



PARADIPLOMACY OF CZECH REGIONS

South Moravian Region

Liberec Region

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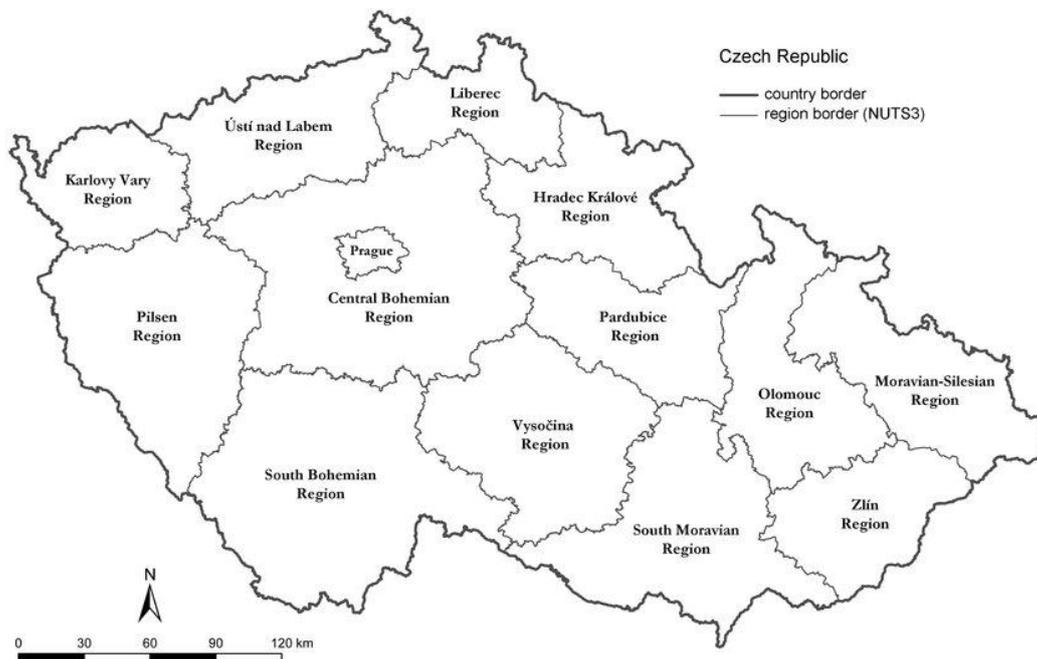


Czech Regional Paradiplomacy and the Case of the South Moravian and Liberec Regions

This paper discusses the paradiplomatic activities of the Czech regions. First, it deals with the national legislative and institutional framework. Secondly, it assesses two case studies – the South Moravian Region and the Liberec Region. It researches and assesses the organizational set-up, content and focus of the regions' international activities. Best practices of paradiplomacy in both regions are pointed out.

The research is mainly based on primary sources – legislative and non-legislative documents and research interviews. It also draws on the literature on Czech paradiplomacy and the author's previous research.

Map 1: Regions of the Czech Republic



Source: V. Kostin, L. Halounová, "An analysis of spatial structure of urban regional networks using GIS," *Acta Polytechnica* Vol. 59 No. 1, 2019, pp. 35-42. Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-location-of-study-regions-in-the-Czech-Republic_fig1_331679878 (accessed on February 20, 2021).

1. National Legislative and Institutional Framework of Czech Regional Paradiplomacy¹

According to the Constitution of the Czech Republic, "regions (...) are higher territorial self-governing units" and are "independently administered by their representative body", that is, the regional council. Article 101, paragraph 4, further states that "the state may intervene in the affairs of territorial self-governing units only if such is required for the protection of law and only

in the manner provided for by statute."² The powers of the regions are further set out in detail in the Act on the Establishment of Regions.³ It stipulates that the regions administer their affairs independently and entitles them to comment on proposals by state bodies that affect their competences. According to §28, the law allows the regions to cooperate with territorial self-governing units in other states, with the provision that regions may also be members of international associations.

¹ Based on V. Dostál, *Paradiplomacie českých krajů: region jako aktér mezinárodní politiky* [Paradiplomacy in the Czech Regions: Regions as International Policy Actors], Brno: Muni PRESS, 2017; V. Dostál, "Kraje jako aktéři české zahraniční politiky", in M. Kořan, ed., *Aktéři a tvorba české zahraniční politiky*, Brno: Muni PRESS, 2016.

² "The Constitution of the Czech Republic," Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Available online:

<https://www.psp.cz/en/docs/laws/constitution.html> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

³ "Act on Establishment of Regions," Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic. Available online: <https://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/file/act-on-regions-2000-pdf.aspx> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

The fact that the Czech Republic is a party to the European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities of 1980 (the Madrid Convention), which it ratified in 1999⁴, also presupposes autonomous regional activities in international relations. Furthermore, in 1999, the Czech Republic ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government, Article 10 of which provides for the possibility of international cooperation.⁵ At the same time, the European Union emphasizes the regional and local dimension of governance, both by promoting cross-border and international cooperation and by involving the Committee of the Regions in the European Union's decision-making as an advisory body.

The Czech legislation thus provides the self-governing unities with broad competences in the international arena. The Act on the Establishment of Regions states that they may enter into a relationship with other self-governing units. However, it does not explicitly prohibit relations with other international actors (states, NGOs, private entities, international organizations) if the region is acting within its autonomously administrated affairs.

