Dimension of Local Security – Selected Issues

Abstract

Local security is the most tangible security category. Most often it is identified with the immediate living space of a person. Contemporary civilization processes and opportunities that result from them cause that man ceases to close himself only to the matters of his immediate environment. The development of self-governance, which started in the 1990s, and its three-level expansion, made citizens conscious participants of social life at the municipality, county and province level. The article presents selected issues related to the contemporary dimension of local security. Local boundaries determining the issues of this environment and examples of threats that may affect the sense of security of its inhabitants were indicated. The possibilities of counteracting threats to the local environment by setting the standards of the binding legal order were also presented.

Keywords: security, danger, public order, local security, territorial division

Received: 03.08.2020; Reviewed: 24.08.2020; Accepted: 18.09.2020

Wymiar bezpieczeństwa lokalnego – wybrane zagadnienia

Abstrakt

Środowiska oraz przykłady zagrożeń, jakie mogą kształtować poczucie bezpieczeństwa jego mieszkańców. Przedstawiono również możliwości przeciwdziałania zagrożeniom środowiska lokalnego przez stanowienie norm obowiązującego porządku prawnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** bezpieczeństwo, zagrożenie, porządek publiczny, bezpieczeństwo lokalne, podział terytorialny

**Przyjęty: 03.08.2020; Zrecenzowany: 24.08.2020; Zatwierdzony: 18.09.2020**

**Безпека у локальному вимірі – вибрані проблеми**

**Анотація**

Локальна безпека є найбільш відчутною категорією безпеки. Найчастіше її уточнюють із безпосереднім життєвим простором людини. Сучасні цивілізаційні процеси та можливості, що випливають з них, приводять до того, що людина перестає закриватися лише на справи свого найближчого оточення. Розвиток самоврядування, що розпочався у 1990-х роках та його трирівневе розширення, зробило громадян свідомими учасниками суспільного життя на рівні комун, повітів та воєводств. У статті представлені вибрані проблеми, що стосуються сучасного виміру локальної безпеки. Були вказані локальні межі, що визначають проблеми цього середовища, та приклади загроз, які можуть формувати почуття безпеки його мешканців. Також були представлені можливості протидії загрозам для локального середовища шляхом встановлення стандартів зобов'язуючого правового порядку.

**Ключові слова:** безпека, загроза, громадський порядок, локальна безпека, територіальний поділ

**Прийнятий: 03.08.2020; Рецензованої: 24.08.2020; Затверджений: 18.09.2020**

**Introduction**

Security is one of our essential needs. It occupies a key position in diverse systems specialised in valuating needs. As an example, in the pyramid-based needs hierarchy developed by Abraham Maslow [1], security occupies a position immediately after basic physiological needs. Fulfilment of needs that occupy a higher position in the hierarchy (love and belonging, respect and recognition or self-fulfilment) basically depends on
satisfying needs of a lower rank, such as physiological needs and the need for security [2]. This is not ruled out by the fact that the principle presented by Maslow based on the hierarchical needs pyramid has been and still remains idealistic. The need for security also occupies a key position in the ERG psychosocial theory (E – Existence, R – Relations, G – Growth) developed by Clayton Alderfer [3]. In this model the need for security is associated with the group of physiological needs related to living conditions of an individual – existence [4, pp. 25–34]. As an effect a conclusion may be drawn that despite changes of a social, political, economic and technological nature, security remains our basic need [5, p. 10; 5, p. 9].

Regardless of the position occupied by security perceived in a systemic way in the hierarchy of human needs, which as a category is related to global, state, local and personal issues [6, p. 11; 7, pp. 33–39], it is a need, the assurance of which is a state awaited by particular individuals in the individual dimension, as well as a collective one – in a social or even global dimension [8, p. 15]. Obviously individuals tend to be affected to the biggest extent by the type of security that serves as basis for creating perspectives for everyday life for themselves and for persons closest to them. This does not mean at all that in the individual dimension it does not continue to mean care for security of the community, country, continent or the world [9, p. 6]. Yet it is a dimension of the perspective of own security and that of persons closest to us. The dimension of this closeness determines the activity of particular individuals and social groups. Those groups build ties and develop values that allow their distinguishing from others [10]. What is more, it is consolidated by the need of satisfying own needs that arise from various conditions, e.g. territorial or environmental ones. In the sphere of security those would comprise conditions that result from common hazards [11, p. 8; 12, p. 9].

