

# THE SUCCESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRUCTURALLY AFFECTED CITY OF KARVINÁ

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The aim of this paper is to propose measures leading to overcoming the limits of development of the city of Karviná. Based on the results of the situational analysis supplemented by a questionnaire survey, it can be said that the economic and social pillars of the city are not developing very successfully. On the contrary, the environmental pillar, its landscape condition, and environmental care are developing most successfully. The current problematic factors limiting the development of the city are mainly the insufficient and unattractive local labour market and business activities, the image of the city, and the still low air quality. A strategy of diversification of the economic structure and a programme of support for small and medium-sized enterprises can make a significant contribution to overcoming these problems, achieving successful future development, and fully exploiting the city's potential. There is also scope for the use of development projects such as the New Economic Zone initiative and appropriate publicity for the city's strengths. A strategy aimed at improving air quality in the region is also a key aspect. There is an opportunity to finance these measures through the European Equitable Transformation Fund, which can greatly facilitate their implementation.

**Keywords:** regional development, peripheral regions, development strategies, urban development

## Introduction

The city of Karviná is currently facing a gradual decline in mining activity, which until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a key focus of the local industry and a source of jobs. The city has lost its primary focus as a result of the decline of the mining industry and is now facing a number of negative consequences (e.g. out-migration, lack of employment opportunities, damaged environment, low attractiveness for investors, etc.).

In the context of regional development, the Statutory City of Karviná belongs to the so-called "structurally affected" and "economically weak" regions of the Czech Republic, which benefit from concentrated state support in the form of fundraising. The city uses regional policy instruments at the European, national and local level and strategic documents for development which analyse the current state of the territory and propose the direction of the region's development and specific steps to achieve the set objectives for the chosen period.

The main objective of the city is to implement a development strategy that replaces the original core mining sector with new areas and sectors that will be sustainable in the long term and ensure an increasing quality of life for the inhabitants in all its areas.

Regional development can be defined as a discipline in the academic or practical sense, which aims to increase competitiveness, develop the economic, social and environmental structure of a region and eliminate or mitigate disparities that fundamentally affect the potential of a given territory (Cejpová, 2018).

The Ministry of Regional Development, in cooperation with regions and central administrative authorities, identifies problem regions that lag other territorial units. These regions are determined based on a socio-economic analysis of the conditions of the territory, and their definition is determined by Section 4 of Act No. 248/2000 Coll. on Support for Regional Development. Incentives of operational subsidy programmes are directed to state-supported regions and action programmes for territorial development are created (Popelka, 2021).

Based on their own analytical work, Körner et al. (2017) state that problem regions differ from other regions at least in the following characteristics:

- poor labour market situation (imbalance between supply and demand on the labour market, rising unemployment);
- a significant increase in the risk of poverty among the population;
- ageing of the region (outflow of young people and low birth rate);
- environmental pollution (caused by intensive economic activity).

The practical level of regional development is represented by regional policy, i.e. the activities of the state, local and regional authorities aimed at supporting development activities in regions and mitigating the negative consequences of uneven regional development (Glücker, 2016).

Authors such as Bessonova (2019), Šilhan et al. (2018) or Applová (2016) are concerned in their studies with the evaluation of the success of regional policy. According to them, the latter represents a set of activities that should be used to achieve strategic development goals, reduce interregional disparities and successfully develop the region. However, according to the authors, regular evaluation, identifying strengths and weaknesses and proposing appropriate recommendations are essential for the effectiveness of regional policy.

According to the above-mentioned authors, this evaluation is possible by comparing the results of selected relevant development indicators at the beginning and end of the regional policy programming period, which allows to assess the success of the set policy in the development of the region. As a second possible method of evaluation, the authors mention a sociological survey, thanks to which it is possible to obtain information by means of a questionnaire survey or e.g. a structured interview, which is not possible to obtain from databases of statistical data or publicly available information (e.g. finding out the subjective opinions of the inhabitants on the current situation and the success of the development of the municipality, assessing the usefulness of the implemented development projects, assessing the success of the development, the effectiveness of the development policy, etc.).

