

DISSERTATION THEMES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/2021 AT FESRD SUA NITRA STUDY PROGRAMME - INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Thesis title: Participatory Approaches to Integrated Strategic Planning at Regional and Local Level

Supervisor: **doc. Ing. Ol'ga Roháčiková, PhD.**
Supervisor specialist: **Ing. Katarína Melichová, PhD.**
Department: Department of Regional and Rural Development
Study form: Full time

Summary:

Participatory planning expects the involvement of relevant stakeholders at almost all stages of the strategic document development process and partly in its subsequent implementation. Amending Act no. 309/2014 Coll. that amended the Act no. no. 539/2008 Coll. on the promotion of regional development, significantly strengthened the partnership dimension in the elaboration of strategic documents at both local and regional level. Nevertheless, in the evaluation report on the state and efficiency of public administration in 2017, the European Commission out of 28 member countries placed the Slovak Republic in 24th place. This placement was precisely due to the negative assessment of strategic planning capacities (Slovakia ranked 24th along with Cyprus and Hungary), public administration transparency (28th) and the lack of cross-sectoral coordination (23rd). As a cause of the low rate of participatory processes in public administration and the dynamics of administrative reforms, the report identifies several factors which, however, have their origin in often different national cultures. In this aspect, Slovakia ranked 20th in key dimensions such as distance of power (accepting hierarchy and uneven distribution of power) and in individualism (understanding individual responsibility and need for self-determination). Disregarding these specifics of Slovak conditions, participatory approaches to strategic planning proven in other countries are often used inadequately or only formally.

The aim of the dissertation thesis is to explore alternative ways of participatory strategic planning and change management, namely innovative forms of public-private-people partnerships (PPPPs), social and institutional innovations and new management models based on the concept of polycentric management of common-pool resources. The methodology will be based on quantitative and qualitative research methods, in particular the tools of mathematical sociology and behavioural economics (network analysis models, behavioural games and experiments, nudging, questionnaire, interview, focus groups, observation, etc.).

The dissertation pertains to the project Horizon 2020: SEP-210579659 IN-HABIT (Inclusive Health and Wellbeing in Small and Medium-sized Cities)

Growth dynamics in rural areas of Slovakia: employment and population

Supervisor: **prof. Ing. Pavol Schwarcz, PhD.**
Supervisor specialist: **doc. PhDr. Mgr. Ing. Ladislav Mura, PhD.**
Department: Department of EU Policies
Type of study: Fulltime

Summary:

Addressing current rural challenges such as depopulation, weakening the economic base, socio-economic changes are being considered as fundamental priorities of EU rural development policy. The thesis will follow the dynamics of population and employment changes in particular sectors of the national economy in rural areas of Slovakia. The aim will be to assess demographic change along with changes in the labour market and to consider the spatial implications of these changes, considering the heterogeneity of rural areas. The evaluation will be based on the examination of census data and other databases of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

The dissertation follows the project Jean Monnet Center of Excellence - No.: 611446-EPP-1-2019-1-EN-EPPJMO-CoE - CEEAG: Center of Excellence for European Agri-Food Chain

Agricultural land protection from the perspective of the sustainability of rural areas in Slovakia and in selected states of the European Union.

Supervisor: **doc. JUDr. Lucia Palšová, PhD.**
Department: Department of Law
Study form: Full time

Summary:

The scientific aim of the dissertation thesis is to map the protection of agricultural land in selected regions of Slovakia and selected countries of the European Union, to identify and evaluate problems related to the agricultural land protection and to find out the effectiveness of the tools. Based on the findings, the thesis will determine the effectiveness of the tools effected the agricultural land protection, with an emphasis on the sustainability of rural areas.

The generally formulated scientific aim implies the following partial objectives, which will be necessary to achieve the aim of the thesis in the examined regions:

- to analyse the current state of agricultural land protection in qualitative and quantitative terms in Slovakia and selected EU countries;
- to analyse the development of the legislation on the agricultural land protection and its implications for the protection of quality and the change in the acreage of agricultural land;
- to map and evaluate the effectiveness of instruments affecting the protection of agricultural land;
- to analyse "good practices" from selected EU countries and their possible application in Slovakia.
- to identify barriers to agricultural land protection in relation to rural development.

The result of the dissertation thesis will be the formulation of systemic measures for the modification of legislative measures and the practice of decision-making in the field of agricultural land protection, which will positively influence rural development.

The thesis will use primary data sources and currently available secondary data sources obtained from the Statistical Office of the SR and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the SR.