Given the perspective of their occurrence, social groups will be formed that are deeply interested in their neutralisation. The above mentioned local security would be activating individuals interested in the common objective, and namely counteracting present or prospective local hazards to security. It becomes a challenge to the local community. Yet we are still left with the question: How extensive is the dimension of localness and what aspects shape processes taking place in it?

Limits to localness

As has already been mentioned, social relations based on common values and intention of their protecting give rise to the need of assuring security in the local dimension. In most
general terms local nature is to be comprehended as a certain type of social order resulting from natural ties and contacts of a personal nature [13, p. 78]. Localness is inherently connected with the existence or occurrence on a given area [14]. This justifies introducing administrative divisions of state territories. They are implemented to assure certain law and order in activity implemented on the given area. Its distinguishing is determined by factors of economic nature, as well as those related to urban planning, settlement structure, obliteration of differences between urban and rural areas or demographic factors, but also historical ones [15, p. 102]. Undoubtedly they are executed to streamline the functioning of states (government and self-government administration) and to create conditions for closer definition of activity of its entities on a given territory [16, p. 101].

It should be pointed out that divisions of state territory are also executed by non-government entities, such as for example churches. At the time of their strict relations with the state they served as a basis for the functioning of state administration. The distinguishing of new territorial units of the church had a political dimension. A prominent example is the establishment of the archdiocese in Gniezno [18].

Furthermore, also contemporarily political aspects cause the drive of having administrative separateness. A striking example are attempts at distinguishing of the Częstochowa province in the state administrative structure [19].

Presently practically all states adopt an administrative division of their territory. Regardless of names applied for units of such a division (region, province, state, land etc.) this activity is aimed at streamlining activities of the state on a local level. In practical terms making such a division is not easy. This is caused by the diversity of ties between particular areas within given countries. It seems that the most obvious division is the one based on geographical criteria. Such criteria were constituted naturally by such elements as mountains and rivers. Yet contemporarily they are weakened by infrastructural relations and the ability of communicating and mobility.

The territorial division of Poland appeared to have undergone rather drastic changes, which arose from difficulties connected with systematisation of ties that bind particular geographic areas. One should bear in mind the fact that before regaining of independence in 1918, on Polish lands there were divisions adopted appropriately to needs of occupant countries. As an effect after regaining of independence the Republic of Poland has basically adopted divisions set up by those countries. The period of World War 2 gave rise to the introduction of divisions imposed by occupant countries, which were completely different than the ones existing to date. The post-war reality ensuing
from the loss of a considerable part of eastern lands and connection of lands lying in the west required ordering the administrative division of the state. Yet in that process use was made of inter-war period achievements. In the state structure a distinction was made of provinces (województwa), counties (powiaty), towns and municipalities (gminy), with communes (gromady) as auxiliary units of municipalities. In Warsaw and in Łódź, districts have been established as auxiliary units. The 1950 reform of the administrative division caused replacement of municipalities by communes and the establishment of districts. According to presumptions this was supposed to contribute to making new authorities closer to the population [20, p. 206].