The relationship between the regional administration and the central state administration in foreign activities has gradually evolved into more structured, yet still quite loose cooperation. After the establishment of the regions in 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) chose not to strive for greater coordination or to create more formalized communication platforms. Only in the run up to the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2009 did the regions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conduct more comprehensive cooperation, when two documents were signed. The first was an agreement on the implementation of the Presidency's activities in the regions drawn up in March 2007. Subsequently, in May 2007, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in European Affairs with the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic, emphasizing the willingness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to share information on European affairs with the regions. The most visible manifestation of this cooperation was the preferential leasing of premises to the regions for their representations in Brussels.⁶

In 2015, a meeting was held between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Association of Regions, at which

it was promised that the meeting would be convened in this format on an annual basis and that there would be greater stress on the role of the regions in foreign policy implementation.⁷ A Memorandum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic on Cooperation in Area of Economic Diplomacy was signed in 2017. The shared goals were:

- ✦ “support for Czech regional business entities and their business and economic interests in establishing contacts and obtaining information on foreign markets and business opportunities;
- ✦ greater visibility of the presentation of the economic potential of the regions abroad organized in cooperation with the embassies of the Czech Republic;
- ✦ strengthening cooperation in foreign business missions of regional leaders (e.g. for events in partner cities), greater involvement of the regional entities in trade missions led by government officials and support for these events (e.g., the organization of negotiations with foreign partners);
- ✦ active exchange of information and experience between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, embassies of the Czech Republic and the regions of the Czech Republic, preparation of seminars and contact events for business and other entities;
- ✦ harmonization of positions held by the regions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic on political and economic issues with individual states.”⁸

The memorandum presupposed the presentation of an annual activity plan and a yearly meeting between regional coordinators and MFA officials.⁹

The regions are also mentioned in strategic documents. The 2015 foreign policy concept emphasizes the coordinating role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and assumes “close cooperation” between the regions in promoting the “good name of the Czech Republic”.¹⁰ The previous concept from 2011 referred to the role of the regions in presentations in foreign and cross-border cooperation.¹¹ Here a shift in awareness can be observed in the importance of regional government: the foreign policy concept from 2003 – the first one to follow the

⁴ “European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities,” Council of Europe, May 21, 1980. Available online:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDC TMContent?documentId=0900001680078b0c> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

⁵ “European Charter of Local Self-Government. Strasbourg. European Treaty Series,” Council of Europe, October 15, 1985. Available online: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007a088> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

⁶ “Kraje budou spolupracovat s MZV při prosazování českých zájmů v EU,” [The regions will cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in promoting Czech interests in the EU] *EurActiv.cz*, May 5, 2007. Available online: <http://www.euractiv.cz/cr-v-evropske-unii/clanek/kraje-budou-spolupracovat-s-mzv-pri-prosazovani-ceskych-zajmu-v-eu> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

⁷ “Ministr Zorálek se setkal s primátorkou Prahy a hejtmany,” [Minister L. Zorálek met with the Mayor of Prague and the governors] ČSSD, September 22, 2015. Available online:

<https://www.cssd.cz/media/tiskove-zpravy/ministr-l-zaoralek-se-setkal-s-primatorkou-prahy-a-s-hejtmany/> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

⁸ “Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí vstupuje do krajů,” [The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is Engaging with the Regions] *Asociace krajů*, June 17, 2017. Available online:

<http://www.asociacekrajy.cz/novinky/ministerstvo-zahranicnich-veci-vstupuje-do-kraju-1.html> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

⁹ “Memorandum o spolupráci v oblasti ekonomické diplomacie mezi Ministerstvem zahraničních věcí České republiky a Asociací krajů České republiky,” [Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of Economic Diplomacy between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic] *Asociace krajů*, June 17, 2017.

¹⁰ “Concept of the Czech Republic’s Foreign Policy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, July 3, 2015. Available online: https://www.mzv.cz/file/1574645/Concept_of_the_Czech_Republic_s_Foreign_Policy.pdf (accessed on February 20, 2021).

¹¹ “The concept of foreign policy of the Czech Republic,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, July 27, 2011. Available online:

establishment of the regions – did not mention the regions at all.

The research on the national legislative framework for Czech regional paradiplomacy shows that the regions have a great deal of autonomy within the structures implementing Czech foreign policy. That autonomy is framed within the legal definitions, which attribute a coordinating role to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a small but gradually increasing regional interest in closer contact with central government. The regions' competences for conducting their own foreign relations are conferred upon them by the legislation (the Constitution and the Act on Regions) and international conventions to which the Czech Republic has acceded. The contacts recorded between the regions and the central authorities have so far been conducted on the working level in preparation for the EU Council Presidency, encompassing meetings on ad hoc topics at the highest level and, since 2017, have focused on economic diplomacy. It can therefore be stated that formally the regions have considerable room for maneuver in conducting their foreign policy activities. Moreover, the conceptual foreign policy materials would suggest that the MFA, and therefore the government, perceives them to be an increasingly relevant actor.

2. Regional Legislative and Institutional Framework

Since the regions have a great deal of autonomy in international relations, it is important to show that the relevant legislative and institutional framework and processes apply identically in all of them.

The council decides on matters of autonomous competence. The regional executive body regarding autonomous competence is the regional board of councilors, which is responsible to the council. The chief executive officer of the regional authority (the president of the region) represents the region externally. The tasks assigned by the council and the board are performed by the regional authority.¹² This general division of tasks between the institutions of regional self-government is also reflected in foreign relations. Pursuant to §35 paragraph 2h of the Act on Regional Establishment 139/2000 Coll. the regional council decides on international cooperation, but this is preceded by a number of procedural activities.

Regional authorities, which usually have an external relations or international cooperation department, play a crucial role in developing the region's foreign relations. Today, these departments usually operate under the regional president's office. In some cases, the department will also deal with public relations, tourism and communication. Decisions concerning foreign activities are approved by the board, with one of the members being designated responsible. The board can establish

commissions as its advisory bodies, which submit their conclusions to the board. Some regions also set up commissions for dealing with foreign issues (e.g. in 2012–2016 six regions out of thirteen had such a commission).¹³ The council, or the council commission, not only approves formal partnerships, but also discusses foreign initiatives (e.g. foreign visits, participation in international fairs, meetings with ambassadors), agrees on the implementation of foreign relations and approves implementation reports. If a formal partnership is concluded, the documents are signed by the regional president. Subsequently, they are approved by the council. The regional council is required by law to set up several statutory committees, but it may decide to create other committees as well. Some regions have set up committees focused on foreign issues. The committees submit their opinions to the board in the form of resolutions. As in the case of the board commissions, the committees are not limited to approving formal agreements, but discuss the ongoing foreign relations agenda as well.

