slovak society.

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<sup>5</sup> Analyses were performed based on results of the Census of inhabitants, houses and apartments in 1991 and 2001 in municipalities. Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used to measure extent of functionality.

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