By the act of 1975 on the two-level administration of Poland including a change of the act on national councils [63] counties have been cancelled, and their competences were basically turned over to municipalities as units of basic level. The act has also established 49 provinces (województwa). In addition, it allowed a considerable increase in coordination relations and special divisions [21, p. 207]. Political changes at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s also applied to changes in the territorial division of the country in favour of weakening the importance of units of auxiliary and special division. They arose in the first place from the repeal of the Act on national councils [64], Act on the system of national boards and territorial self-government [62] via the Act from 1990 – Regulations introducing the act on territorial self-government and the act on self-government employees [60]. It did not introduce changes, however, in the field of two-level nature of territorial division of the state, although in a way it smuggled it de iure in the Act on field bodies of general government administration [61]. Article 49 established administrative regions as auxiliary units for the implementation of government administration in provinces. The effected change of the territorial division also required adopting a new functioning concept of government and self-government administration in the state [60 and 61]. The latter one was established for all areas of basic state division. Apart from the already existent municipality self-government [59], also established were the county self-government [57] and the provincial self-government [55]. Tasks of government administration operating in administrative regions were assigned to the county self-government, and county (regional) government administration units became combined in the county under supervision of the heads of districts (starosta). On the other hand, in the province, despite the establishment of self-government on that level, functions of fusion were filled out by the provincial governor (wojewoda) as the local government administration [22, pp. 75–92].
Contemporary municipalities, counties and provinces are constituted by communities of their residents. The territory of the municipality is determined by the Council of Ministers [66]. By virtue of the act on municipality self-government it is obliged to do this in a way that assures a possibly homogenous territory to the municipality with view to the settlement and spatial pattern, which takes into account social, economic and cultural ties, and which assures the ability of implementing public tasks. Own tasks of the municipality comprise satisfying collective needs of its inhabitants as a community. In addition municipalities implement assigned tasks in the field of government administration. Pursuant to the act on county self-government county inhabitants form by virtue of the law a local self-government community. Counties are established (joined, divided, borders defined, names assigned and a seat of their authorities selected) by the Council of Ministers [65]. The act stipulated that the definition of county borders takes place by specification of communes comprised by the county. Although this is not done directly by the act expressis verbis, yet a change of county borders or its establishment should be made in a way assuring to the county a possibly uniform territory with respect to the settlement and spatial arrangement, taking into account social, economic and cultural ties and ensuring the capability of executing public tasks. The county executes public tasks specified in relevant acts on its own behalf, as well as those commissioned to it in the field of government administration. However, they are of a supra-municipality nature. Pursuant to the act on provincial self-government inhabitants of a province form by virtue of law a regional self-government community. The listing of municipalities and counties comprised by provinces is announced by the Prime Minister [67]. Changes of province borders related to establishing, merging, division or abrogation of counties may be carried out by the Council of Ministers, yet in doing so it has to strive not only at improving conditions for the execution of public tasks of a provincial nature, but also maintaining regional social, economic and cultural ties. There is also a need of obtaining opinions of law-making bodies of territorial self-government entities, to which such changes apply. The functional scope of the provincial self-government comprises the execution of public tasks of a provincial nature, not reserved by acts in favour of bodies of government administration. What is more, the scope of operation of the province self-government does not violate the autonomy of counties and municipalities [23, pp. 210–222].

Consequently it may be concluded that the modern administrative division of the state territory [24] is not only meant to assure effective implementation of tasks by state entities (governmental and self-governmental ones) on the given section of the
state territory, but is also aimed at consolidating the inhabitants of those units. This is expressed not only by the indicated requirements of taking into consideration the settlement and spatial pattern as well as social, economic and cultural ties, but also possibilities and needs of assuring security to their inhabitants on the municipality, county or province level. Particular emphasis is placed here on public order and security of citizens, as well as fire protection and flood preventing [25].

If we refer local security to those tasks that are doubled on diverse municipality levels, we are faced with the following questions: May and should local security be analysed on all levels of state administrative division? Does a literal determination of the county self-government communities, as one of a local nature, fail to determine the relation of local security only to it? Should local security be analysed only in areas of official administrative divisions of state territory, taking into consideration auxiliary units – solectwa (subdivision of municipalities), districts, neighbourhoods? Do limits of localness not exceed beyond official divisions? Responses to questions formulated in such a way may differ depending on setting up limits of localness. Given that in the majority of cases local security is identified with the security of the local community comprehended as a community residing on a relatively small territory, such as a district, neighbourhood, village or parish [26], it may be assumed that it only pertains to common needs perceivable to their residents, differing from the specific nature of inhabited area [27, p. 79]. Such a line of argumentation would be justifiable if hazards to those needs only arose from hazards generated in those environments.

**Hazards to local security**

Undoubtedly hazards to local security basically do not diverge from those that had already been identified. This applies not only to hazards as such, but also sources that generate them [9, p. 23]. Those hazards that have been identified as non-military threats are most perceivable on a local scale. The main non-military hazards, besides political, economic, ecological, health-related and social dangers, may be said to comprise hazards to public order and security. It may be considered that their sources comprise organised and common crimes, hooliganism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, activity of religious sects, juvenile gangs, domestic (spousal) violence or aggression [16]. The qualifier of hazard sources enables the identification of basic groups of hazards basically classified as: natural disasters (all dangerous phenomena connected with forces of nature); technical disasters (connected with civilizational and economic
development of societies); synergic disasters (social pathologies, acts of terror). Causes of those hazards unfortunately have to be associated with intentional destructive actions of people [26, pp. 6–8].

