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## Municipal Tax Policy as a Tool of Local Development

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#### **Abstract**

Municipality as basic unit of territorial government, needs to be fiscally autonomous. This autonomy is reflected both on the expenditure side as well as on the revenue side. The basic revenue group of municipalities is tax revenue. But the real reflection of using the tax jurisdiction is found in case of local taxes. Since 2005 there is a new system of local taxation in Slovakia. Slovak municipalities are able to use their taxing powers in order to support the other local policies. Aim of the paper is to evaluate a local taxes and local taxation as a tool of local (social and economic) development. The paper discusses the relation of tax, social and economic policies of municipality. It also contains a short legal analysis of local taxes use as a tool of supporting social and economic policies in the legal system of Slovak Republic. The paper also contains a proposition and implementation of methodology for quantification the social and stabilizing function of local taxes and its application in district towns of Slovak Republic. Results have shown that in Slovak district towns is no relation between local social and stabilizing policy and their current budgets development.

Keywords: local development; local taxes; municipalities; real estate tax; tax policy; social policy; stabilizing policy;

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#### 1. Introduction

Local development is a very structured and complex phenomenon. According to Maier and Todtling (1997, 1998) it is clear that the development has three dimensions – spatial, economic and social. The objective of this paper is to evaluate the use of local taxes in order to support local economic and social development in specific conditions of Slovakia. In economic theory is questionable whether public sector should or should not interfere into market based economy. Current theories of regional and local development, mainly institutional theories, the Learning regions theory, the Cluster theory, the Theory of the Regional innovation systems and so on (e.g. Blazek – Uhlir, 2011; Bucek – Rehak – Tvrdon, 2010; Vyrostova, 2010; Maier – Todtling, 1997, 1998) support interventions of public sector subjects into economy.

Zarska (2008) says that the most important financial tool of local development in conditions of municipalities is local taxes and local taxation. In order to implement an objectives of local development use municipalities their own stabilizing policies. In comparison with the economic policy of state these have a little influence on the territory, but in specific conditions of municipalities they may help local producers and then inhabitants and municipality as well. The role of municipalities in support respectively in stabilization of local economy is analyzed in Jezkova – Jezek (2011) as well as Toth et al. (2014). Local taxes also fulfill a stabilizing function but it has not as big influence on economy as the state taxes. From the reality it is clear that the social (redistributive) function of local taxes is used more often. It is necessary to state the main local taxes functions.

The basic functions of taxes are same as the functions of public sector as well. According to Musgrave and Musgrave (1989) there are three functions of public sector:

- 1. Allocative function the purpose is to collect an adequate resources to finance a provision of public services
- 2. Stabilizing function the purpose is to influence an unemployment rate, inflation rate, balance of payment and GDP (the magical quadrilateral)
  - 3. Redistributive function the purpose is a reduction of social disparities

In application of these public sector functions to local taxes it may be said that local taxes in general fulfill these functions:

- 1. Allocative (fiscal) function Local taxes are perceived as a source of financing the public services provision.
- 2. Stabilizing (economic) function Stabilization of the local economy. Implementation of tax policy measures in order to support local producers or entrepreneurial activities in territory\*.
- 3. Redistributive (social) function Redistribution of a private property (in form of obligatory public payment) among the municipality inhabitants. Redistributive function is implemented in the whole process of tax administration and tax proceedings. Basically it is reflected in determination of specific conditions for particular activities or particular tax subjects with reflection of their social status, public interest and the orientation of the social policy of tax administrator (municipality). According to Babcak (2015) the social function has no place in taxation. This opinion is also shared by Duracinska (2014). However Vernarsky et al. (2010) refuted it by a specific monograph. Molitoris (2010) deals in this monograph directly with a social dimension of local taxes.

In the following sections of this paper will be analyzed an implementation of social and stabilizing functions of local taxes in specific conditions of Slovak municipalities. For the purpose of this paper will be a municipal tax policy perceived as the use of local taxes functions in order to influence the social, economic and environmental situation in territory primarily by: (1) deciding of imposing the local

<sup>\*</sup> For more: Alm – Buschman - Sjoquist (2011); Alm – Buschman - Sjoquist (2014); Baskaran (2014); Bondonio – Greenbaum (2007); Braid (2013); Fisher (1996); Gruber (2010); Janeba - Osterloh (2013); Lynch (2004); Lyytikäinen (2012); McCluskey - Bevc (2007); McCluskey - Franzsen (2005); Presbitero - Sacchi – Zazzaro (2014); Ulbrich (2011)

taxes, (2) determination of taxation conditions, (3) determination of tax liability exemptions, (4) procedural position of the tax authority and (5) authorization to write off an uncollected tax debts.