This overview shows that Czech regional paradiplomacy is a fully established part of regional self-government. Implementation is highly centralized in the hands of the president of the region as the relevant regional authority departments usually come under the president's office. Regions set up board commissions and council committees for dealing with international affairs.

It is not possible to say unequivocally whether the existence of the relevant commissions and committees has an impact on the extent and quality of foreign relations between the regions. Undoubtedly, these bodies provide opportunities for more in-depth discussions on the region's foreign relations, which is essential for exercising control (responsibility of the council committee) and providing support (responsibility of the board) for the region's activities, especially when day-to-day activities in foreign relations are centralized directly under the president's department. At the same time, though, this does not mean that in the absence of special commissions and committees, there is a lack of debate on foreign relations. Discussions on international cooperation can be held directly within the regional council or at sessions of the board of councilors.

Foreign partnerships are usually established through informal and personal contacts between regional representatives and foreign entities, the involvement of central authorities (e.g. by inviting regional representatives to foreign trips) or the foreign embassies in the Czech Republic. Cultural or educational institutions established by the region or other regional bodies (chambers of commerce, universities, NGOs) may also be mediators of the first contacts. The same partners are then involved in the implementation of foreign cooperation. The formalization of the partnership – for example, through the signing of a memorandum of cooperation

https://www.mzv.cz/file/675937/koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_2011_cz.pdf (accessed on February 20, 2021).

¹² The terms “regional council”, “regional board of councilors”, “chief executive officer of the regional authority” and the “regional authority” are taken from the official English translation of the Act on Regions provided by the Czech Ministry of Interior. However, other terms are more frequently used. Instead of “regional council”, the terms “regional assembly” or “regional parliament” are used. The

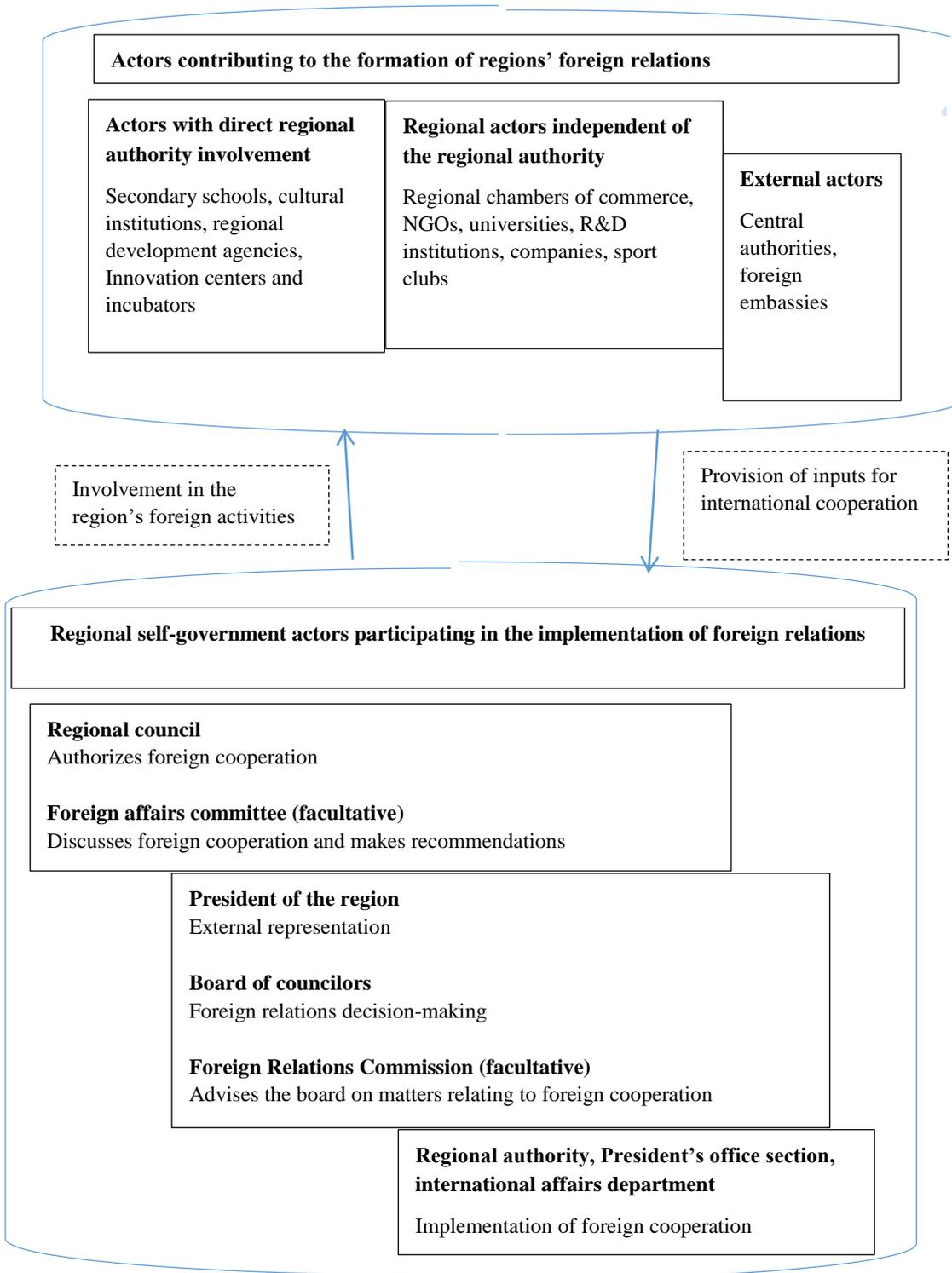
“regional board of councilors” is often the “regional council”. The head of the region is the “president of the region”. For clarity, I use the term “regional council” for the elected assembly, “board of councilors” for the executive body and “president” for the head of the region..