Forms of hazards that occur in the local environment should obviously include those that are defined as crimes (ordinary offences, economic crimes), committed individually or in an organised way. They also include hazards that arise from violations of standards imposed by the binding legal order, which fail to meet conditions for crimes. They are punished as offences, and in certain cases they are not even subject to any legal or penal rigours. One may not forget forms of hazards to public security that arise from failure to abide by legal and administrative rigours. They will also comprise consequences of failure to follow different standards, e.g. customary norms, but also such activities that have not been penalised yet, but which cause dangerous states, in particular for life and health. This will also include such activities that as such do not constitute directly a hazard to public security, but which they accompany owing to the mass scale of participants – mass events, assemblies or religious celebrations [25, pp. 53–104].

Serious hazards to local security are identified thanks to critical infrastructure. This does not only apply to devices and facilities situated locally, but also to those, the possible dysfunctional nature of which may have a range broader than merely a local one. The most frequently occurring hazards in this respect include failures of systems and devices such as heating and power lines, water supply, sewerage or gas supply pipes [26, pp. 120–121]. Their occurrence not only brings lack of stability to public life, but also causes the danger of occurrence of direct and indirect hazards for people, such as for example diseases resulting from unsatisfactory sanitary conditions [25, p. 66]. A good example may be constituted by the sewerage system of Warsaw, the failure of which was painfully experienced by practically all local communities that inhabit lower situated sections of the Vistula River [28].

Also of importance for local security are hazards that arise from spreading of diverse diseases. This may be proven not only by epidemics that decimated local societies ages ago – smallpox, plague, cholera. Although the recently identified diseases caused by newly discovered viruses, such as for example the H5N8 virus leading to the occurrence of a highly contagious bird flu or the African Swine Fever virus (ASF) did not affect people in a direct way, yet in the areas of their occurrence they gave rise to concerns of local producers of poultry and pigs as to the future of their activity. The scale of those concerns may be proven among others by signals of initiatives connected...
with erecting physical barriers meant to render impossible the movement of animals. The German Land Brandenburg has commenced building a 120-kilometre fencing to prevent the entry of boars from Poland [29]. Local consequences of the occurrence of such diseases affect not only producers, but also local residents involved in breeding, and in addition also processing of produced goods, which in turn leads to a destabilisation of the local economy by depriving residents of their sources of income.

The appearance of the COVID-19 coronavirus, and in the first place the rate of its spreading, imposed the necessity of taking up preventive measures. In the first place they comprised giving up the hitherto way of living in favour of behaviour oriented at preventing the spreading of that virus. They caused destabilisation, which also affected local societies, and even endangered their existence. As a result the adoption of state intervention became necessary, and more than PLN 212 billion have been earmarked for the protection of the economy and jobs under the anti-crisis shield and PLN 100 billion of additional means under the so-called financial shield [30].

The cited examples prove that it is impossible to analyse hazards to local security not only in the context of hazards self-generated by that community. This fact remains unchanged even though – basically – the security of a local community is identified with hazards within it and subjectively perceptible only to its members [29, pp. 359–373] and determined by features characteristic for this community, such as autonomy, own social standards, strong cultural and interpersonal ties, inhabiting a distinguished small area, feeling of rootedness and belonging to the specific area [33]. Modern migration possibilities [34] certainly weaken them and make them appear to be stereotypic. It is also further intensified by the feeling of broader possibilities achievable thanks to building relations with other societies and benefitting from their experience, for example by identifying hazards they are already experiencing, which have not yet occurred in one's own surroundings. As a result local communities open up, and in some cases even fall apart, although in a paradox way it is from them that we expect assurance of security [10, p. 80].

The intensity of occurrence of the above mentioned hazards would be clearly dependent on local conditions. They would depend first of all on natural properties of their environments (mountains, rivers) and the present infrastructure, but also on the specific nature of social and cultural aspects of their inhabitants. In this context social operation of the state in the sphere of internal security becomes an important guarantee for social security of the citizens also at the time of economic growth. This is due to the fact that on the one hand economic growth brings about greater wealth of the society,
and consequently an intensified feeling of social security, and on the other hand the occurrence of persons (groups) that for various reasons do not make use of achievements of such progress. This concerns particularly those with limited access to basic goods and services that are generally available but beyond reach of such persons that form the category of people excluded or socially marginalised [17, p. 7]. It is vital that social activities of the state on the central and local level contribute to minimising this phenomenon, which may lead to better state of local security.

