

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE SELF-GOVERNING REGIONS IN SLOVAKIA

Participatívny rozpočet a jeho realizácia v rámci samosprávnych krajov na Slovensku

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ABSTRAKT: V súčasnosti aktívne rezonuje vplyv jednotlivých záujmových komúnít na financovanie regionálnych rozvojových projektov ako priestoru pre občianske aktivity vo verejnom záujme, ktoré sú poskytované ako verejne dostupné služby, ktoré kraj z rôznych dôvodov nevykonáva, alebo ktoré uskutočňuje neuspokojivým spôsobom. (tzv. participatívny rozpočet). Článok sa zaoberá problematikou participatívneho rozpočtu, ako jednou z najnovších rozpočtových inovácií v riadení verejného sektora, pričom si kladie za cieľ identifikovať výzvy a bariéry implementácie participatívneho rozpočtovania na regionálnej úrovni na Slovensku. Analyzuje tiež implementáciu tohto nástroja na úradoch samosprávnych krajov v podmienkach Slovenskej republiky pred a počas pandémie COVID-19, ktorá výrazne zasiahla verejné rozpočty a ich prerozdelenie. Metodologický prístup tohto výskumu zahŕňa systematický prehľad literatúry o participatívnom rozpočtovaní s analýzou, komparáciou, objasňovaním kauzálnych súvislostí, systematizáciou, abstrakciou a konkretizáciou a výsledkami činnosti výskumníkov na probléme realizovaného výskumu. Výsledková časť článku prezentuje výsledok prieskumu uskutočneného na všetkých ôsmich úradoch samosprávnych krajov, pričom výsledky ukazujú aj mieru negatívneho dopadu skúmanej problematiky prebiehajúcou pandemiou. Príspevok poskytuje prehľad výziev a bariér PB na Slovensku na regionálnej úrovni.

Kľúčová slova: participatívne rozpočtovanie – samosprávne kraje – regionálna samospráva
rozpočtové inovácie – verejný sektor.

ABSTRACT: At present, the influence of individual communities of interest on the financing of regional development projects as a space for civic activities in the public interest provided as publicly available services that the region is not executing in an unsatisfactory manner or is not executing at all for various reasons is actively resonating). The article deals with the issue of participatory budgeting as one of the latest budgetary innovations in the field of public sector management and aims to identify the challenges and barriers to the implementation of participatory budgeting in Slovakia at the regional level. It also analyses the implementation of this tool in the regional authorities in the conditions of the Slovak Republic before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has significantly affected public budgets and their redistribution. The methodological approach applied in this research includes a systematic review of the literature on participatory budgeting concerning analyses, comparisons, clarification of causal relations, systematization, abstraction, and concretization, and results of researchers' activities related to the subject of the conducted research. The chapter "Results" presents the findings of a survey carried out in all eight regional authorities of self-governing regions, and show the

extent to which the issue in question has been affected by the ongoing pandemic. The paper provides an overview of the challenges and barriers to PB in Slovakia at the regional level.

Key words: participatory budgeting – self-governing regions – regional self-government – budget innovations – public sector.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, considerable emphasis is put on innovation, modernization in governance, and efficiency in public finance management. Democratization of governance is high on the list of public governance priorities (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2014). Changes in the public sector are coming more often and the development of society is advancing. Governments at various levels are often unable to respond adequately and flexibly to such changes, and their implementation may seem costly or excessively time-consuming. The solution to this situation could be the implementation of a modern tool of the 21st century, which participatory budgeting undoubtedly is. However, the question remains whether it is in the interest of governments at various levels to respond to the demands of this time and to accommodate the needs of the largest population possible (Peixoto, 2009). According to Manes-Ross et al. (2021), participatory budgeting (PB) is a relatively novel approach to the allocation of funds, which allows ordinary citizens to become directly involved in how local government money is spent. Nevertheless, participatory budgets may already be considered as one of the most popular tools of participation and at the same time, one of the most effective democratic tools, which allows citizens to be directly involved in decisions on redistributing public resources earmarked by towns, municipalities, or higher territorial units for the purposes of the participatory budget. It thus brings a new type of public discussion between citizens and public administration bodies not only about the implementation of specific proposed projects initiated by citizens but especially about the future vision and shape of the city or territory as seen by its inhabitants. Participatory budgets are now common in the world today and are applied at the local, regional, and national levels. At the same time, however, the question of whether citizen participation is so important, it has not been achieved, is often addressed by the professional public (e.g., Strokosch, Osborne, 2020). In the study submitted, we set out to fill some of the research gaps by identifying the challenges and obstacles to participatory budget implementation at the regional level in Slovakia. We examine the limitations perceived by employees of self-government region offices.

The authors of the paper formulate two research questions:

RQ1: What are the key challenges and obstacles to the implementation of PB at the regional level in Slovakia?

RQ2: What are the limitations perceived by employees of offices in the self-government region?

Using data synthesized from documents and surveys carried out in the eight offices of self-governing regions, we show barriers of PB and identify the limitations perceived by the staff of self-government region offices competent in the field of PB.

