

## FAMILY BUSINESS SUCCESSION IN THE V3 COUNTRIES

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**Abstract:** This paper reacts on one of the main issues the family businesses are facing with – handling the business succession process. The aim of the paper is to analyze the process of family business handover and its support from a side of the regional authorities in the South Bohemia Region (Czech Republic), the Presov Region (Slovakia) and the Mazowieckie Region (Poland). The research framework combines face-to-face interviews and impersonal questionnaire survey to obtain data. It applies standard management data analyzing methods to identify the key strategic objectives and tasks for facilitating and sustaining the family businesses and the business succession process. The objectives and tasks are structured in the following areas: (I) Information Gathering & Monitoring, (II) Planning & Implementation, (III) Support & Facilitation, (IV) Cooperation & Coordination. In addition, the tasks are enriched of various good practices from analyzed regions to enhance their impact in practice.

**Keywords:** family business, business succession, planning, regional authorities

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### INTRODUCTION

Ismail et al. (2019) define the family-owned businesses as business units which are managed and governed by one family members with the aim to keep the family business tradition through the generations. They differ from other types of business by a unique combination of family and business environment which plays an important role in the running of the company. Their unique business culture usually brings them to strong commitment to family members, employees and local community (Petrů et al., 2016). Moreover, as Kachaner et al. (2012) note, the family businesses are usually very innovative, and able to flexible react on the changing market environment. They are widely accepted as the fundamental base of a stable economy and have a key role in regional or local development (e.g. Skokic et al., 2015; Poza & Daugherty, 2020; Peráček et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

The European Family Businesses (2021) estimates that the family-owned businesses make up 85 % of all private entrepreneurs in European countries, generating up to 50 % of European GDP, and providing more than 60 million jobs in the private sector. Thus, they are considered as the backbone of private industry and a key target for policies aimed at economic and regional growth (Andersson et al., 2018).

The paper covers the outputs of the INTERREG project: CENTRAL EUROPE, ENTER-transfer: Advancement of the Economic and Social Innovation through the Creation of the Environment Enabling Business Succession (CE1158). The aim of the paper is to draft the strategic tasks for the regional authorities in V3 countries for an enhancement of the business succession process (BSP) at the family business units (FBUs). The research framework combines face-to-face interviews with FBUs' owners and impersonal questionnaire survey with representatives of the regional authorities to obtain data. The first research stage is aimed at mapping the BSP phases. The next stage maps the regional authorities' knowledge about the FBUs and their involvement in supporting activities. After that, the paper defines the strategic objectives and analyzes them in detail by the Force-Field Analysis. Afterwards the objectives are decomposed into the strategic tasks which have to be accomplished to meet

the strategic objectives. In addition, the tasks description is enriched of various good practices from analyzed regions which can be used as an inspiration in meeting the strategic tasks and objectives.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most important issue the family business units are facing with is a transgenerational ownership transfer, i.e. the business succession process. This topic has been gaining rising attention both from scholars and policy-makers (e.g. Skokic et al., 2015; Jaskiewicz et al., 2016; Machová & Taušl Procházková, 2017; Ferrari, 2019; Poeschl & Freiling, 2020). As many authors claim (e.g. Dalpiaz et al., 2014; Helin & Jabri, 2015; Jaskiewicz et al., 2016; Bozer et al., 2017; Lušňáková et al., 2019; Poeschl & Freiling, 2020), the issue how to successfully manage succession from one generation of leaders to the next one is the key strategic issue in business life of family-owned businesses. Mathews and Blumentritt (2015) consider the business succession as a key determinant of family business longevity. However, it also represents a potential development crisis, or even a reason for business failure, when executing inappropriately (Jaskiewicz et al., 2016; Lušňáková et al., 2019).

The business succession can be understood as a process of transfer of management power through and in parallel with transfer of ownership from one business generation to another (Hering & Olbricht, 2003). In general, the business succession focuses on who will own the business, and when and how that will happen (Waseem et al., 2018). Poza and Daugherty (2020) define the succession process as a subordination of all the processes in which the ownership of the company is located and the related management power relinquishes the economic entity producing on whether to transfer the active among the family members.