#### 2. Data and Methodology

The objective of submitted text is to evaluate the use of local taxes as a tool of local social and economic development in specific conditions of Slovak municipalities as well as an application of a simple model of local tax loss in order to use local taxes as a tool of local social and economic development. The research question is whether there is a relation between the real estate tax stabilizing and social function implementation and current deficits or not. The main reason is to find out whether municipalities in order to gain more revenue when the gap between current revenue and expenditure increases (in a negative sense), restrict the use of real estate tax to support the local inhabitants and entrepreneurial units. There will be used data of 2008-2013 current deficits, because according to this research question there is a need to compute a relation with a one year gap.

The research sample is assembled from Slovak district and regional towns except of town Kosice and Bratislava (because of their two-leveled government). The sample selection was determined by the accessibility of data. The material for the research was provided by generally binding regulations of analyzed municipalities and statements on real estate tax for year 2009–2014. This season has been chosen due to the fact that in season 2005–2008 have Slovak municipalities practically no effort to change their tax policies (in 2009 they had felt the first impacts of economic crisis).

The used model is almost the same as in Poliak (2015). The proposed model is based on fiscal capacity quantification by Jilek (2008). Fiscal capacity is the indicator of the ability, respectively of the potential of municipality to finance the local public goods from its own tax revenue. It is quantified as:

$$C_i = t^a.B_i \tag{1}$$

When:

t<sup>a</sup> – average tax rate

B<sub>i</sub> – tax base for tax "i"

This method of quantification of so called "potential revenue" shows a high degree of uncertainty because the calculation is based on the average tax rate. This formula will therefore be edited as follows.

A tax loss in this case is a volume of income which is abandoned by the municipality due to implementation of selected sectoral policy into its tax policy. It is influenced by interference of municipality primarily in area of:

- 1. Tax rate
- 2. Subject of local tax
- 3. Registered tax arrears

It is a sum between a potential income and real income of analyzed tax. A problematic institute is local tax arrears. Municipalities can solve this problem by:

- 1. Implementation of officiality principle the municipal council may write off a part of arrears.
- 2. Implementation of dispositive principle according to the tax debtor initiative may municipality at the request pardon a registered arrear.

According to the form of register and reporting of municipalities it is very hard to find out the purpose of dealing with tax arrears. In accordance of a scientific objectivity it is better to abstract from the institute of tax arrears.

A real income from particular local tax is a sum of paid tax (while abstracting from the existence of tax arrears) at various tax regimes.

Real income = 
$$((NTb * BR) + \sum (NTi * Ri))$$
 (3)

When:

NTb – Number of tax subjects taxed by a basic tax rate

BR - Basic tax rate

NTi – Number of tax subjects taxed by a different tax rates (each)

Ri – a tax rate (rates) different of a basic tax rate

In case of a special tax regime we may quantify a tax loss as a multiple of number of tax subjects taxed by a specific tax regime and a difference between a basic tax rate and a specific tax rate.

$$Tax loss = (\sum (NTi * (BR - Ri)) + (NTe * BR))$$
(4)

When:

NTe – Number of subjects exempted of taxation

In case of a total exemption of taxation (zero tax rate) creates a tax loss whole potential income of these tax subjects.

According to the fact that the tax loss will be quantified in terms of the real estate tax, it is necessary to edit formula (3) and (4) as follows.

Real income = 
$$((Ab * BR) + \sum (Ai * Ri))$$
 (5)

When:

Ab – Area taxed by a basic tax rate

BR - Basic tax rate

Ai – Area taxed by a different tax rates (each)

Ri – A tax rate (rates) different of a basic tax rate

Lands in Slovakia are taxed based on the value. Therefore it is necessary to apply for the real estate tax this modified procedure.

$$Tax loss = (\sum (Ai * (BR - Ri)) + (Ae * BR))$$
(6)

When:

Ae – Area exempted of taxation

In submitted text will be quantified a social and stabilizing function of the real estate tax. According to the fact that Statements of real estate tax do not contain sufficient information about housing tax, it will be considered as the object of an implementation of a social function of this tax. Of building tax will be into calculation of stabilizing function included these types of buildings: (1) buildings for agricultural production, (2) industrial buildings and (3) buildings for other entrepreneurship, storage and administration are the object of a stabilizing function of the real estate tax. The other buildings\*

<sup>\* (1)</sup> residential buildings, (2) recreational and gardening cottages, (3) detached garages, (4) other buildings and (5) multipurpose buildings.

are the object of the social function quantification. Of tax land will be for the purpose of stabilizing function quantification taken into account (1) arable lands, (2) forest lands and (3) fish ponds and the other economically used areas. It is due to their potential of generating the revenue. These types of lands are used by a person who has ownership, rent or user rights to these types of lands, for economic activities that generate a direct or indirect kind of benefit. Due to the municipal regulation of tax regime in case of permanent grasslands, gardens, built-up areas and courtyards, construction sites and other areas, these will be taken into account in case of social function quantification.