This research aims to make contribution to the issue mainly through examining participatory budgeting as one of the latest budget innovations in public sector management, particularly from the perspective of budget staff in offices of self-governing regions in the Slovak Republic.

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

The authors of the study aimed to examine the issue of participatory budgeting as one of the latest budget innovations in public sector management through analysing the implementation of this tool in the offices of self-governing regions in the Slovak Republic. The methodological approach of this research includes a systematic review of the literature on participatory budgeting including the analysis of the findings, comparison, classification, design, clarification of causal relations, systematization, abstraction and concretization, analysis of documentation, and results of researchers' activities concerning the research. In the effort to obtain an objective view of the real perception of the participatory budget at the level of local government offices in the Slovak Republic and to implement such a form of participatory democracy at this local government level, quantitative research was carried out using a questionnaire method. The respondents, consisting of staff from all municipalities with a potential impact on the planning and implementation of participatory budgeting, could express their views through an online pilot survey consisting of 20 closed questions, in some cases with the possibility of further verbal expression through an open answer option. The questions were formulated so that it was possible to answer the research questions, which aimed to point out the influence of the human factor on the implementation of participatory budgeting and the possibilities to enhance the use of this tool. The survey was addressed to an average of 4 respondents from the budget and financing departments in eight Slovak self-governing regions. The return rate of the questionnaires was 75% in absolute number 21. For better clarity, selected questions are evaluated graphically. The research was conducted between October 2020 and June 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Participatory methods bring elements of direct democracy to regional development, enabling residents of a certain area or members of local community to participate in the preparation of regional development strategies, priorities, implementation and control of development processes. In general, the forms of participation of members of the territorial community in addressing issues of local importance can be presented as expression of residents' own interests, needs, requests; rallies, marches, pickets, individual and collective appeals; consultations of members of the territorial community with bodies and officials of local self-government on solving local problems; participation of residents in the activities of local governments; and of course, direct participation of citizens in solving local problems (local referendum, bodies of self-organization of the population) (Blazhivska, Petrovskyi, 2020). This approach can take many forms in terms of practical use; currently, about 60 methods are used in the world, for example: eParticipation, hackathon (intensive workshop), participatory GIS, participatory community budget, Pop Up democracy, Open Space technology, territorial committees and territorial Commission, World Café, etc.) (Dušek, 2020, p. 287) Simonofski et al. (2021) also emphasizes that each city has its own unique characteristics which need to be taken into account when designing a tailored citizen participation strategy and adapted to their specific context.

According to Klima (2006), "direct democracy can be any organizational form in which people (population) as the basic actor of universal statehood, in which they have transferred decision making to their representatives, are also active themselves in decision making." In the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, in this context, Article 2 - §1 of the Constitution, as amended: „State power comes from citizens who exercise it through their elected representatives or directly“ is undoubtedly important. At the level of local governments, it finds its reflection in the legal regulation, specifically in Art. §11a and 11b of Act no. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipality Establishment, as amended. Therefore, we could state that in Slovakia, there is a legal regulation at the level of the law that enables the participation of citizens in public affairs. However, these institutes are used only minimally in practice, often with invalid or questioned conclusions, resulting in a constantly declining public confidence in public institutions (Haulík, 2020).

Over time, participatory democracy has become an 'alternative name for direct democracy' (Sekerák, 2017), with the pressure on public participation in public affairs or participatory public policy-making accentuated by the need to deepen democracy through the introduction

of innovative elements into traditionally perceived representative democracy (Klimovský, Gašparík, 2020).

Participatory budgeting is a mechanism or process by means of which people decide or participate in decision-making on the distribution of all or part of available public resources, and although it is important to emphasize that it is not an institution, with any explicit legal basis or definition in our legal system, it is defined as a process of direct, voluntary, and universal democracy that provides people with the opportunity to discuss everything about the public budget and politics while making relevant decisions (Čunderlík, 2015). The citizens thus not only elect members of the town council but are directly involved in the process of deciding on priorities concerning their town or town district. As an element of direct democracy, it represents an alternative to representative democracy (city council, city commissions). Participatory budgeting is a relatively new tool in the public sector, with the basic source being public finances and their redistribution. The very definition of the term participatory budgeting is not uniform in the conditions of the Slovak Republic. There are a number of inconsistent, specific, but mainly general definitions of the term. It should be noted that the inconsistency in the definition of the participatory budget comes primarily from the environment in which it is implemented. The lack of a legislative definition of this term within the Slovak Republic is another limitation of an unambiguous definition (Strecková, 1998).

The non-profit organization 'The Participatory Budgeting Project' (2015), which focuses on supporting the implementation of this tool mainly in Canada and the United States, defines participatory budgeting as a democratic process based on the redistribution of the public budget by the government in cooperation with the population. They further state that it is people as taxpayers who should be directly involved in decisions on the public budget and thus affect their own lives. Participatory budgeting has also been defined by the United Nations as the most effective tool for self-governments to pursue the goals of democracy, civil society, transparency, efficiency, and modernization, as set out in Agenda 21 and other documents approved and adopted by administrations within the European Union (The Participatory Budgeting Project, 2015).