Tuchlynska et al. (2021) mention in their study that the involvement of residents in assessing the development of a region is essential, as the primary objective of development is to improve their quality of life. Therefore, according to the authors, it is essential to find out their comments or suggestions

through sociological surveys, which can significantly contribute to future regional policy actions. For example, a questionnaire survey focusing on three groups of questions could be used for evaluation:

1. questions assessing the current situation in the village;
2. questions to determine the opinion on the direction of the development of the municipality (to determine the usefulness of implemented or planned projects and activities);
3. questions leading respondents to propose goals, projects and specific activities for the future development of the municipality.

By regularly evaluating and following this approach, as Tuchlynska et al. (2021) state, it is possible to implement regional development policy of the city more effectively and thus improve the quality of life of its residents. This approach makes it possible to identify key areas in need of improvement, analyse the effectiveness of ongoing measures, and at the same time actively involve citizens in the process of developing the city's future goals and strategies.

## Material and methods

The aim of this paper is to assess the success of the structurally affected city in its economic, environmental and social development and to propose measures to overcome the limits of the development of the area.

The assessment of development success was applied to the structurally affected city of Karviná. Methodologically, this assessment of the success of the city in its development of the three pillars of regional development for the period 2014–2020 was examined from the perspective of the inhabitants of the region using a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was created in Survio and electronically distributed using the social networks of the city of Karviná. It was also sent to selected respondents (e.g. secondary schools) to their email addresses.

The actual data collection was carried out in March 2022. The questionnaire was divided into three parts according to each pillar, with each part containing a set of three research questions based on the recommendations of Tuchlynska et al. (2021) for assessing the success of the city in its development.

The data have been sorted based on the number of answers and expressed in

percentages to be more understandable. The visual analysis of the results helped to cover out the main limitations and achievements to be able to formulate conclusions and recommendations for the future development.

## Results and discussion

In the survey there have been 217 respondents participated, of which 122 respondents (56.2%) were women and 95 respondents (43.8%) were men. Of the total, 60.8% of the respondents were employed, 18% of the research population were students, followed by self-employed (7.8%), retired and unemployed.

When examining the success of the development of the economic pillar, the respondents were confronted with the set goal of the city's regional policy for the 2014–2020 programming period "to develop entrepreneurship and the labour market in Karviná" (SPR, 2014). While people of working age perceived the development of the economic pillar as unsuccessful, individuals of post-productive age, on the contrary, assessed this development as successful. This result can be seen as logical, as the younger generation is more active in seeking employment and may have a better overview of labour market dynamics, while people of post-productive age may place more emphasis on stability and overall quality of life, which may contribute to positive perception of economic development.

The business environment was selected by respondents as the area currently developing least well (Figure 1). This option was chosen by 50.2% of them. Entrepreneurs are leaving the city

due to reasons such as low concentration of young people, unskilled workforce, negative image of the city, etc. (Obce v datech, 2021).

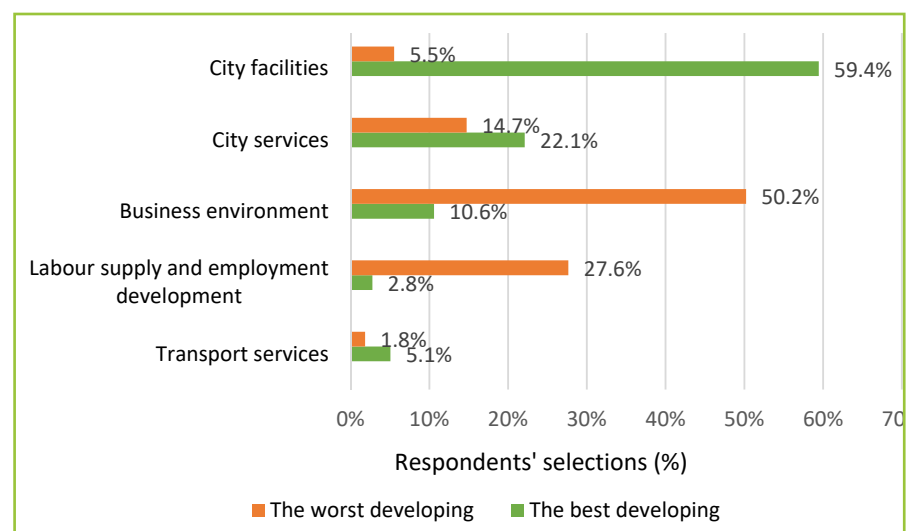
The second most frequently chosen option was "labour supply and employment trends". Together with the first option, the labour market area was identified by almost 77% of respondents as the least developing. On the other hand, the highest ranked area was urban amenities, selected by almost 60% of participants.

