

SWM implementation through PPP projects

Improving the development of new areas...

The conversion of land to urban areas has – from the water management perspective – reached its limits. Conventional drainage systems are no longer able to deliver satisfactory outcomes and in view of sustainability principles prove to be inadequate. Due to the extensive surface sealing, municipalities struggle with insufficiency of their drainage systems, which results in frequent flooding and an ever-increasing pollution load of water bodies. Changing climate in the form of extreme torrential rains worsens the condition.

There is, however, a solution to tackling this issue; that is retaining stormwater on the plot where it falls, infiltrating it underground or regulating its runoff. This way, both quantitative and qualitative reduction in sewer and surface water load may be reached. Provided stormwater control measures are constructed and operated effectively, the natural water-cycle will benefit greatly.

The prerequisite for the effectiveness of the stormwater management (SWM) control measures is the consistent observance of the complex rules concerning almost every field of the construction industry. Where such rules are not institutionalised, their enforcement is extremely ineffective; the rules required at local level are then not employed systematically, orderly and consistently. Furthermore, investors tend to circumvent the rules since their observance makes construction work more costly.

In the last few decades, the majority of West European countries have employed stormwater management measures through legislative, economic and technical rules, as well as through public awareness programmes. East European countries have not, by contrast, introduced any such systemic tools for SWM implementation.

The most common way of developing new, especially resident areas in the Czech Republic, is via property developers. The developers purchase land, build houses, sell them and hand over the infrastructure facilities to the municipalities. Once the area is developed, they neither own nor operate anything. Their role is motivated solely by gain of the highest profit possible; other criteria, such as external appearance of buildings, convenience, safety, resident's operating costs and social prestige, are not taken into account.

In a milieu of widespread corruption, this contracting model heavily burdens public services. The developers go to great lengths to remove obstacles to achieve their only goal. This gives rise to residential areas that are lacking in green spaces, parks and recreational areas, and therefore results in a reduction of quality of life. In addition to the disregard for the social aspects, the role of SWM projects in flood protection is also neglected.

By integrating SWM control measures into urban areas, developers lose building land for parking places, houses, shops and other urban structures, which may be otherwise used to generate profit. These tendencies are in direct opposition to the municipal needs. Local authorities should take care to look for more effective tools to ensure quality development regardless of the fact of whether the investor is a public or private subject.

One of the ways to improve the development of new areas lies in PPP projects. At present, PPP projects may play as good as a historic role in the Czech Republic; this ambition will be fulfilled only when qualified and committed investors populate the market. The reason for a low number of successfully implemented PPP projects in the Czech Republic does not mean a lack of private investors; it rather demonstrates the fact that the investors find the

preparation of PPP projects difficult to process. Should the potential of private sector be effectively employed to influence the external appearance of buildings, and municipal function and safety, it would be necessary for local authorities to give the matter careful consideration and to optimise their fighting spirit. The PPP project implementation is accompanied by a number of risks, which correspond to the abilities of the partners involved. These, in return, reflect the nature of communities where the partnerships are to be realised.

General experience shows that in order to employ the PPP potential in the Czech Republic more effectively, investors' commitment needs to be improved in these respects:

- Independent vision for the future of the municipality accompanied by a detailed action plan including an implementation methodology;
- Responsible approach securing political commitment to the project over several electoral terms;
- Qualified and committed approach to the project objective.

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