Since the beginning of the second millennium, many experts have been dealing with a relatively new phenomenon of the participatory budgeting (e.g., Baiocchi, Ganuza, 2015; Bardovič, Gašparík, 2021; Cabannes, 2004; Klimovský, Nemeč, Bouckaert, 2021; Motherrik, 2020; Peixoto, 2008; Sintomer, Herzberg, Röcke, 2008; Wampler, 2012; etc.). They further state that the studies of individual authors were carried out in various countries of the world, in which the tool of appropriate budgeting had been applied. Since its inception in the late 1980s

in Porto Alegre, participatory budgeting has been applied in Africa, Asia, and North America. Within Europe, local authorities have decided to adopt participatory budgeting to such an extent that one third of all initiatives worldwide are implemented in this part (Bardovič, Gašparík, 2021).

PARTICIPATIVE BUDGET AT THE OFFICES OF SELF - GOVERNING REGIONS IN SLOVAKIA AND ITS INFLUENCE BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The first attempt to introduce a participatory budget in Slovakia was in 2010, initiated by the Utopia association. This was followed by a national project called 'Participation', in which several pilot projects took place at four levels (national, regional, microregional, local), while at our monitored regional level, two projects were carried out, namely “Regional concept of environmental education, training and awareness in Trenčín county” and “Providing social assistance to people with mental disabilities and their families” (Peixoto, 2008).

Although this tool has not been used long in the conditions of Slovakia, there are several professional studies dealing with this issue (Baiocchi, 2001; Brix, 2018; Garaj, Bardovič, 2020; Gašpariková, 2015; Hrabínová, 2020; Klimovský, 2017). Many publications address the specific impact of the pandemic on participatory budgeting (Bardovič, Gašparík, 2021; Černěnko, Neubauerová, Zubaľová, 2021; Klimovský, Nemeč, Bouckaert, 2021).

The use of the participatory budget in Slovakia has been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused several shortfalls in the budget of self-governing regions. The main shortfall was income tax revenue, which represents a substantial part of self-governing regions' budgets. The pandemic has also contributed to the negative impact on the budgets of self-governing regions in terms of reduced mobility and physical contacts of individuals, and for this reason, the implementation of participatory budgeting in some municipalities has been limited or even suspended (Bardovič, Gašparík, 2021).

As already mentioned, participatory budget has been implemented in Slovakia recently, and the regional level is no exception. Although not all Slovak self-governing regions have decided to implement the innovative tool within their offices, four (50 %) of the total number of eight self-governing regions, have done so. It is worth noting that the first self-governing region that decided to allow its inhabitants to co-decide on the distribution of public funds was Trenčín self-governing region, in 2017, followed by the Bratislava self-governing region in 2018, and the self-governing regions of Trnava and Žilina in 2019. The decision not to apply the participatory budget was introduced by the Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice self-governing regions.

Table 1: Self-Governing Regions in Slovakia Implementing a Participatory Budget during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Self-governing region	before 2020	2020
Bratislavský	✓	✓
Trnavský	✓	✓
Nitriansky	×	×
Trenčiansky	✓	✓
Žilinský	✓	×
Banskobystrický	×	×
Prešovský	×	×
Košický	×	×

Source: Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, 2021 - Own Processing.

RESULTS

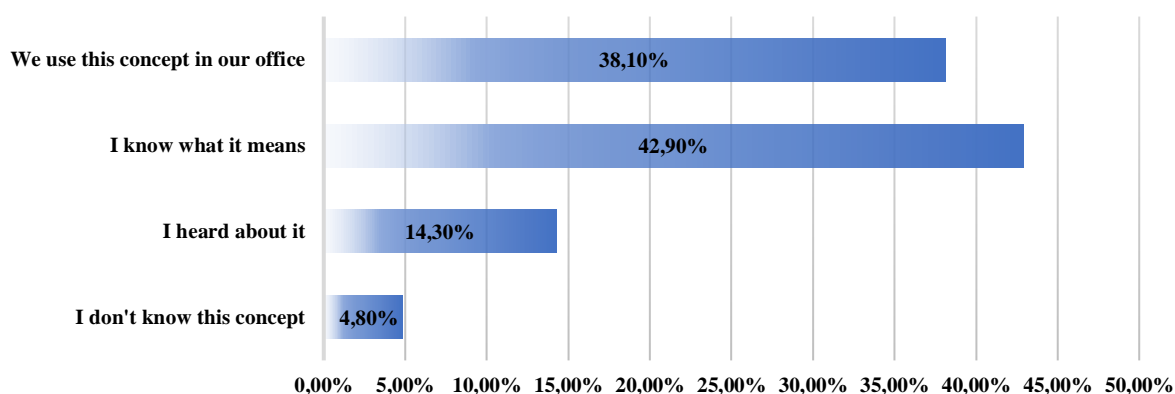
To obtain an objective view of the perception of the participatory budget and its implementation in the offices of Slovak self-governing regions, quantitative research was carried out by means of the questionnaire method. The respondents had the opportunity to express their views by answering 20 closed questions, in some cases with the possibility of further specification of their responses. The implementation of research in the period from October 2020 to June 2021 was also expected to clarify the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As mentioned above, it is clear that the pandemic has also negatively affected the issue under study negatively impacted on the issue under study.