In the last part of the evaluation of the economic pillar, respondents chose from a range of upcoming development projects of the city those which they evaluated as the most potentially beneficial for economic development, with 45% of respondents choosing the project "Karviná zone".

For the development of the social pillar in the 2014–2020 programming period, the City of Karviná has set the goal of "improving the living conditions for all its residents, slowing down the out-migration of young people and bringing the city closer to the world as an attractive area" (SPR, 2014). A total of 74% of the respondents of the questionnaire survey believe that the set goal was not fulfilled by the city of Karviná in the selected period (sum of the options "no" and rather no"). According to the respondents, the most problematic area in the development of the social pillar is the image of the city (Figure 2).

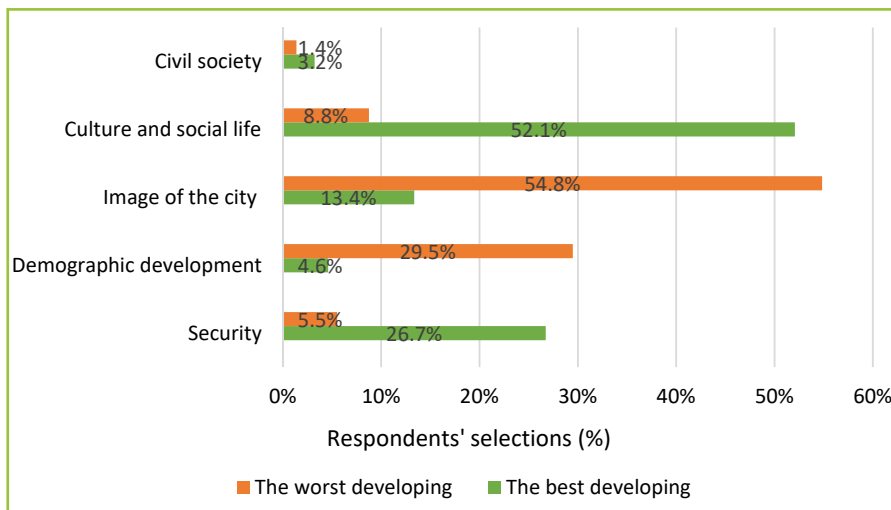
Thus, the residents expressed dissatisfaction with the external impression of the city, i.e. how the city affects the environment outside its residents.

On the other hand, 52.1% of respondents say that "culture and social life" is developing best, followed (26.7%) by "safety" in the city.



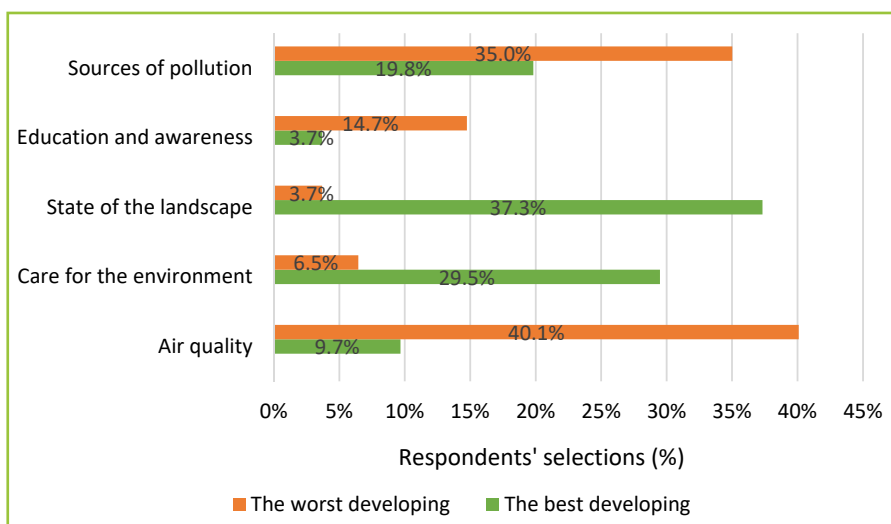
**Figure 1** Evaluation of economic development areas

Source: own processing, 2023; data: own questionnaire survey, 2022



**Figure 2** Evaluation of social areas of development

Source: own processing, 2023; data: own questionnaire survey, 2022



**Figure 3** Evaluation of environmental areas of development

Source: own processing, 2023; data: own questionnaire survey, 2022

to the recommendation for successful future development in the environmental area, 68% of respondents selected a project aimed at monitoring and improving air quality as the most beneficial for the city.