**Counteracting hazards to local security**

Hazards to local security are subject to care expressed by stipulations of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland [50]. Not only the legislature, but also the executive authorities are encumbered by it. Law-making, with laws that are centrally constructed and set down (acts that implement them – regulations) is not favourable to the satisfaction of local needs. Yet it is indispensable to assure harmonisation of the system of values and principles, according to which those communities are to function. In certain cases centrally imposed standards give rise to reluctance of their recipients, and that is why it is so important to prepare them in advance and provide proof of their legitimacy, and even the necessity of their adoption. In this respect particularly important are preceding educational activities implemented in diverse social and organisational forms [35], as well as preventive actions undertaken for example by the Police [49].

One of the examples of solutions adopted centrally, aimed at counteracting hazards on a local level, is clearly the act on crisis management [52]. It sets up an obligation of establishing centrally and on local administration levels (government and self-government administration) of structures aimed at preventing crisis situations, preparation for taking over control over them by way of planned activities, responding in the event of occurrence of crisis situations, elimination of their consequences and restoration of resources and critical infrastructure. This fact is not changed by the optional nature of establishing municipality (municipal) crisis management centres [52].

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland anticipates the need of providing legal solutions aimed at assuring local security not only on the central level, but also on a local one [48, p. 34]. This is possible by adopting local law acts classified to commonly binding law. This means that those acts may regulate the conduct of all categories of recipients, such as citizens, state authorities, all public and private institutions and organisations [35, p. 155], provided they are subject to Polish legislation [36, p. 107].
In the first place they may serve as a basis that defines sources of rights and obligations of those recipients [42, p. 61].

Local legal acts are made by territorial self-government bodies and local government administration bodies, binding on the area of activity of those bodies or their part. Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Republic of Poland reserves that acts of local law may be made on the basis and within the framework of empowering contained in acts, they may be classified as implementing and procedural ones [47, p. 34]. The first ones are issued for needs of specific implementation of given statutory material and legal standards. On the other hand, the objective of procedural acts is the regulation of a certain sphere of social relations, which had not been taken up by the legislator at all. This applies to standardisation of local situations that arise from needs of providing protection, such as protection of the life or health of inhabitants, in situation of special needs resulting from the fact of absence of general national regulations in this respect [29]. Consequently those regulations appear to be a supplementing element for the system of legal sources [43, p. 73].

The act on provincial governor and government administration in the province [51] empowers province governors and bodies of non-combined government administration to laying down acts of local law for the province or its part. They are of an executory nature, and hence implement specific statutory empowerments. It is inadmissible to make them among others on the basis of empowerments in regulations or other legal acts of basic rank [40, p. 285]. Implementing local legal acts are consequently acts of an autonomous nature and require specific framework in acts [41, p. 114].

In addition pursuant to art. 60 of the above mentioned act the provincial governor has the capacity of issuing provincial order-related rules in the form of regulations. Neverthelesss this general standard that empowers to legislative activity needs to encompass all such issues which to date have not been the object of another generally binding act. This also has to be indispensable to protect life, health or property and to assure order, peace and public security. Circumstances that justify the issuance of procedural regulations comprise among others all types of natural calamities, and in particular natural disasters [53]. These are events related to forces of nature, and include in particular atmospheric discharges, seismic tremors, strong winds, intense precipitation, long-term occurrence of extreme temperatures, landslides, fires, draughts, floods, ice phenomena on rivers and the sea as well as lakes and other water bodies, mass occurrence of pests, diseases or plants or animals or infectious disease of people or the occurrence of another element [46, pp. 60–69].
When issuing a procedural regulation the provincial governor submits it immediately to the Prime Minister, but also to the province marshal, heads of district, town presidents, mayors and commune heads, on the territory of which the regulation is to be adopted. Their effective application requires their being notified to inhabitants of areas, on which they are to become obligatory.