¹³ V. Dostál, *Paradiplomacie českých krajů: region jako aktér mezinárodní politiky*, op. cit., pp. 64.

between the region and self-governing unit abroad – then often leads to the expansion of cooperation into other areas (the economic side plus the cultural or educational side, etc.).¹⁴ This simplified chain of events in regional paradiplomacy will be examined in detail through two case studies of the South Moravian Region and the Liberec Region.

The procedural side of regional paradiplomacy is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Czech Regional Paradiplomacy Processes¹⁵



¹⁴ B. Bodnárová, "Regionální aktéři české zahraniční politiky," [Regional Actors in Czech Foreign Policy] in: M. Kořan and M. Hrabálek ed., *Česká zahraniční politika: Aktéři, struktura, proces*, Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2007, p. 137-151.

¹⁵ Source: V. Dostál, "Kraje jako aktéři české zahraniční politiky," in M. Kořan, ed., *Aktéři a tvorba české zahraniční politiky*, Brno: Muni PRESS, 2016, pp. 384.

The Case of the South Moravian Region

The South Moravian Region has several advantages that make it an ideal region for extensive international cooperation. It is the third most populated region in the Czech Republic (fourth if we include Prague, which is not a region in its own right), with nearly 1.2 million inhabitants. Its capital, Brno, is the second biggest city in the Czech Republic and home to several universities, scientific institutions and (innovative) industries. The region is located in proximity to three capitals – Vienna, Prague and Bratislava. Last but not least, Brno is the historical capital of Moravia and the region has strong cultural roots and traditions. Thus, the South Moravian Region, established in 2000, has huge potential for establishing strong international links.

Table 1: South Moravian Region in Numbers

Area	7,188 km ²
Population	1,178,815 (2017)
Population density	164/km ²
Capital city	Brno
Capital city population	377,973 (2016)
GDP per capita	485,000 CZK (2018)
GDP as a share of Czech GDP	10.8% (2018)
Public and state universities	5

Source: “Základní údaje o Jihomoravském kraji,” [Basic information about South Moravia Region] South Moravian Region. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=27204&TypeID=2>; “Makroekonomické údaje v Jihomoravském kraji,” [Macroeconomic information about South Moravia Region] 16.01.2020. Available online: <https://www.kurzy.cz/zpravy/527016-16-01-2020-makroekonomicke-udaje-v-jihomoravskem-kraji-vroce2018/> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

Development of South Moravian Paradiplomacy

The past twenty years of the South Moravian Region’s paradiplomatic relations can be divided into a number of stages. These can be categorized as the initial stage, Europeanization, economization and departmentalization.

In the initial stage, the South Moravian Region established connections with neighboring regions in Austria (Lower Austria) and Slovakia (Trenčín and Trnava Regions). It also deepened existing municipal partnerships with Brno City and elevated them to the regional level. This was the case with Utrecht Province and the Kaunas Region. In this stage, some completely new relationships were established as well. These were facilitated by the

embassies or some interested politicians who regarded international cooperation as having added value. Examples are the partnerships with Gers Department in France and Tuscany Region and Bergamo Province in Italy).¹⁶ Early involvement in international cooperation reflected the belief that establishing foreign contacts was good for regional development, for cultural reasons or for “adapting to international trends”. These were the key motivations for developing paradiplomacy identified in the first research study on the topic by the Institute of International Relations in 2003.¹⁷ Imitation, or “me-tooism”,¹⁸ was a factor that contributed to the development of regional paradiplomacy in the Czech Republic. In other words, from the very beginning of the existence of the South Moravian Region, its representatives were aware of the importance of international cooperation. Shortly after the establishment of the region, the substance and, most importantly, the institutional foundations of regional paradiplomacy were determined.

The Europeanization phase started with the final stage of the Czech Republic’s EU accession talks and culminated with the establishment of the South Moravian Region’s Office in Brussels in 2007 and the Czech EU Council Presidency in 2009. In that period, the region’s intention was to learn how to best exploit the benefits of European integration.¹⁹ At the domestic level, the most visible manifestation was the rapid increase in investments financed by European funds compared to the pre-accession period. The South Moravian Region’s representatives were thus motivated to learn about best practices focusing especially on research and development and innovations. Projects were also funded through cross-border programs, for which good neighborly relations were particularly important. Another consequence was the involvement of regional politicians in the work of the Committee of the Regions.

In the third stage the region started using paradiplomacy to promote regional exports. The trade missions became a feature of international trips organized by the regional authorities. It also led to the establishment of some new partnerships, mainly with parts of Russia (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and Tatarstan). Though these links were primarily economically motivated, they always led to broader cooperation in, for instance, culture, sport or education. Later, the cooperation was re-focused on Asia. In 2016 four partnerships were launched with Chinese provinces and one partnership with a South Korean province.²⁰

In the departmentalization phase, various motivations for paradiplomacy (economic, neighboring cooperation, cultural, learning best practices) gave rise to the current form of international activities undertaken by the South

¹⁶ Phone interview with the former head of the South Moravian external affairs department, May 6, 2020.

¹⁷ P. Drulák, L. Königová, P. Kratochvíl, *Podíl obecních a krajských samospráv na zahraniční politice. Zpráva z výzkumného projektu* [Share of local and regional government engagement in foreign policy: Research Project Report]. Prague: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2004.

¹⁸ P. Soldatos, “An Explanatory Framework for the Study of Federated States as Foreign-policy Actors,” in H. Michelman and P. Soldatos, ed., B. Rubin, ed., *Federalism and International Relations*.

The Role of the Subnational Units, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 46.