Table 2: What does the term participatory budgeting tell you?

Answer	Count	Proportion v %
I don't know this concept	1	4.8
I heard about it	3	14.3
I know what it means	9	42.9
We use this concept in our office	8	38.1
Other...	0	0.0

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Graph 1: What does the term participatory budget tell you?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

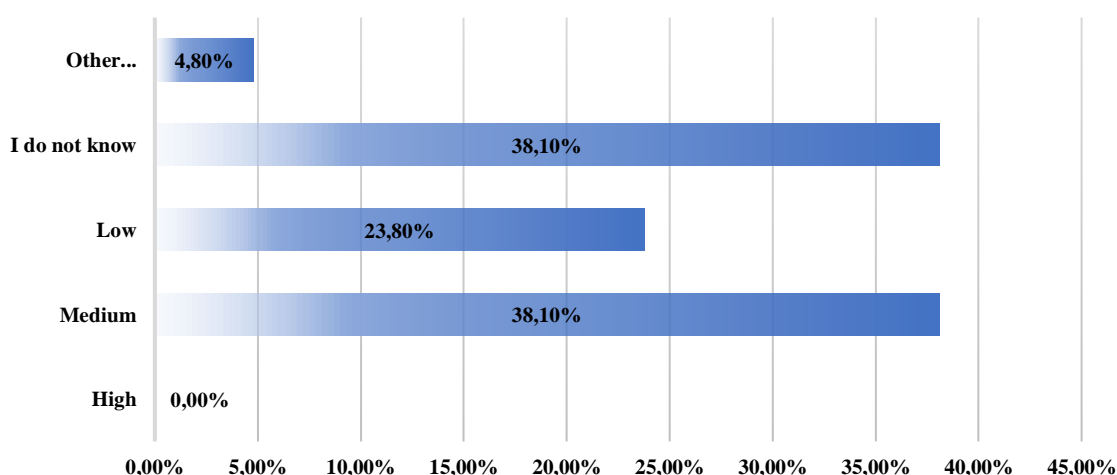
Table 3: In your opinion, what is the level of implementation of the participatory budget within the higher territorial units in Slovakia?

Answer	Count	Proportion in %
High	0	0.0
Medium	8	38.1
Low	5	23.8
I do not know	8	38.1
* Other...	1	4.8

* Self-governing regions not monitored in this area, it is not possible to assess.

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Graph 2: In your opinion, what is the level of implementation of the participatory budget within the self-governing regions in Slovakia?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

As we assume that the potential to improve the level of participatory budgeting implementation in self-governing regions depends primarily on the persons responsible for the

use of funds in specific self-governing regions, we primarily sought to determine the level of using this innovative form of budgeting in individual regions.

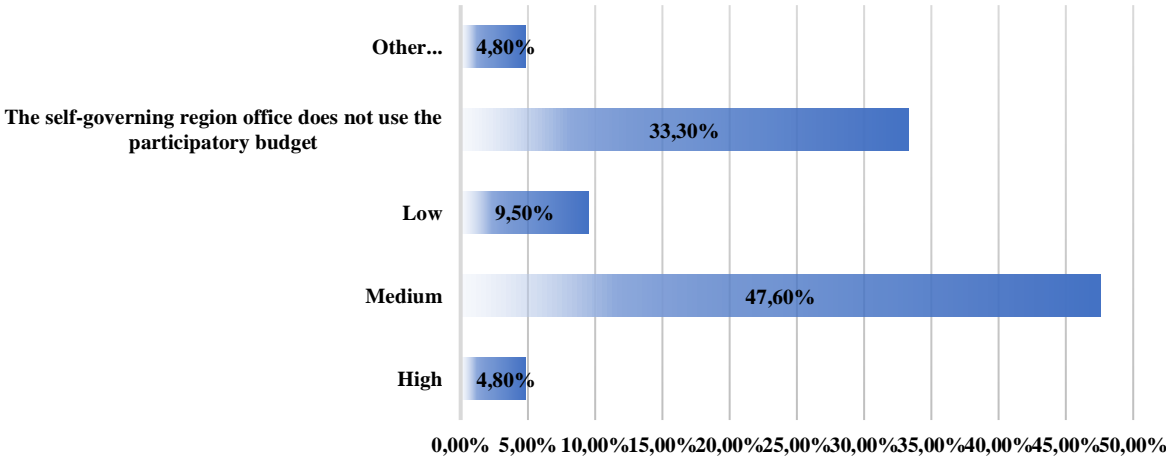
Table 4: In your opinion, what is the level of implementation of the participatory budget within your self-governing region office?

Answer	Count	Proportion v %
High	1	4.80
Medium	10	47.60
Low	2	9.50
The self-governing region office does not use the participatory budget	7	33.30
* Other...	1	4.80

* We had two years in the past.