Principles and rules for making local legal regulations by territorial self-government bodies are defined by the following acts: Act on provincial self-government [54], Act on county self-government [56] and Act on municipality self-government [58]. Hence they are issued on all functioning levels of territorial self-government. On the regional level – i.e. the province – they are issued by the regional assembly. This particular body lays them down for the entire province or its part on the basis of empowerments provided in acts and within their framework. Those acts are of an implementing nature and are in the form of resolutions. The county self-government community is authorised to lay down local regulations by its authorities, i.e. the county council and county administration board. The county council issues local legal acts applicable on the county area, lays them down on the basis and within limits of authorisations comprised by acts. However, as regards the scope not regulated by acts or other regulations that are universally applicable county-level procedural regulations are issued. The council is authorised to do so in specially justified cases, if this is indispensable for the protection of life, health or property of the citizens, protection of the natural environment or to assure order, peace and public security. A condition for enactment of county procedural regulations is the occurrence of causes that justify their issuance on an area of more than one commune from the county territory. County procedural regulations may also be enacted by the county management board. However, it may do so only in cases of urgency. They require approval during the subsequent session of the county council, and if they are not submitted for approval or if the board refuses to approve them – they cease to be binding. Self-government communities of the lowest level – municipalities – lay down local legal acts via their bodies, i.e. municipality council or municipality head (mayor, town president). Based on statutory empowerments the municipality council is entitled to lay down acts of local law binding on the municipality territory. This is done by the council in the form of a resolution. On the other hand, in the scope not regulated in acts or other commonly binding regulations (for example provincial or county local legal regulations) the municipality council is entitled to issue legal regulations. This is done if this proves to be necessary for the protection of life or health of the citizens, and also to assure order, peace and public
security. In a case of urgency procedural regulations may be issued by the municipality head, in the form of a decree. Similarly as a procedural resolution of the county executive authority (management board), also the procedural order of the municipality head (mayor, town president) requires approval during the subsequent session of the legislative body – the municipality council. The procedural order of the municipality head loses its effect in the case of refusal to its approval or failure to having it approved during the next session of the council [42, 43].

A particularly valuable institution that contributes to activation of the local community is the possibility of coming up with a citizens’ legislative initiative to commence the process of laying down local legal acts. It was assumed for inhabitants of municipalities, counties and provinces with active voting rights. They may apply to the relevant law-making body of the territorial self-government unit, once the requirement of representativeness is met. It is important that the draft resolution notified within the citizens’ legislative initiative becomes a topic on the agenda during the closest session of the law-making authority, yet no later than after the lapse of three months since submission of the draft. This proves that the citizens’ legislative initiative offers genuine means to enable local communities to shape the direct environment of their functioning.

**Conclusions**

The reference of local security clearly depends on defining the community to which it applies. In most cases it is identified with the direct social group in which the individual is functioning. However, as a result of the development of self-governments, limiting one’s activity, also with respect to caring for security, to the direct surroundings only is practically impossible. This is due to the fact that we are participants of communities of municipalities, counties and provinces. This deceitful structure, which appears to be of a hierarchical nature, may not cause weakening of activity in the sphere of security. It is equally dependent on activities in municipalities, countries and provinces, and even on the national level. This imposes activity in those dimensions. Only well understood participation in self-government communities may serve as guarantee that undertaken decisions would uphold the principle: nothing about us without us. Inhabitants of local communities (not merely those understood *stricto sensu*) are best aware of their needs and hence form ties that enable their fulfilment. This does not mean that central authorities are released from the obligation of assuring internal security of the
state in a local dimension. Each initiative in this respect, even apparently unjustified, is valuable. In the first place this allows the deployment of forces and resources that are locally unavailable for the implementation of measures serving the population and enhancing their security. An example of this type of activity are infrastructural investments, but also interventions in a situation when hazards occur. The anticipated possibility of autonomous law making by self-government communities, supplemented by citizens’ legislative initiative, is an expression of the comprehension of citizens’ intentions and will of caring for issues of their communities, including also in the field of local security.

To conclude a presumption may be made that limiting the issue of local security only to issues of the closest surroundings may cause isolationism of settled social groups. In such a situation there is a need to initiate the activity of inhabitants in all dimensions pertaining to their issues. For this reason building community awareness on all levels of its functioning is clearly a desired phenomenon.

References:


Legal regulations:


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[59] Act of 8 March 1990 on municipality self-government, original text Polish Journal of Laws/ Dz.U. No. 16, item 95,


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