Based on the results of the survey, the economic pillar has not been successful enough for the city to develop during the 2014–2020 programming period. Its most problematic area is the insufficient supply of job opportunities and the low attractiveness of the business environment. Within the social pillar, the area of the city's image, which has a significant impact on the potential inflow of investors, new business activities, and affects the depopulating demographic trend in the city, was the most difficult to develop. The environmental pillar has been successfully developed thanks to the reclamation and transformation processes of the local landscape, but the quality of the local air is still problematic.

The Statutory City of Karviná is currently facing a significant decline in its formerly main sectoral focus, i.e. coal mining. The consequence is a high level of unemployment, insufficient attractiveness of the area for new business entities, investors and young people looking for employment. Based on a questionnaire survey among residents, the economic pillar is underdeveloped in the 2014–2020 programming period despite the use of development strategies (e.g. in the area of business activities and labour supply). On the contrary, Karviná is the most successful in its environmental development. Within the social pillar, the most problematic areas are 'city image' and 'demographic development'.

The successful development of the structurally affected city of Karviná is dependent on the city's interventions and its development policy, in addition to assistance at the national and supranational level (i.e. state interventions and its direct financial support, subsidy programmes and EU funds). It is also essential to overcome the current problematic factors limiting this development and to make adequate use of its potential and opportunities. Some measures can contribute significantly to this, such as diversification of the city's economic structure, adaptation to current global demands and trends on the labour market or the demands of the city's inhabitants, appropriate presentation of Karviná's strengths motivating investors, entrepreneurs and young people to come to the city. It is essential to reclaim the areas affected by mining and to ensure the improvement of the local air quality.

For the successful development of the social pillar of the city of Karviná, 40% of respondents recommended the development project "New Faculty of Silesian University", to make the city more attractive for students. 30% of respondents suggested the implementation of a media campaign that would actively seek to improve the overall public perception of the city.

By analogy with the economic and social parts of the questionnaires, the participants were presented with the city's goal for the development of the environmental area in the period 2014–2020: "to develop Karviná, to improve public spaces and to increase the quality of the environment" (SPR, 2014). Of the total sample, 72% percent of the respondents considered the development of the city's environmental pillar to be successful.

According to 37% of the respondents (81 persons), the "state of the landscape" of Karviná is the best developing area (Figure 3). Thus, these respondents believe that there is a positive transformation of the city's landscape form (e.g. through reclamation).

The second most frequently chosen area closely related to the state of the landscape was the "care of the environment" of the city, i.e. the area containing nature protection or improvement of the state of individual environmental components.

"Air Quality" was identified by 87 respondents (i.e. 40.1%) as an area that the City is currently failing to successfully develop. The second most frequently selected option was the area of "Pollution Sources", i.e., attenuation and elimination of negative impacts. In relation

The recommendations (measures) can be appropriately funded through regional policy money at European level by using e.g. the current “Fair Transformation Fund” (FST). The European Structural and Investment Funds portal defines it as comprehensive support to significantly affected regions (especially coal regions) to mitigate economic, social and environmental problems (subsidiaseu, 2022). According to the same source, the FST Fund will be available through the Operational Programme Equitable Transition. This is a programme for the 2021–2027 programming period aimed at addressing the impact of the shift away from coal in the most affected regions and transforming their economic structure.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey highlights the critical challenges in Karviná during the 2014–2020 period. The economic pillar faces difficulties due to limited job opportunities and an unattractive business environment. The city’s image remains an obstacle within the social pillar, impacting investor attraction and demographic trends. While environmental progress has been made, air quality remains a concern.

The decline in coal mining has led to unemployment and decreased appeal for businesses, investors, and the younger workforce. Development strategies have fallen short of economic growth targets. Success lies in local interventions, diversifying the economy, aligning with global labour market trends, and marketing Karviná’s strengths. Continuing reclamation efforts and air quality improvements are vital.

These measures can be funded through European regional policies, including the “Fair Transformation Fund” (FST). Accessing the FST Fund via the Operational Programme Equitable Transition for 2021–2027 offers Karviná support in addressing the consequences of its economic transition and shaping its future.

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