The actual quantification of social and stabilizing function is based on the formulas (4), (5) and (6). Both functions are quantified in proportion to the total potential income from the real estate tax.

$$social/stabilising \ function = \frac{\text{Loss of specified components of real estate tax}}{\text{Potential income of real estate tax}}$$
 (7)

The relation between the social and stabilizing function and current deficit will be computed by IBM SPSS Statistics software. For the results presentation will be used a correlation matrixes for each function.

#### 3. Results and Discussion

The objective of submitted text is to evaluate the use of local taxes as a tool of local social and economic development. Legal construction of local taxes in Slovakia allows to municipalities to use a wide spectrum of supporting their local economies. From the analysis of generally binding regulations of district towns it is clear that the use of local taxes as a tool of local economic development is not as enhanced as their use as a tool of local social policy.

According to the actual law status since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 Slovak municipalities are according to the Act Nr.582/2004 Coll. On Local Taxes as amended authorized to levy (1) Real estate tax (land tax, building tax, housing tax), (2) Dog licence tax, (3) Tax for use of public space, (4) Tax for accommodation, (5) Tax for vending machines, (6) Tax for non-winning gaming machines, (7) Tax for the entry and remaining of the vehicle in historical part of town and (8) tax for the nuclear device. The evidence of real estate tax is in Slovak Republic sufficiently detailed for a relatively precise quantification of tax loss. From analysis of the generally binding regulations of Slovak district towns it is clear that local taxes are used in various forms as a tool of local social and economic policies.

Table 1. The Most Frequented Ways of Social and Stabilizing Functions of Local Taxes Implementation in Slovakia

Тах	Subject to tax	Social function implementation	Stabilizing function implementation
Real estate tax	Use, ownership, leasing of realty	Tax reliefs for inhabitants older than the specified age (e.g. 62/65/70 years), inhabitants living alone, and physically disabled inhabitants.	Tax reliefs for buildings, serving as museums, galleries, exhibition halls and of lands that are farmed by self-employed farmers
Dog licence tax	Ownership or possession of dog	Tax reliefs for guide dogs.	Tax reliefs for dogs which are used for a property secure, or which are owned by a private security services.
Tax for use of public space	Use of a dedicated public space in not the usual way	Tax reliefs for cultural or charity events for older people, kids or younglings.	Tax reliefs for summer terraces and seating, presentation of craftsmen work, sale of smallholders sale and so on.

Tax for accommodation	Overnight stay at an accommodation facility	Tax reliefs for the physically disabled person card holder, and students.	Tax reliefs to accommodation facilities if they prove that they have confirmed by the contract of accommodation facility occupation as a whole or its part for the purpose of accommodation of individuals.
Tax for vending machines	Operation of vending machine	Tax reliefs for vending machines containing only medical supplies and equipment, or protection against the spread of infectious diseases.	Tax reliefs for vending machines selling food (except alcohol and cigarettes) and vending machines selling milk and milk products.
Tax for non-winning gaming machines	Operation of non-winning gaming machine	No use.	Tax reliefs for entertaining game machines designed for fun of preschool children placed in commercial establishments.
Tax for the entry and remaining of the vehicle in historical part of town	Entry and remaining of the vehicle in the demarked part of municipality	Tax reliefs for the physically disabled person card holder.	Tax reliefs for owners of facilities in historical part of the municipality.
Tax for the nuclear device	Operation of nuclear device	No use.	No use.

Table 1 contains an overview of the most frequented use of social and stabilizing functions of local taxes in Slovakia. The reality shows that local taxes in Slovakia are used primarily (if the fiscal function is disregarded) as a tool of local social policy. From the table 1 is clear that implementation of social function of local taxes is determined by (1) achieving a minimum age, (2) proving a health condition, (3) implementing a specific (public-beneficial) activities. Local taxes as a tool of local economic policy is primarily oriented to support mainly small local businesses and self-employed.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix - Social Function/Current Deficits

		Deficit 2008	Deficit 2009	Deficit 2010	Deficit 2011	Deficit 2012	Deficit 2013
Social 2009	Pearson Correlation	-,091	-,121	-,063	-,096	-,506**	-,194
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,459	,321	,610	,433	,000	,111
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Social 2010	Pearson Correlation	-,055	-,139	-,086	-,159	-,491**	-,199
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,653	,255	,480	,193	,000	,101
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Social 2011	Pearson Correlation	,062	-,085	-,070	-,130	-,174	,030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,613	,487	,568	,288	,154	,804