¹⁹ P. Drulák, L. Königová, P. Kratochvíl, *Podíl obecních a krajských samospráv na zahraniční politice. Zpráva z výzkumného projektu*. op. cit., pp. 50.

²⁰ “Portál Jihomoravského kraje - Meziregionální spolupráce,” [Portal of the South Moravian Region - Interregional Cooperation] Jihomoravský kraj. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=27&TypeID=1> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

Moravian Region. As the international cooperation had proliferated over the past 20 years, some sector specialization in relations with particular regions was essential. Thus, just as the relations with the various partners have their own histories, the types of events and activities undertaken are often very similar. Nonetheless, that does not mean that regional paradiplomacy is at a standstill. On the contrary, the South Moravian Region is still developing new international connections.²¹

There are also two special cases of South Moravian Regional paradiplomacy. The first is the partnership with Šumadija District in Serbia, where South Moravia provided development assistance in public administration from 2003, and later expanded its activities into the economic and cultural fields. The second special case is the relationship with the Principality of Liechtenstein. The initial motivation was to revive the ties between Southern Moravia and the House of Liechtenstein, the latter having owned large estates in Southern Moravia before the Second World War. The region's activities later evolved into the broader area of economic and cultural projects with the Principality of Liechtenstein.²²

Table 2: List of South Moravian Region's paradiplomatic partnerships

Partner	Country
Basque Country	Spain
Bjelovar-Bilogora County	Croatia
Bratislava Self-governing Region	Slovakia
Lower Austria	Austria
Gers Department	France
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	Russia
Kaunas Region	Lithuania
Leningradskaya Oblast	Russia
Principality of Liechtenstein	Principality of Liechtenstein
Łódź Voivodeship	Poland
Lviv Oblast	Ukraine
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	Russia
Odessa Oblast	Ukraine
Province of Bergamo	Italy
Guangdong Province	China
Hainan Province	China
Hebei Province	China
South Gyeongsang Province	South Korea
Shaanxi Province	China
Province of Utrecht	The Netherlands
Tuscany Region	Italy
Varna Region	Bulgaria
Republic of Tatarstan	Russia
State of Georgia	USA
Middle Franconia	Germany
Šumadija District	Serbia

²¹ Phone interview with the former head of the South Moravian external affairs department, May 6, 2020.

²² V. Dostál, Paradiplomacie českých krajů: region jako aktér mezinárodní politiky, op. cit., pp. 130-142.

²³ "Aktualizace strategické vize Jihomoravského kraje," [Updated strategic vision of the South Moravian Region] Jihomoravský kraj,

Trenčín Self-governing Region	Slovakia
Trnava Self-governing Region	Slovakia
Zadar County	Croatia

Source: "Medziregionální spolupráce," [Interregional cooperation] South Moravian Region. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=27&TypeID=1> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

South Moravian Paradiplomacy Planning

There are currently no strategic documents dealing explicitly with South Moravian paradiplomacy. The Regional Development Strategy states that:

the mission of the South Moravian Region – in the most general sense – is to improve the living conditions of members of the regional community (...) [by] strengthening the region's economic competitiveness and improving its inhabitants' quality of life. To fulfil this mission, the region will make full use of the competences entrusted to it as the regional self-government body, while strengthening dialogue and cooperation with cities, municipalities and other entities in the region, as well as with partners in other parts of the Czech Republic and abroad.

Thus, the importance of international activities was acknowledged in the very early days of the region's developmental vision. However, the region's key strategic paper, which states its priorities, measures to be taken, interventions and main projects, makes no reference to international activities conducted by the region.²³ Nonetheless international relations is implicitly present in the section focusing on innovations, marketing and the region's attractiveness to foreign workers.

Thus, its regional paradiplomacy is supportive and administrative, rather than being the cornerstone of the region's activities or a political issue. From this one can derive the manner in which the foreign activities are conducted. The key factor in the planning is the individual interests of members of the region's board, or other external actors such as universities, entrepreneurs, honorary consuls, the regional chamber of commerce, the South-Moravian Innovation Centre or NGOs. There is in effect no long-term planning. Some elected politicians have tried to set their own agenda, as was the case with the relations with Liechtenstein or the Chinese regions, but this was also done more on an ad hoc basis than with proper advanced planning.²⁴

Individual activities are planned by the regional authority and the respective external relations department and approved by the board. Since international cooperation is not politicized, it draws little attention from the elected bodies. The South Moravian Region has both the

January 2012. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?PubID=182101&TypeID=7> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

²⁴ Interview with the former head of the South Moravian external affairs department, May 6, 2020.

Committee of the Council for the Interregional Relations and the Commission of the Board for Interregional Relations. Therefore, the board – as the executive office – and the council – as the elected assembly – pay specific attention to international relations. But they are not explicitly involved in planning activities in that area.

Management of South Moravian Paradiplomacy

The regional paradiplomacy is conducted by the External Relations Department with a staff of 12. However, the department does not just deal with international relations, but with internal relations within the region itself. Interestingly, international relations are not managed from within the department of the president's office, which is the more usual way of steering regional paradiplomacy and nominally provides the department with more independence.

The department is mainly responsible for:

- ✚ “external and foreign relations of the South Moravian Region and their development;
- ✚ receiving foreign visits, organizing international conferences and meetings in the region and abroad;
- ✚ ensuring the participation of the region in programs announced and supported by the European Union or other international organizations for international regional cooperation;
- ✚ creating, organizing and implementing cooperation projects within interregional relations;
- ✚ providing promotional materials and items for use in interregional cooperation.”²⁵

The South Moravian Region also has a representation in Brussels which is managed by the Office of South Moravian Region for Interregional Cooperation, a semi-publicly funded regional authority organization. A semi-publicly funded organization was the best way of setting up a regional representation abroad.²⁶

The Brussels office was created in 2007 with a staff of one representative and some interns. Initially, the office's very broad priority areas were supposed to be narrowed down by the Coordination Group for the Affairs of the South Moravian Representation to the EU which included other regional actors interested in the regional office's activities. However, the coordination group was dissolved in 2009.²⁷

Substance, tools and implementation of South Moravian Paradiplomacy

The annual reports produced by South Moravian Region cover its extensive interregional activities in detail. A review of activities undertaken in 2016–2018 shows that the region had a broad range of international contacts.²⁸

Areas of cooperation included tourism and promoting the region, agriculture, transport, contact with Czech minorities abroad, development assistance education and university collaborations, culture, medical services, research and development, business and trade missions, and sport.