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Graph 3: What do you think is the level of implementation of the participatory budget within your office?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

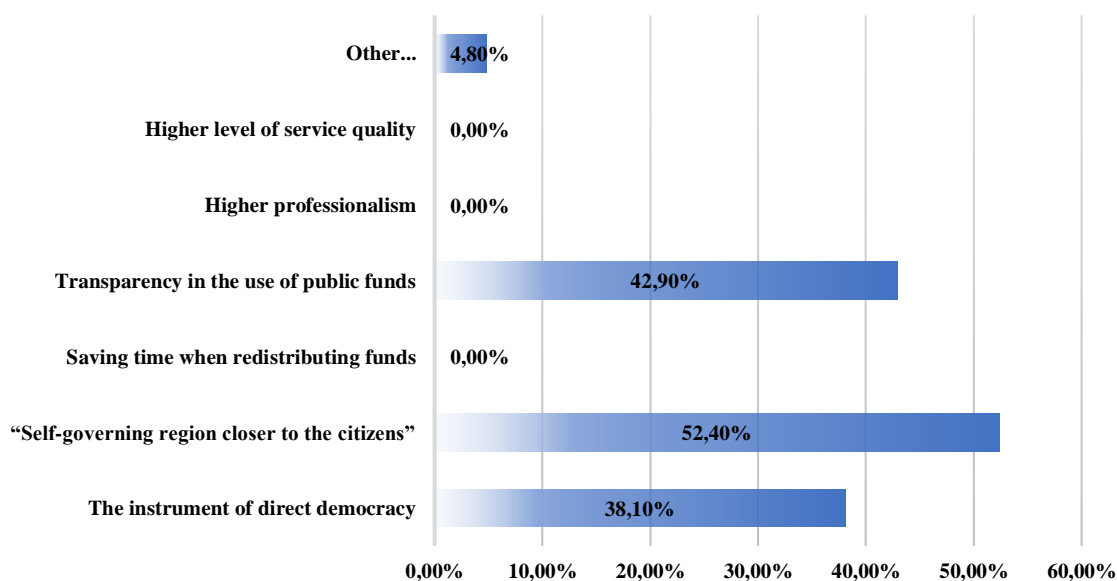
Table 5: In your opinion, what are the reasons for introducing a participatory budget?

Answer	Count	Proportion v %
The instrument of direct democracy	8	38.10
“Self-governing region closer to the citizens”	11	52.40
Saving time when redistributing funds	0	0.00
Transparency in the use of public funds	9	42.90
Higher professionalism	0	0.00
Higher level of service quality	0	0.00
*Other...	1	4.80

* It is modern and trendy.

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Graph 4: In your opinion, what are the reasons for introducing a participatory budget?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Table 6: In your opinion, what are the obstacles to the introduction of a participatory budget in the offices of higher territorial units?

Answer	Count	Proportion v %
No interest of citizens	8	38.10
Reluctance to change on the part of the office	3	14.30
Low motivation of the self-governing region	4	19.00
* Other...	7	33.33

* 1. The self-governing region Nitra has long been a leader in providing FO and PO subsidies in the form of VZN within SK8.

2. High processing complexity (software, entitlement to employees, time consuming, high workload).

3. Setting the local government's competences.

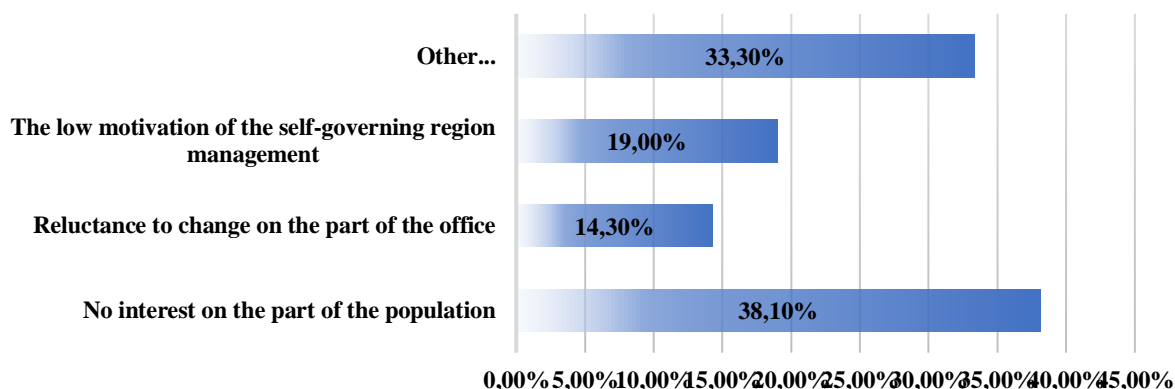
4. New concept, lack of experience from other local governments.

6. Long-term project preparation process with uncertainty approval after deliberation.

7. Reluctance of members of the council to change.

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Graph 5: In your opinion, what are the obstacles to the introduction of a participatory budget in the offices of self-governing regions?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Table 7: Do you have experience with participatory budgeting?

Answer	Count	Proportion in %
Yes	10	47.60
No	11	52.40

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

It should be noted that more than half of the respondents (11-52.40 %) said they had no experience with participatory budgeting. Subsequently, the respondents were asked to comment on the reasons why they thought they had no experience with this tool. The individual answers were as follows.