Although there is no universal definition, it is clear that the succession process goes through several stages which are described by many business succession models such as American River Bank Succession Planning Roadmap, St. Gallen Consulting Succession Planning Model, Rothwell Succession Star Model, or Witten Phase Model for Succession (Odak, 2016). The models consist of various simplified steps resulting to successful family-business handover from one generation to another. Moreover, as Mathews and Blumentritt (2015) point out, many research articles describe the way that lead to successful and efficient successors, including the proclivity of the successor to want the job, good relationships between the founder and successor, clear commitment to the company, and the transfer of tacit knowledge from the founder to the successor.

Although each business is unique and influenced by various factors such as industry, business strategy, relationships and roles of family members, a structured and well-prepared approach to succession planning is desired. The process requires deep analysis from the perspectives of family members, management, and ownership systems in order to understand properly the perspectives of the different stakeholders (Lušňáková et al., 2019). This is the only way how to handle the business succession and prepare family-owned firms to a change in business leadership (Poeschl & Freiling, 2020).

## 2. METHOD

The research aim of the paper is to draft an understandable and comprehensive guideline for the V3 regional authorities how to support the family business units and enhance the business succession process. This aim can be decomposed into a set of research questions:

1. What are the main phases of the business succession process?
2. What are the main supporting activities of the regional authorities aimed at family business units?
3. How to transform the supporting activities into a set of sustainable objectives?
4. Which factors positively or negatively influence a possibility to reach the objectives?
5. How to realize the enhancement of the business succession process in practice?

The first research stage is aimed at mapping the BSP phases. It divides the BSP into 12 phases in 3 quadrants which follows the Deming Cycle: Plan – Do – Follow-up. The BSP phases are derived from the following general business succession models: St. Gallen Consulting Succession Planning

Model (Halter & Schröder, 2010); Rothwell Succession Star Model (Rothwell, 2010); EMF Institute Succession Model (EMF-Institut, 2017).

FBU's owners comment the phases via face-to-face interviews. The respondents comment their importance for handling the BSP, expected results, and anticipated workload. The set of respondents includes representatives of the micro, small, and medium-size firms operating in analyzed regions:

- the South Bohemia Region (Czech Republic): micro (4), small (1), medium-size (1)
- the Presov Region (Slovakia): micro (3), small (2), medium-size (1)
- the Mazowieckie Region (Poland): micro (3), small (1), medium-size (1)
- The next analysis is aimed at the following regional authorities which can be considered as the subjects of the regional political and business environment directly influencing the FBUs and the business succession process:
- the South Bohemia Region (Czech Republic): Regional Authority of the South Bohemian Region, CzechInvest: South Bohemia Region Office, South Bohemian Chamber of Commerce, South Bohemian Science and Technology Park
- the Presov Region (Slovakia): Regional Office of the Presov Self-governing Region, Regional Advisory and Information Centre Presov, First Contact Centers: Presov Region Office, East Slovak Investment Agency
- the Mazowieckie Region (Poland): Office of the Marshal of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Radom Region, Chamber of Crafts and Small Entrepreneurship in Radom, Family Enterprise Initiative: Mazowieckie Region Office

The survey with senior managers maps their knowledge about the FBUs and their problems & needs. It also maps how intensively the regional authorities pay attention to the family business units when forming general economic environment in the region.

The analytic overview, which points to the opportunities for improvement in supporting effort of the regional authorities, serves as the main information base for stipulation of the strategic objectives. The paper analyzes the objectives in detail by Lewin's Force-Field Analysis. The core of the analysis lies in identification of the factors positively or negatively influencing a possibility to reach the objectives (Baulcomb, 2003; Swanson & Creed, 2014). The regional authorities' managers evaluate the rate of impact (RI) of the forces on the following scale: very low (1) – low (2) – strong (3) – very strong (4). The mark (-) indicates the force which is considered not to be relevant in a particular region.

Afterwards the objectives are decomposed into the strategic tasks which have to be accomplished to meet the strategic objectives. The paper also points to good practices which can facilitate the realization of the tasks in practice.