The Representation to the EU was assigned specific tasks:

- ✚ accessing relevant EU information, processing, analysis and interpretation for the regional authority and other actors in the region;
- ✚ representing the region within the EU and lobbying;
- ✚ networking;
- ✚ participating in platforms and networks such as PURPLE for peri-urban areas and ERRIN – a network of R&D regions;
- ✚ promoting the region's cultural, investment and tourism opportunities;
- ✚ and providing support for the region's political delegations visiting Brussels.²⁹

There are a number of tools used for the implementation of regional paradiplomacy:

- ✚ official visits by the region's politicians;
- ✚ working visits by Regional Authority officials;
- ✚ business delegations;
- ✚ provision of development assistance;
- ✚ participating in fairs;
- ✚ promoting the region's tourism, investment and cultural opportunities.

South Moravian Region has 29 established partnerships. It is also expanding its international activities and has relations with other regions or bodies (mostly foreign embassies). The substance and tools differ significantly, but some generalizations can be made:

- ✚ Cooperation with neighboring regions focuses on practical issues relating to the spatial proximity. These include transport, road infrastructure, medical services, crisis management and cooperation in regional tourism and local culture.

²⁵ “Činnost odboru vnějších vztahů,” [Activities of the Department of External Relations] Jihomoravský kraj. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=18645&TypeID=2> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

²⁶ The office is also responsible for the activities conducted in the Zadar and Šumadija regions.

²⁷ “Tisková konference 20. dubna 2007” [Press conference on April 20, 2007] Jihomoravský kraj. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=19549&TypeID=2&origin=mobil> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

²⁸ “Annual Report of the South Moravian Region 2018,” Jihomoravský kraj, 2019. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=398031&TypeID=61> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

“Annual Report of the South Moravian Region 2017,” Jihomoravský kraj, 2018. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=372449&TypeID=61> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

“Annual Report of the South Moravian Region 2016,” Jihomoravský kraj, 2017. Available online: <https://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=344930&TypeID=61> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

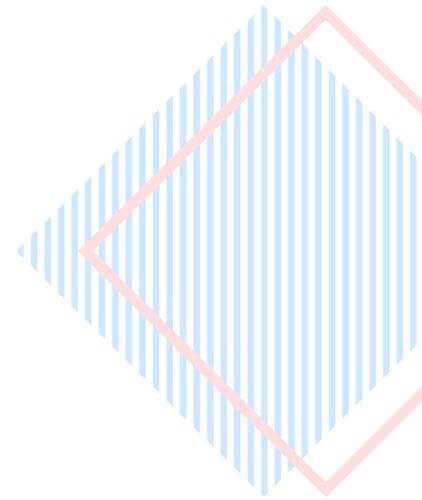
²⁹ N. Pavlůsková, *Diplomová práce. Paradiplomacie Jihomoravského kraje* [Thesis: Paradiplomacy in South Moravian Region]. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2019, pp. 73. Available online: https://is.muni.cz/th/szkvd/Nikola_Pavluskova_-_Diplomova_prace_zaverecna_verze.pdf (accessed on February 20, 2021).

- ✚ Relations with EU regions focus on sharing know-how in South Moravian Region's priority areas – such as innovations, regional development, agriculture, modern transport.
- ✚ Cooperation with non-EU regions tends to consist of support for the region's exports and promoting investments in the region. It also includes development assistance.
- ✚ Cooperation in culture, sport, education and with universities, and promotion of the Region as a tourist destination are part of relations with all kinds of partner regions.

Monitoring and reporting

The Regional Authority produces substantive reporting on its international activities. The region's annual reports run to around 150 pages, with about 10 of these covering paradiplomatic activities. Foreign relations are discussed and monitored by the regional council and the board as well as by their consultative bodies: the Interregional Relations Committee of the Regional Council and the Interregional Relations Commission of the Board of Councilors.

No specific goals are set so the monitoring is informative, rather than evaluative. This is because paradiplomatic activities are seen as auxiliary to the implementation of key regional priorities, not a priority in themselves.



The Case of the Liberec Region

The Liberec Region is one of the smallest regions in the Czech Republic. It has the second smallest population (442,000). It shares a border with the German state of Saxony and the Lower Silesia Voivodship in Poland. Its capital, Liberec, is the fifth biggest city in the Czech Republic and has a Technical University and significant industry. Thus, despite not being a very populous region, it has huge potential for conducting international relations.

Table 3: Liberec Region in Numbers:

Area	3,163 km ²
Population	443,398 (2020)
Population density	140/km ²
Capital city	Liberec
Capital city population	104,445 (2018)
GDP per capita	386,788 CZK (2018)
GDP share of Czech GDP	3.2% (2017)
Public and state universities	1

Sources: "Aktuální makroekonomické údaje za Liberecký kraj" [Current macroeconomic data for the Liberec region] Czech Statistical Office. Available online: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/xl/aktualni-makroekonomicke-udaje-za-liberecky-kraj> (accessed on February 20, 2021); "Poradenství," [Consulting] Liberec Region. Available online: <https://poradenstvi.kraj-lbc.cz/o-kraji> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