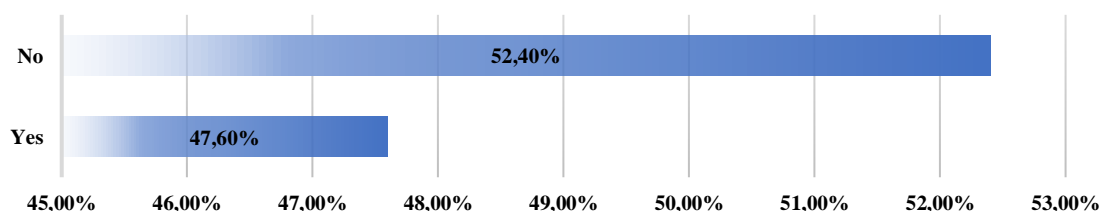
- It is not beneficial;

- The Nitra self-governing region does not use this budgetary policy instrument;
- The participatory budget is, in principle, a tool for distributing subsidies to cities and municipalities;
- Demanding;
- The Covid-19 pandemic has stopped the launch of this form of subsidies.

In contrast, if the respondents stated that they had experience with participatory budgeting, they were asked to provide further information on the experience. The most common answers included:

- Assistance in drafting a general binding regulation related to participatory community budgeting.
- Participation in public considerations in relation to participatory budgeting (project presentation and evaluation).
- Revitalization of an unused building of a former school.
- Study of concepts and legal norms concerning the participatory budget in the environment of the Slovak Republic, but also abroad.

Graph 6: Do you have experience with participatory budgeting?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

The respondents were asked “In what areas is the participatory budget used in the first place within your office?”. The most relevant answers include:

- Culture, education and social services.
- LEADER - support for local action groups.
- For publicly beneficial purposes in accordance with applicable legislation.
- To preserve folk traditions.
- In international projects in the field of culture and sport.
- To improve the social conditions of communities.
- To protect the environment.
- For regional development and revitalization of disused buildings.

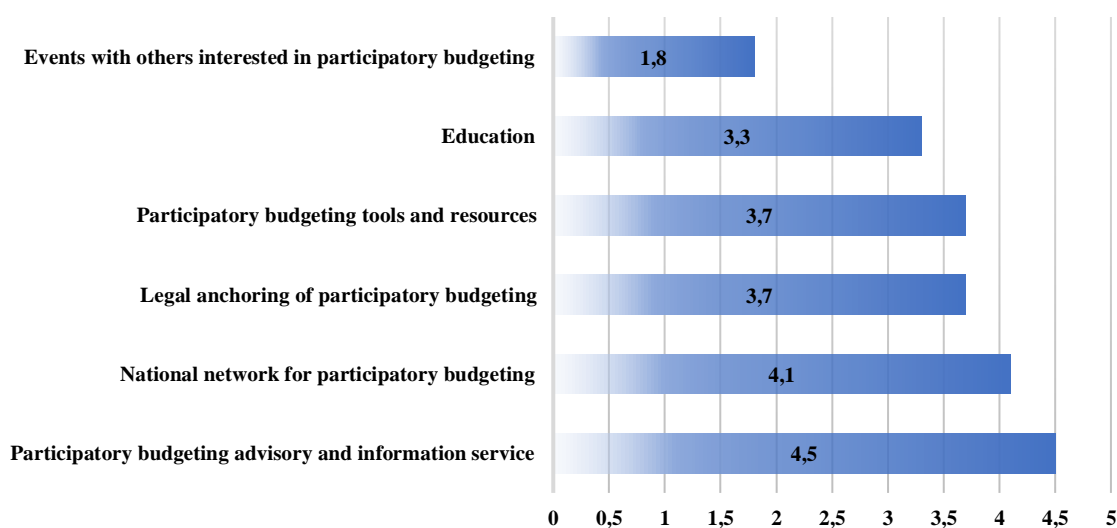
- Community infrastructure.

Table 8: What do you think could help in the development of participatory budgeting in Slovakia?

Answer	Significance
Participatory budgeting advisory and information service	4.5
National network for participatory budgeting	4.1
Legal anchoring of participatory budgeting	3.7
Participatory budgeting tools and resources	3.7
Education	3.3
Events with others interested in participatory budgeting	1.8

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Graph 7: What do you think could help in the development of participatory budgeting in Slovakia?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

In this question, the respondents could rank in order of importance what in their opinion could help in the development of a participatory budget within the offices of self-governing regions. They consider the advisory and information service for participatory budgeting to be the most beneficial, while joint actions with other people interested in participatory budgeting are considered to be the least beneficial.

Table 9: Have you helped organize or simplify participatory budgeting?