### 3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The outputs of the first research stage focused on mapping the BSP are summarized in the following table. It includes 12 phases which are vital for successful handling the family-business handover.

Table 1: Analysis of the BSP Phases

Phase Description		Phase Result	Workload
<b>PLANNING PHASE</b>			<b>30 %</b>
P1	Setting main expectation and goals	Clear evidence about preferable state of the BSP	5 %
P2	Business analysis & communication	Assessment of the internal environment readiness for the BSP	10 %
P3	Stakeholder analysis & communication	Assessment of the external environment readiness for the BSP	10 %
P4	Identification of the business succession gap	Identification of the gap between preferable state and the environment readiness	5 %
<b>REALIZATION PHASE</b>			<b>40 %</b>
P5	Setting successor's preferable profile	Identification of successor's profile needed for closing the business succession gap	5 %
P6	Successor selection	Identification of promising successor capable of closing the business succession gap	5 %
P7	Successor training	Improvement of successor profile to be vital in closing the business succession gap	25 %
P8	Successor implementation	Change in business leadership from the business owner to the successor	5 %
<b>CLOSING PHASE</b>			<b>30 %</b>
P9	Legal ensuring of the BSP	Set of legal instruments fixing a change in business leadership	5 %
P10	Setting a new role for the business owner	Setting of new relations between the owner and the successor within the BSP	5 %
P11	Successor counseling	Consultation oriented towards an improvement in adaptation process	10 %
P12	Stakeholders counseling	Consultation oriented towards an improvement in adaptation process	10 %

Source: own research

The first step lies in setting main expectation and goals of a business owner. He / she should take into consideration own motivation to a process of business handover, and set the expected results of the BSP. After that, the set of clear goals related to the BSP has to follow. The owner should briefly analyze a readiness of business environment for the BSP after this opening stage. He / she must confront the goals and expectations with business reality and expectations of the stakeholders. The vital part of this stage lies in communication with all stakeholders. They must have solid information about the BSP and have a chance to express their point of view. The last step consists of identification of the business succession gap. This term can be understood as the gap between owner's preferable state and business environment readiness for a change in business leadership.

The core of the realization phase is an implementation of a successor in a way which leads to closing the business succession gap. The owner has to think about successor's preferable profile and define criteria for his / her selection. The next step is focused on training and improvement of successor's profile. The owner should help the successor in adaptation process and develop all key successor's characteristics. This stage is a period of time when the owner is slowly leaving the business and the successor is taking over it. The final successor implementation in the business is the last step of the realization phase.

The formal way how to fix the BSP is its legal ensuring. It not only crowns the family-business handover by law, it prevents some possible conflicts between the owner and the successor in future. These conflicts can be prevented by proper setting of a new role for the business owner too. It is also important to define some framework or boundaries to prevent an influence peddling from owner's side. The last two steps are focused on owner's informal counseling towards the successor and business stakeholders.

There is a high chance that some informal consultations oriented towards the adaptation process significantly smooth the path for the successor.

The next analysis is aimed at the regional authorities in the V3 countries: the South Bohemia Region (SBR), the Presov Region (PRR) and the Mazowieckie Region (MAR). The following tables summarize results of the survey.