Development of Liberec Region Paradiplomacy³⁰

Liberec Region commenced international relations shortly after it was established. The first partnership was agreed with the Canton of St. Gallen in Switzerland. The city of St. Gallen had already established cooperation with the city of Liberec in 1990, when it provided material aid to Czechoslovakia following the collapse of the totalitarian regime. The partnership between the two cities evolved throughout the 1990s and a regional agreement was seen as a natural step in the fruitful cooperation. Liberec Region also made contacts with neighboring regions – the Lower Silesia Voivodship and the Saxony Land Directorate of the Free State of Saxony. An agreement with its Polish partner was signed in 2003 and with the German one in 2006. Cooperation with the Prešov Self-governing Region was established in 2004 following the devastating gales in the Tatra Mountains.³¹

Moreover, a couple of partnerships with regions in Western Europe were established in 2000s. These included regions in Spain, Italy, Sweden and Norway. They were usually initiated by the partner region. In both cases the Czech embassy in the country, or the foreign embassy in Prague, was the mediator in establishing the partnership. However, these two examples of cooperation

did not endure. They came to an end after the regional government changed in the partner regions.

From 2008 to 2012 a number of new partnerships with non-EU regions were either commenced or discussed. These include Aswan in Egypt, Bursa in Turkey, Orenburg in Russia and Hi-Thin Province in Vietnam. The partnerships were short-lived, as the new government after the 2012 elections had different priorities, and partnering with distant regions was not one of them. Instead, Liberec Region started to focus on getting more added value out of the existing cooperation. Its newly established partnerships were with the Lubusz Voivodship in Poland and most importantly with the Vinnytsia Oblast in Ukraine.

There were generally four key motivations behind the international cooperation. Firstly, there was cross-border cooperation and a mutual interest in improving transregional relations. Secondly, there was a need to learn about self-government administration from the regions located in Western Europe. Thirdly, there was an interest in trade relations, investments and tourism, which attracted partners from non-EU countries, and fourthly, it was keen to share its expertise and development assistance with less developed regions, which was the case with Vinnytsia Oblast.

Table 4: List of Liberec Region's paradiplomatic partnerships

St. Gallen	Switzerland
Vinnytsia Oblast	Ukraine
Lubusz Voivodship	Poland
Lower Silesia Voivodship	Poland
Land Directorate of Saxony Free State of Saxony the Federal Republic of Germany	Germany

Source: "Annual Report 2018 – Liberec Region," Liberec Region, 2018. Available online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/case:show/id:10414577?> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

Planning Liberec Region's Paradiplomacy

There is no specific document dealing with Liberec's regional paradiplomacy. External relations are mentioned in the Liberec Region Development Strategy. In the section about the strategic goal of territorial development and the development of civil society in the region, it says that "enhancement of international and trans-border cooperation and the creation of trans-border and international projects as well as international networks of cities and regions" are among the activities contributing to regional development.³²

Cooperation with St. Gallen and Saxony is well-established and there is always a jointly agreed plan of activities for one, two or even three years. The plan exists

³⁰ Unless stated otherwise, the description of the Liberec Region is based on a phone interview with the Head of the Press and External Relations Department Andrea Fulková, July 16, 2020.

³¹ "Prešovský samosprávny kraj (Slovenská republika)," [Prešov self-governing region (Slovak Republic)] Liberecký kraj. Available

online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/page3831> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

³² "Strategie rozvoje Libereckého kraje 2006-2020 [Strategic Development in Liberec Region 2006-2020]," Liberecký kraj, pp. 99. Available online: <https://regionalni-rozvoj.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/case:show/id:909321> (accessed on July 17, 2020).

partly because of pressure from the partner regions, who requested prior discussions on joint endeavors to ensure the cooperation produces the expected results.

Cooperation with other partners is more flexible, ad-hoc and is usually tied to specific events.

Liberec Region does not have a dedicated commission within the board or committee in the council for international affairs. There is therefore less political debate. However, the authority to conduct international activities lies with the board, and the council is obliged to approve international cooperation agreements. Cooperation is not a top political issue; the coalition agreement between the region's current leader contains only two lines on cross-border cooperation.³³

Management of Liberec Region's Paradiplomacy

Regional paradiplomacy is conducted by the Press and External Relations Department which is staffed by eight people. However, international relations comes under the remit of the head of the department and one other employee. The agenda falls under the department of the president's office, and the president is responsible for international relations.

The department:

- ✚ “publishes reports on foreign trips by members of the board and employees of the regional authority;
- ✚ ensures the promotion and presentation of the region (...) abroad in external and foreign relations;
- ✚ implements the region's foreign relations;
- ✚ creates the concept of the region's external and foreign relations;
- ✚ organizes the reception of domestic and foreign delegations by the president, other members of the board and the regional council, including the provision of protocol requirements;
- ✚ keeps records of the region's foreign activities;
- ✚ prepares and negotiates partnership agreements on cooperation with foreign regions, or EU institutions and other foreign bodies, and coordinates activities relating to the implementation of these agreements;
- ✚ assesses the region's foreign relations and cooperation and reports to the members of the board and council;
- ✚ communicates and cooperates with embassies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Czech Centers abroad, embassies and the European institutions in Brussels;

- ✚ monitors the EU agenda
- ✚ is responsible for the agenda relating to the Brussels representation, cooperates with the entity providing the region's representation; prepares conceptual proposals for the Brussels representation; provides the board and the council with regular information on the operations of the region's Brussels representation;
- ✚ organizes foreign trips for the members of the board and the council;
- ✚ provides the council with proposals for all foreign business trips and keeps records of travel reports.”³⁴

Liberec Region's interests in Brussels are formally managed by Neisse Euroregion. The representation of the region's interests is contracted out.³⁵ In practice representation is provided by Dr. Pavel Branda, who is the deputy mayor of a village in Liberec Region, member of the Committee of Regions, and Euroregion project manager. The region does not have a permanent representative in Brussels, but has a contract with the person responsible for activities related to this agenda.