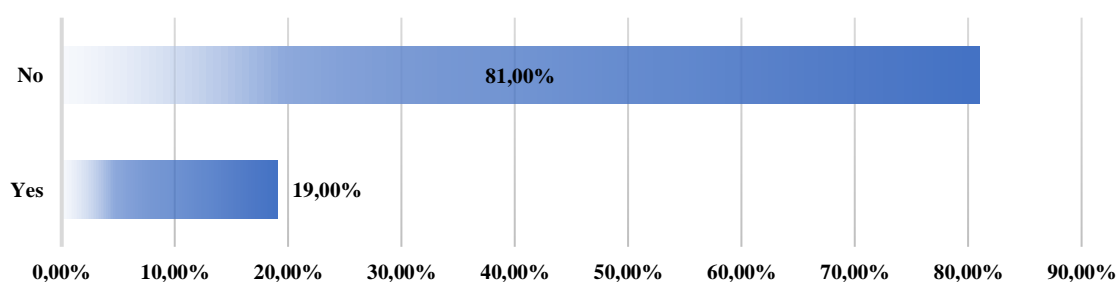
Answer	Count	Proportion in %
Yes	4	19.00
Nie	17	81.00

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

The respondents who stated that they had helped organize or simplify participatory budgeting could further comment on how they had been involved in the activity. Two respondents used this opportunity; their answers were as follows:

- In a personal meeting with the interested parties, we explain the principle of the whole process on our website.
- Annual adjustment of generally binding regulations according to the suggestions that have arisen during its implementation since 2017.

Graph 8: Have you helped organize or simplify participatory budgeting?



Source: Pilot survey at the local government, 2021 - own processing.

Table 10: Are you currently planning or organizing participatory budgeting?

Answer	Count	Proportion v %
Yes	7	33.30
No	14	66.70

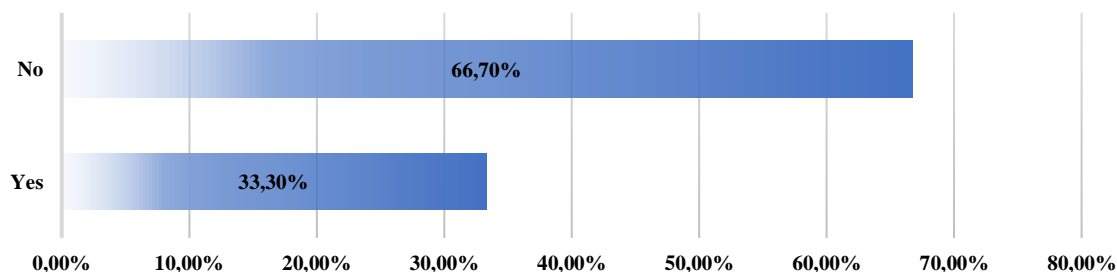
Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

In connection with the question of whether they are currently planning or organizing participatory budgeting, the respondents could also comment on the specific activities involved. The most relevant answers included:

- Within the budget, we have set aside EUR 200,000, which will be redistributed among the submitted projects.
- Support for local action groups.
- Participatory subsidies.

- Preparation of the participatory budget for 2020 and 2021.
- Subsidies for public services and regional development.

Graph 9: Are you currently planning or organizing participatory budgeting?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

Table 11: In your opinion, did the measures of the Slovak Republic government in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic affect the budget?

Answer	Count	Proportion v %
Yes	16	76.20
I do not know	2	9.50
No	1	4.80
* Other...	2	9.50

* 1. The planned participatory budget for 2020 has been cancelled.

2. Completely affected - the participatory-community budget process was suspended for 2020.

Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing.

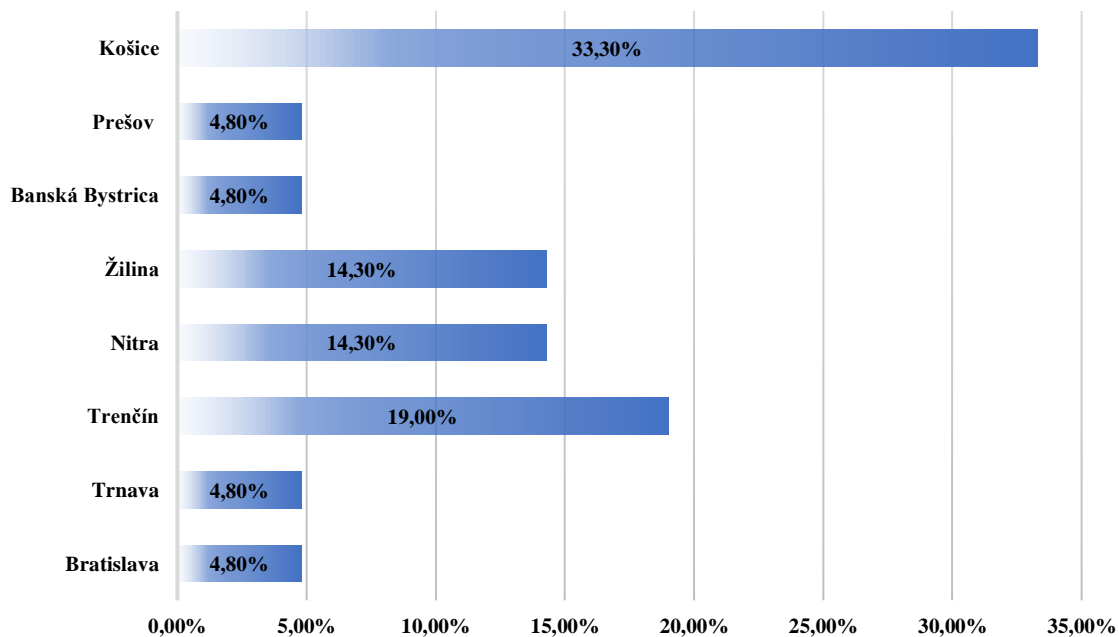
From the point of view of examining participatory budgeting and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on it, this issue is a significant indicator. As many as 16 (76.50%) of the 21 respondents stated that the measures taken by the Slovak Republic government during the first wave of the pandemic affected the execution of the budget of the self-governing regions.