Table 2: Analysis of the Activities of the Regional Authorities

<b>Are the specific issues of the family-owned business incorporated in the development strategy of your region?</b>		
SBR	No	The Regional Development Program of the South Bohemia Region just mentions a general need to support family businesses.
PRR	No	The issues specifically related to the family-owned business are not incorporated in the regional development strategy.
MAR	No	Issues regarding family businesses are not specifically included in the Development strategy for the Mazowieckie Voivodeship until 2030 nor in Regional Innovation Strategy for Mazovia until 2020.
<b>Do you know how many family business units operate in your region? Do you have any information about their size and field of their business activity?</b>		
SBR	Partially	The government has no precise information about regional FBUs. However, the information is gathered by the government's agency – the JVTP
PRR	Partially	We are aware of the existence of dozens of family business units in our region. These entities generally fall into the category of the SMEs.
MAR	Partially	The government has some general information about the number of FBUs, their size and field of activity.
<b>Do you know what are the main problems the family business units are facing with? Could you name some examples of the most significant problems?</b>		
SBR	Yes	absence of any legal framework for family businesses or for the BSP, administrative burden, lack of experience with the BSP, no guideline for handling the BPS, conflicts between owners and successors (children)
PRR	Yes	risk of failure in a market, lack of experienced and loyal staff, tax and administrative burden, successors do not show interest in the family business, property transfer problems, family conflicts; lack of experience with the BSP
MAR	Yes	rising labor costs, increasing competition on a market, lack of experienced and loyal staff, uncertainty about FBU's position on a market after a change in its leadership, lack of proper business profitability, difficulties in searching for successors
<b>Do you realize any specific activities / projects aimed at support of the family-owned business?</b>		
SBR	Yes	administration of the web portal "Podpora podnikání", participation in regional family business conference
PRR	Partially	various activities under the schemes of EU funded projects focused on development of the SMEs
MAR	Partially	various activities under the Interreg Europe project "Increasing competitiveness and sustainable development of European SMEs through procedures and models" which main goal is to prepare and manage changes in the succession of manufacturing enterprises
<b>Do you provide any specific activities / projects aimed at handling the business succession process?</b>		
SBR	Partially	seminars and workshops aimed at management skills development, development of an online tool for support of the BSP, annual meeting for representatives of the FBUs
PRR	Partially	seminars and workshops aimed at management skills development, consultations
MAR	Partially	newsletter, sharing information and good practices
<b>Do you communicate your supporting activities to family business owners? How do you communicate?</b>		
SBR	Yes	direct communication through the JVTP, websites of the regional government, web portal "Podpora podnikání", participation in conferences, seminars
PRR	Yes	websites of the regional government, e-mails, participation in specific events
MAR	Yes	direct communication at the Office of the Marshal of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, websites of the regional government and subordinate units, mailing list (e-mails), participation in specific events, social media

source: own research

If we take a look at the result, we can see a high level of homogeneity when comparing regional authorities' activities. The issues of the FBUs have just limited strategic attention from the side of the regional authorities. The FBUs are considered to be mostly a part of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This is why the authorities hardly recognize specifics of the FBUs and have a tendency to overlook their specific problems when forming general economic environment. They know just the fragments about actual situation of the family-owned businesses, or have rather partial or general information which often corresponds to the situation of the SMEs.

Nevertheless, the regional authorities are aware of some significant issues the FBUs have to face with: (a) a lack of previous experience with the business succession process, (b) a lack of solid information (methods, procedures, plans) how to handle the business succession process, (c) tough seeking of any suitable successor, (d) conflicts in a family regarding the process of business leadership change, (e) unwillingness of young generation to take over the business, (f) an uncertainty about the business results / business position on a market after a change in business leadership, (g) lack of experienced and loyal staff supporting family business, and (h) high level of bureaucracy connected with the FBUs' business activities.

It is positive that all organizations declare some kind of supporting activities aimed at the FBUs / SMEs development and handling the business succession process. However, the activities are rather general, not precisely targeting the main FBUs issues. The majority of them consists of passing / sharing general information, giving some consultations, arranging joint meetings, organizing seminars / workshops aimed at development of management skills, or creating better conditions for business activities of the FBUs / SMEs. The FBUs are informed about the activities mostly via online communication tools such as websites, e-mail, and social media. Face-to-face communication is often used by the regional authorities as well.

### **Strategic Objectives and Tasks**

Reflecting the analytic overview, the paper drafts the set of four strategic objectives. The objectives are decomposed into a number of strategic tasks for facilitating and sustaining the family businesses and the business succession process. The following tables have a comprehensive form to be able to provide the regional authorities as much information as possible in a one place. They include the objectives and their analysis by the Force-Field Analysis. They also include the strategic tasks. In addition, the tables mention some good practices which can inspire the regional authorities in implementation of the strategic tasks.