Substance, tools and implementation of Liberec Region's Paradiplomacy

The Liberec Region annual reports give a concise overview of its interregional activities with established partners. A list of activities undertaken in 2016–2018 shows that the region conducts international contacts in the following areas: environmental protection, agriculture, tourism transport, contact with Czech minorities abroad, development assistance, education and university collaborations, culture, medical services, innovations and crisis management.³⁶

The Liberec Region representation to the EU is responsible for the following activities:

- ✚ “participation in professional European debates on topical issues, conferences, exhibitions, presentations etc;
- ✚ the acquisition and exchange of information, experience and contacts with foreign regions in the region's areas of interest;
- ✚ cooperation with the relevant regions and coordination within the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC);
- ✚ assistance in establishing interregional cooperation, e.g. monitoring offers for cooperation, coming up with initiatives, project preparation and implementation;

³³ “Liberecký kraj. Programové prohlášení koalice pro období 2016–2020 [Liberec Region: Coalition Program for 2016–2020],” Liberecký kraj, pp. 4. Available online: <https://liberecky-kraj.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/id:1012168/lastUpdateDate:2018-02-20%2011%3A08%3A22> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

³⁴ “Náplň činnost. Oddělení tiskové a vnějších vztahů,” [Nature of the activity. Press and External Relations Department] Liberecký kraj. Available online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/page806> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

³⁵ “Smlouva o poskytování komplexních služeb v oblasti zastupování Libereckého kraje při EU,” [Agreement on the provision of comprehensive services in the field of representation of the Liberec region to the EU] Liberecký kraj, 2020. Available online:

https://smlouvy.gov.cz/smlouva/soubor/16501176/OLP_700_2020_r_egistr.pdf (accessed on February 20, 2021).

³⁶ “Annual Report 2018,” Liberecký kraj, pp. 28. Available online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/case:show/id:1041457??> (accessed on February 20, 2021); “Annual Report 2017,” Liberecký kraj, pp. 28. Available online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/id:1023741/lastUpdateDate:2018-06-22%2010%3A47%3A15> (accessed on February 20, 2021); “Annual Report 2016,” Liberecký kraj, pp. 38. Available online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/id:1000005/lastUpdateDate:2017-07-12%2009%3A39%3A45> (accessed on February 20, 2021).

- ✚ providing support for the president's work for the Committee of the Regions, i.e. preparing documents, analyzing issues discussed, preparing the agenda, visiting Brussels, providing escorts, interpreting;
- ✚ monitoring the activities of other EU institutions according to the current needs of the region;
- ✚ ensuring there is the administrative and organizational support in Brussels for the Liberec Region and its domestic partners;
- ✚ monitoring current calls for community programs and project co-operation offers, including providing information on the prospects for forthcoming events;
- ✚ ensuring mandated employees assigned to the regional authority in the area receive training;
- ✚ organization of all Liberec Region events in Brussels;
- ✚ handling all the necessary aspects of stays by Liberec Region representatives or employees in Brussels, such as providing flight tickets, accommodation,
- ✚ providing EU information to the public."³⁷

The Liberec Region has a small number of established and functional partnerships. However, some international contacts are conducted without a formal partnership (e.g. contacts in Israel or on the EU level). There are also clear distinctions between the existing partnerships:

- ✚ Cooperation with neighboring regions is focused on practical issues related to the spatial proximity. These include transport, road infrastructure, medical services, crisis management and cooperation on regional tourism and environmental issues.
- ✚ Relations with St. Gallen and Saxony center on exchanging best practices in various areas. Interestingly, this is now mutual, unlike in the 1990s. The Swiss partners are for example interested in the public libraries system.
- ✚ Cooperation with the non-EU regions has stagnated and has almost disappeared. Liberec Region has no functional cooperation with the Chinese province or Russian region.
- ✚ However, it has recently established cooperation with Vinnytsia Oblast, where the focus is on sharing Czech experience with Ukraine, development assistance and humanitarian aid.

Monitoring and reporting

The relevant Regional Authority department reports its international activities in the region's annual reports. Foreign relations are also monitored by the regional board. The department issues an internal annual report summarizing achievements in international cooperation and outlining its plan for the following year. This report is approved by the board.

Conclusion: lessons learned from two contrasting regions

The two Czech regions – South Moravia and Liberec – differ enormously in size and history. However, they both share a border with two countries, focus on innovation, have a large regional capital and universities. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the research:

- ✚ The legal set-up of Czech paradiplomacy provides the self-governments with significant autonomy in the implementation of international affairs. The central authorities pay little attention to the substance unless it causes problems for relations with some countries. The regional international activities are generally welcomed and seen as part of the Czech Republic's foreign relations.
- ✚ Foreign relations are not a priority in themselves. The role they play is more auxiliary. In other words, paradiplomatic activities have to contribute to the region's development. This affects the political attention given to that area, which is low, compared to other regional policies such as health care, infrastructure, social services or education.
- ✚ Regions always develop partnerships with neighboring regions and focus on a very practical agenda related to the spatial proximity and de-facto absence of physical borders.
- ✚ Sharing experience, ideas and lessons learned is often part of the international cooperation on various levels. Interestingly, the regions are not just beneficiaries but also providers, mainly for the non-EU regions.
- ✚ Although international regional relations are not politicized at the regional or state level, political leaders clearly steer it and give it its specific shape. That was more visible in the case of Liberec Region, where the priorities of the new board in 2012 led to a re-focusing of paradiplomacy.
- ✚ Size matters. South Moravian paradiplomacy has four times the number of staff and six times the number of partnerships Liberec Region has.
- ✚ Both regions have a Brussels representation. However, in the Liberec one the administration is low-cost, whereas the South Moravian Region set up a semi-publicly funded organization dedicated to that purpose.

³⁷ "Annual Report 2018," Liberecký kraj, pp. 29. Available online: <https://kancelar-hejtmana.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/case:show/id:1041457??> (accessed on February 20, 2021).