Subsequently, in the next question, the respondents had the opportunity to comment on how these measures had affected budget execution within their office. The most common reasons included:

- decrease in revenues in suburban transport and increase in expenditure on passenger transport in the public interest,
- the decline in own incomes in culture, especially theatre, which needs to be replaced,
- in 2020, the provision of funds under the participatory budget was suspended,
- drawing repayable financial assistance for the exercise of self-governing competencies,

- lower revenues in a wide range, nonrealization of more expenditures for anti-epidemiological reasons,
- lack of resources,
- so far, two budget cuts,
- increase in expenditure related to the solution of measures,
- during the state of at the time of the emergency declared in connection with the Covid-19 disease, the costs of providing material and hygiene needs increased,
- Reduction of the planned income from personal income taxes,
- The one - year participatory budgeting model was replaced by changed to a two - year cycle, as it was not possible to implement any projects in 2020.

Graph 10: In which city is your Self-Governing Region Office located?



Source: Pilot survey at self-governing regions, 2021 - own processing,

The respondents could also provide their own suggestions related to the use of participatory budget. Five respondents used this opportunity, and their suggestions included:

- The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic should be the guarantor for the introduction of a participatory budget in the conditions of self-governing regions.
- It is not a completely suitable tool for regional governments, as their competencies are not as close to the citizen as local and regional authorities.

- It is not fully used, as there is a low level of awareness of this issue and poor application in practice.
- There is a need for greater publicity and clarity in project decisions.
- Establish a legislative framework dedicated to participatory budgeting and simplify its implementation within self-governing regional offices.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of secondary data, it can be stated that participatory budgeting is one of the newest phenomena in the field of budgeting and redistribution of public finances in the conditions of the Slovak Republic, which combines elements of direct and representative democracy. We can consider this phenomenon as a good example of a democratic instrument in the field of governance, which is gaining more and more awareness, both among the professional or the general public. We must thus agree with V. Žofčinová's (2018, p. 159) that *“territorial self-government represents a democratic basis for the organization and governance of public affairs under the conditions of modern democracies based on the principles of decentralization and subsidiarity”*, and it can thus be assumed that innovative forms of budgeting are expected at this level.

By analysing the primary data, it was found that out of the total number of eight self-governing regions, four (50 %) have implemented the participatory budget. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in several regions (Bratislava, Trenčín and Žilina self-governing regions), the participatory budget had to be either suspended, interrupted, or postponed to the next budget period. Currently, three self-governing regions (Trnava, Bratislava, and Trenčín) implement the participatory budget. The results of the questionnaire survey conducted in the offices of self-governing regions showed that awareness of this innovative tool among employees from the budget and finance departments is at a sufficient level. They agreed that the biggest obstacles to the implementation of the participatory budget are mainly a lack of interest on the side of the population, low motivation of the office management, and, to a large extent, reluctance to change on the side of the offices. They also agreed on the fact that the measures of the Slovak government related to the Covid-19 pandemic have affected participatory budgeting implementation. The main reasons include, for example, lack of financial resources caused by a decrease in own revenues in several areas (especially in the field of culture), increase in local government expenditures related to the need to ensure medical goods and disinfection and

sanitary items, decrease in planned personal income tax revenue and finally the increase in expenditures related to pandemic measures.

CONCLUSION

The results of the survey show that in the first ten years after the introduction of this democratic innovation in Slovakia, 4 self-governing regions have implemented participatory budgeting. Local governments began to deal with the issue of participatory budgeting in 2016, although there was a slowdown in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 epidemic in 2020.

The authors aimed to point out the real challenges and obstacles which determine PB in Slovakia. It is interesting that in addition to the obstacles assumed and thus offered as opportunities (interest of citizens, reluctance to change, low motivation of the self-governing regions), the respondents mentioned other obstacles, such as high processing complexity (software, entity to employees - time-consuming, high workload); setting the competencies of the local government; new concept, lack of experience from other local governments; time-consuming project preparation process with uncertain approval after negotiations; reluctance to change on the side of members of the council. In recent years, participatory public policy-making has been promoted in several local and regional authorities as an important approach to public administration. However, it follows from the answers that there is a lack of experience in making adequate use of participatory budgeting.

Various methodologies, guidelines, or guides to participatory budgeting which have been published in recent years and can offer examples of good practices that can be used in local governments without experience in this field, could also play a significant role. However, even these documents are not a homogeneous set of rules or recommendations. Process standardization leading to the clarification of some terminological inaccuracies could also be helpful. It would be ideal to adopt legislation that would also provide local governments with a greater degree of legal certainty.

The data obtained show that the establishment of the “Advisory and Information Service” and the “National Network for Participatory Budgeting” or the legal anchoring of this concept could be a significant help in the development of participatory budgeting in Slovakia.

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