Table 3: Strategic Objective I

Strategic objective	Monitor the FBUs' activities			
	Description	Rate of Impact		
		SBR	PRR	MAR
<b>Driving forces</b>	Precise specification of the FBUs in any legislative act			
	<b>Cooperation with any regional entity in monitoring activities</b>	3	-	2
	<b>Existence of any work position responsible for monitoring activities</b>	2	3	-
	<b>High-quality information sharing between the FBUs and the regional authorities</b>	-	2	1
<b>Restraining forces</b>	<b>Insufficient financial and human resources for monitoring activities</b>	3	-	-
	Lack of any valid statistics or information about the FBUs' activities	-	2	3
	Poor-quality cooperation between the regional government and other regional entities	3	-	-
	FBUs unwillingness to share information with regional authorities	4	-	3
<b>Tasks</b>		-	2	-
	<b>Develop a platform for effective information sharing between the regional authorities and the FBUs</b>			
	<b>Motivate the FBUs for sharing information about their BSP intentions and specific business-related issues</b>			
	<b>Build an information database enabling to search up-to-date information about the FBUs in a region anytime</b>			
<b>Good practices</b>	<b>Analyze information from the FBUs at regular intervals and monitor their course</b>			
	<b>Round tables</b> <i>Round tables of the FBUs representatives and the representatives of the Association of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Crafts of the Czech Republic (AMSP) which are organized on regular basis. They create a platform for sharing experiences and issues related to the topic of business succession, and for giving the consultations from the AMSP side.</i>			
	<b>Information sharing website</b> <i>The website enables providing the FBUs relevant information and information gathering from the FBUs at the same time. Thus, the website is a tool for sharing information between the FBUs and regional supporting organization and for creating an up-to-date information database.</i>			
	<b>Research on family business</b> <i>The Slovak Business Agency realizes research studies on family business and its issues in Slovakia. The studies are published on regular basis. The most recent one is called "Barriers of Family Entrepreneurship in Slovakia".</i>			

source: own research

Table 4: Strategic Objective II

Strategic objective	Develop a plan aimed at overcoming the main issues of the FBUs			
	Description	Rate of Impact		
		SBR	PRR	MAR
<b>Driving forces</b>	Existence of any manual describing recommended structure and content of the plan			
	Existence of any database of good practices how to help the FBUs to overcome their issues	3	-	-
	Existence of solid information about the FBUs and their issues needed for developing the plan	3	-	-
	Well-established participatory planning – involving various regional entities to planning	3	3	-
		-	3	-
<b>Restraining forces</b>	Insufficient financial and human resources for developing the plan	-	-	3
	Lack of solid information about the FBUs and their issues needed for developing the plan	-	4	3
	Poor-quality cooperation between the regional authorities and the FBUs in solving FBUs' issues	-	4	3
	FBUs unwillingness to share information with regional authorities	-	3	-
<b>Tasks</b>	Involve the FBUs to elaboration of the plan for FBUs development with respect to the principles of participatory planning			
	Elaborate the plan devoted to FBUs development and support as an integral part of a regional economic /development strategy			

	Integrate the issues related to BSP into the plan Establish any unit or appoint any employee which / who will be responsible for activities connected with implementation of the plan
<b>Good practices</b>	<p><b>Strategic approach to the FBUs development as a new priority of the Development Plan</b> <i>The strategic approach to the FBUs support &amp; development in a form of purpose-based strategic plan has its basis in two priorities of the South Bohemia Region Development Plan for 2021 – 2027: (1) Smart region and competitive regional economy, (2) Regional competitiveness and support of business activities.</i></p> <p><b>The FBUs support as a part of the City Development Plan</b> <i>The Radom City Development Plan provides an in-depth analysis of local economic conditions. The analysis creates a solid basis for targeted support of local business units, the vast majority of which are family businesses.</i></p>