,051 ,678 69 ,052	-,193 ,112 69	-,047 ,701 69	-,126 ,301 69	-,226 ,061 69	-,145 ,235 69
69	69	,	,	,	ŕ
		69	69	69	69
,052	200				
	-,200	-,023	-,118	-,078	-,100
,669 69	,099 69	,853 69	,334 69	,527 69	,412 69
,013	-,234	-,117	-,134	-,169	-,123
,917 69	,053 69	,338 69	,272 69	,164 69	,312 69
	,013 ,917 69	,013 -,234 ,917 ,053	69 69 69 ,013 -,234 -,117 ,917 ,053 ,338 69 69 69	69 69 69 69  ,013 -,234 -,117 -,134  ,917 ,053 ,338 ,272 69 69 69 69	69 69 69 69 69  ,013 -,234 -,117 -,134 -,169 ,917 ,053 ,338 ,272 ,164 69 69 69 69 69

Tables contain computed correlations of real estate tax social/stabilizing function implementation and current deficits of Slovak district towns. It is clear that, except stabilizing function implementation in year 2009 and current deficit in year 2008 when there was a weak relation, the Pearson correlation coefficient values are very low. Regression analysis for each pair of years has shown that regression models and therefore results of Pearson coefficient, are statistically non-significant. According to the results it may thus be said that there is no relation between real estate tax social function implementation and current deficits of Slovak district towns and at the same time there is no relation between real estate tax stabilizing function implementation and current deficits of Slovak district towns. Development of current budgets has thus no influence on construction of tax policies in Slovakia.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix – Stabilizing Function/Current Deficits

		Deficit	Deficit	Deficit	Deficit	Deficit	Deficit
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Stabilizing	Pearson	,252*	,202	,234	,041	,266*	,156
2009	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,037	,097	,053	,738	,027	,202
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Stabilizing 2010	Pearson Correlation	,188	,126	,261*	-,001	,193	,102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,123	,302	,031	,994	,113	,404
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Stabilizing 2011	Pearson Correlation	,180	,141	,230	-,009	,176	,089
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,139	,248	,058	,941	,147	,468
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Stabilizing	Pearson Correlation	,187	,152	,241*	,023	,172	,103
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,123	,213	,046	,854	,157	,401

2012	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Stabilizing 2013	Pearson Correlation	,135	,076	,250*	-,113	,127	-,085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,270	,536	,038	,354	,298	,487
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
Stabilizing 2014	Pearson Correlation	,073	,029	,167	-,253*	,057	-,104
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,549	,810	,169	,036	,641	,396
	N	69	69	69	69	69	69
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

Arithmetic mean of computed real estate tax stabilizing function implementation loss during analyzed season was 2.87% of potential real estate tax revenue. Social function implementation "cost" Slovak district towns in average 6.26% of potential real estate tax revenue. There are also high deviations from these values, but it is determined by the orientation of individual municipal policies.

From analysis of the situation in Slovak municipalities is obvious that the implementation of social function of local taxes is preferred before the implementation of the stabilizing function. It may be due to the fact that Slovak municipalities have far less options in supporting local economy than municipalities in other countries. Enterprises in Slovakia are primarily motivated to establish their facilities by state interventions. In comparison to reliefs on the corporate income tax (which is fully in administration of the State) and reliefs on the real estate tax it is obvious that municipality may use its tax policy stabilizing function only to support the state stabilizing policy. This fact is main reason why Slovak municipalities use local taxes primarily as a tool of local social policy. Presented results are unique; there is no comparable study which would deal with this problem, so it is not possible to compare reached results with results in other countries.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the research of a local economic development tools implementation by Slovak municipalities it is possible to say that (Sebova, 2009):

- 1. Tax reliefs provided to entrepreneurs by municipalities have no significant influence on decisions of an entrepreneurial subject.
- 2. Entrepreneurial subjects, in spite of almost no influence on the location decision, state that local tax reliefs are an important tool of entrepreneurship support on the municipal territory.

Business Alliance of Slovakia (2005, 29) conducted a survey among entrepreneurs in order to find out which factors are the most important for their activities. Based on these results it is possible to state that more than half of a research sample declared that the level of local tax burden does not pose a major problem for them.

According to results presented in the submitted paper it is clear that Slovak district towns implement some activities in order to support local economy by their tax policies. The most frequented local economy support tax tool is tax on use of public space. In case of real estate tax (after applying a teleological interpretation of the components of this tax) the stabilizing function implementation tax loss value is only 2.87% of potential revenue of the real estate tax.

According to stated research question the results showed that there is no relation between using real estate tax as a tool of local economic development and current deficits of Slovak district towns. Therefore an increase of current deficit does not lead into a decrease/increase of real estate tax loss volume spent on support of the local economy. Research has, however, shown that there is a (very

weak) negative correlation between current deficits of Slovak district towns and use of real estate tax social function. It appears that the social function of local taxes implementation is in condition of Slovak municipalities (not only district towns) much more popular than using local taxes in order to local economic development support.

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