source: own research

Table 5: Strategic Objective III

Strategic objective	Support and facilitate the FBUs	Rate of Impact		
		SBR	PRR	MAR
<b>Driving forces</b>	<b>Description</b>			
	Existence of any plan defining preferable structure of supporting / facilitating activities			
	Availability of financial and human resources needed for supporting / facilitating activities	-	-	2
	Existence of solid information flow between the regional authorities and the FBUs	3	-	-
	High-quality cooperation between the regional authorities and the FBUs	-	2	-
<b>Restraining forces</b>	Legislative restriction of direct support of the FBUs' business activities			
	Insufficient financial and human resources for supporting / facilitating activities	-	-	-
	High level of bureaucracy related to supporting / facilitating activities	3	4	-
	Poor-quality cooperation between the regional authorities and the FBUs	3	-	3
<b>Tasks</b>	Define a set of specific supporting / facilitating activities based on the plan for FBUs development and support			
	Pay enough attention to the BSP as the key FBUs issue			
	Create a "menu" of the supporting activities in an understandable form, and try to minimize the bureaucratic burden related to their using			
	Communicate the activities with the FBUs in advance and give them a chance to participate			
<b>Good practices</b>	<b>Friendly business environment of Random City</b> <i>Thanks to the friendly policy of local authorities, Radom is a city with positive investment climate. High level of entrepreneurship of Random inhabitants together with the friendly policy of the City Hall, as well as well-developed business environment institutions, make Radom a place where the number of micro, small and medium enterprises is steadily increasing.</i>			
	<b>ENTER-transfer Toolbox</b> <i>The web tool which serves as an environment supporting the business succession process. The tool indicates the possible ways of business succession in the company, and topics and tasks that must be completed within the succession process. In addition, it evaluates the degree of readiness of individual participants in the succession process and the degree of agreement on the chosen solution among participants.</i>			
	<b>ENTER-transfer Matchmaking Tool</b> <i>The web platform enabling and facilitating the establishment of contact between business owners and potential investors in the process of business succession. It mediates those interested in taking over the company and those interested in handing over the company in an unrestrictedly accessible virtual environment.</i>			
	<b>Online communication with the FBUs</b> <i>The FBUs obtain information about supporting / facilitation activities through several communication channels. The special emphasize is devoted to active postings on the official web sites and Facebook page, as well as on direct e-mailing through a contact database.</i>			

source: own research



Table 6: Strategic Objective IV

Strategic objective	Provide coordination of the supporting / facilitating activities			
	Description	Rate of Impact		
		SBR	PRR	MAR
<b>Driving forces</b>	Involvement of coordination activities in the plan for the FBUs development			
	Existence of any public entity suitable for providing coordination activities	-	2	-
	Availability of financial and human resources needed for coordination activities	2	3	-
	High-quality relationship between the regional government and the FBUs	-	2	-
<b>Restraining forces</b>	Insufficient financial and human resources for coordination activities	-	-	3
	Absence of any formal specification of responsibility for coordination activities	-	-	2
	Lack of previous experiences with such coordination activities	-	2	2
	Poor-quality cooperation between the regional government and the FBUs	3	-	3
<b>Tasks</b>	Establish any unit or appoint any employee which / who will be responsible for coordination of the supporting / facilitating activities			
	Develop a platform for an effective information flow from the FBUs to the regional authorities and other related organizations			
	Cooperate with all related regional organizations in developing the business environment in a way that helps the FBUs to overcome their main issues and handle the BSP at the same time			
	Pay enough attention to FBUs activities and needs, and build a mutual trust			
<b>Good practices</b>	<b>Conference on family businesses</b> <i>Annual conference aimed at networking between the representatives of regional supporting organizations, regional government, representatives of academia and representatives of regional family business units. Each participant has an opportunity to share information about his/her activities or issues. Each contribution is followed by a live discussion with the suggestions of all participants.</i>			
	<b>Cooperation skills training</b> <i>In the vast majority of offices people are appointed to cooperate and support entrepreneurs. Their superiors willingly send them to the courses that are necessary to improve their skills and develop their knowledge on cooperation and coordination of activities with entrepreneurs.</i>			
	<b>Existence of departments responsible for supporting &amp; coordinating activities</b> <i>The local government supports the Radom Chamber of Industry and Commerce through departments dedicated to entrepreneurs: (1) The Office for the Radom Economic Zone and (2) The Office of Economic Activity and Permits. Having such departments help to promote entrepreneurship, solve entrepreneurs' problems, collect necessary data and information about entrepreneurs, and support training opportunities.</i>			

source: own research

The objectives and tasks are structured in the following areas: (I) Information Gathering & Monitoring, (II) Planning & Implementation, (III) Support & Facilitation, (IV) Cooperation & Coordination. Such structure meets a fundamental logic of sustainable strategic planning & development. The objectives specify the areas into the clear and understandable formulations. Analogically, the tasks specify, or decompose, the objectives into the specific activities which have to be accomplished to meet the strategic objectives. The tasks indicate the following challenges for the regional authorities in V3 countries in their future effort to support the FBUs activities and enhance the business succession process:

1. Develop an effective and productive online information sharing platform between the regional authorities and the FBUs, and connected information database collecting up-to-date data about the FBUs in the region.
2. Gather and analyze information from the on a regular basis.
3. Strengthen the strategic approach to the FBUs development by drawing up a plan devoted to the FBUs development and support as a part of a regional development strategy.

4. Utilize the principles of participatory planning when drawing up the plan devoted to the FBUs development.
5. Improve the assistance to the FBUs by establishing any entity responsible for coordination of the supporting activities and developing cooperation with the FBUs.
6. Make the FBUs support more intense following their needs and issues, communicate with the FBUs intensively, and thus help the FBUs to overcome their main issues more effectively.
7. Increase the amount of the supporting activities which precisely react on the FBUs needs and issues, and which cause a minimum bureaucratic burden for the FBUs at the same time.

The Force-Field Analysis provides the regional authorities useful contextual information. It captures the initial conditions, in a form of the driving and restraining forces, for implementation the objectives and tasks in practice. Its results vary a lot, and reflects “a readiness” of the regional authorities to implement the objectives. If we generalize the results, the authority of the South Bohemia Region indicates the best conditions for implementation process, as the driving forces obtain relatively high scores, and the restraining forces go low when comparing with the other regions. On the other hand, the authority of the Mazowiecke Region has to deal with a lack of the driving forces and relatively high number of the serious restraining forces.

## CONCLUSION

The paper reacts on the rising importance of the family-owned business for regional economic growth. It deals with a specific issue of business succession which has been serious matter of interest for family businesses established in the 90's. The paper follows the structured approach to succession planning on the basis of the strategic planning cycle: (1) perform an analysis, (2) identify strengths and weaknesses, (3) formulate goals and objectives, (4) formulate a strategic plan with a limited number of tasks, (5) execute the plan (tasks). It goes through all main phases and thus meets its aim. The paper results to a comprehensive set of the strategic tasks, extended of the good practices, which plays a role of the guideline for the V3 regional authorities how to support the FBUs and enhance the business succession process.

The paper decomposes the business succession process into 12 phases and examines their importance and expected results (RQ 1). Thus, it provides the regional authorities with information about “internal” process needed for handling the BSP. It also critically examines how the regional authorities support the family businesses when forming general economic environment in the region (RQ 2). Performing such analysis and identifying the strengths and weaknesses, the paper formulates a set of four strategic objectives and number of tasks aimed at the FBUs' support from the side of regional authorities (RQ 3). Moreover, the paper deals with a question how to execute the objectives in practice. It uses the Force-Field Analysis to reveal the factors which must be taken into account as having an impact on the objectives accomplishment (RQ 4). Finally, it identifies some good practices which can inspire the regional authorities in meeting the strategic objectives and tasks in practice (RQ 5).

The research results can be summarized into the following opportunities for improvement. The crucial opportunity lies in application of strategic approach to development of the FBUs. The solid analysis of the FBUs structure, needs and problems is its vital condition. The next opportunity lies in an existence of a plan devoted to the FBUs support & development. It should be a relatively simply plan mapping the actual situation in the region, defining FBUs' main problems, and having an initial set of objectives and tasks how to help the FBUs in their activities. Thanks to this approach, the tasks and following activities can be more specific and better targeted on the real problems of the FBUs.

Even though an application of the strategic tasks and meeting the challenges for improvement is a long-distance run, the regional authorities should not resign to this issue. The family business units have a unique stabilization role in the local economies. Therefore, they deserve an adequate strategic attention from the side of regional authorities when forming a regional development strategy for the next period.

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