

Countryside in the Czech Republic – determination, criteria, borders

Venkov v České republice – vymezení, kritéria, hranice

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Abstract: To determine the countryside, different criteria can be used from the simplest one – the population density – to more complex ones like the economic indicators or the combination of factors characterizing the particular types of municipalities or regions. Generally, it is possible to divide these indicators into subjective and objective ones and further to categorize them according to other properties. The objective of this article is to collect as much information as possible about the methods of defining the borders of rural areas used in the Czech Republic and to set these criteria into a system. We would like to evaluate the applicability of these criteria and to state the advantages and disadvantages of their use. The article also compares statistical data related to the selected features characterizing countryside.

Key words: countryside, criteria for setting borders, village, town, rural region

Abstrakt: Pro vymezení venkova je možno použít různá kritéria, od nejjednoduššího počtu obyvatel přes komplikovanější ekonomické znaky až po komplexy více faktorů, díky kterým je možno definovat různé typy obcí či regionů. Obecně je možno tyto ukazatele rozdělit na subjektivní a objektivní a kategorie dále členit podle dalších hledisek. Cílem tohoto článku je tedy shromáždit co nejvíce informací o způsobech vymezování hranic venkova používaných v České republice a dále uspořádání používaných kritérií do systému. Důležitou součástí textu bude zhodnocení jejich aplikovatelnosti a posouzení výhod i nevýhod jednotlivých ukazatelů či způsobů členění. Článek bude doplněn porovnáním statistických dat vztahujícím se k vybraným typům vymezení venkova.

Klíčová slova: venkov, kritéria vymezení hranic, vesnice, město, venkovský region

When doing research regarding rural population, it is impossible to avoid the main question – where in fact the countryside begins and where it ends, where are its borders? The question is not as simple as it may seem. The countryside is the matter of research not only of the various scientific branches, but also the legislation. Each of these subjects is then following countryside from its own viewpoint; it uses its own ways of defining it according to different criteria. Some of these criteria are specific ones which could be applied to the Czech Republic only, or even to a certain region, another are, on the opposite, international ones. According to one of these definitions, almost the whole area of the CR (with the exception of Prague) can be regarded as a rural region.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to get together as much as possible of the information on the ways of defining the borders of countryside, utilised in the Czech Republic, and further setting the utilised criteria into a system. An important part of the text will be the evaluation of their applicability and of the pros and cons of the individual indicators or systems of their structuring. The article is supplemented by the comparison of statistical data relevant to the selected types of the countryside definition.

The notion of countryside is so wide that it allows for many explanations. Everyone can imagine something different under this notion – a countryman can imagine his village, an ecologist the nature, a farmer agricultural land, a tourist a free countryside, etc.

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According to that, there also exist many different criteria and possibilities how to define and limit the countryside.

Since it is possible to view countryside from many different viewpoints, it cannot be described by just one definition. Each of the scientific branches which are, even if only marginally, interested in the problematics of countryside, defines it from its own point of view. Therefore, the following text will be aimed at the countryside in general, but primarily from the sociological and socio-economic viewpoint.

In general, countryside is defined as a sparsely inhabited space with an important role of agriculture in it. From the demographic viewpoint, it can be defined by the low number and density of population, from the urbanistic viewpoint by a specific type of building, from the sociological viewpoint, for example, by a different life style.

The Big Dictionary of Sociology (1996: 1380) lists the following definition: “**Countryside** is an inhabited space outside the urban locality characterised traditionally by the orientation on agriculture and lower population density, but also by a different life style, mainly connected to nature, and also by a different social structure compared to the town...”

As a **rural space**, there are usually defined villages (countryside habitations) and the countryside in their vicinity, another definition says that it is the sum of the rural communes cadastres, or in more detail the sum of the area of agricultural land, forests, waters, intravilans, rural settlements, field roads and local communications. Similarly to this, we can define countryside as the whole area excluding towns and cities.

The notion of **rural region** is utilised in statistics and usually it describes the area defined according to the set criteria. The most often used method in the EU evaluates regions according to the share of population living in rural communes, which are defined for the purpose by the given maximum population density (i.e. the number of population per 1 square kilometre), and further according to the share of such communes in the region, which can be of a different size level (district, administrative region).

Rural settlement, rural commune or simply **village** is the name for the unit of inhabitation in the rural space. From the historical viewpoint, it is a typical setting of buildings for living and husbandry fulfilling different functions, among which the important one was agricultural function.

However, Slepíčka (1981: 26) differentiates among them and states that: “By rural settlements we understand all spatially separated inhabitation units besides towns. Then, there belong solitary houses, small

groupings of houses (settlements) as well as villages. Villages can be characterised as a relatively compact rural communes, which have not, according to the type of building, structure of the intravilan space, size of the buildings and their functional utilisation as well as according to the structure of inhabitants and their number (up to 2 000–5 000 inhabitants), the features of a town.” Andrle (1995) equals rural settlement and rural locality. This he defines as a complex set of inhabited objects, which forms a basic collectivity in which people live. Only the historical and economic development led to the connecting of these basic collectivities into bigger systems, i.e. into “administrative communes”. These localities were used as the most detailed inhabitation units in the 1970 census (Kubeš 2000: 42–43).

To illustrate the scope of the problematics, it is necessary to mention the notion of commune, which is not identical with village. From the sociological viewpoint, a **commune** is a “smaller or bigger social unit formed by the population utilising in common a certain limited area, in which the prevalent part of the daily, economic and cultural life goes on”. The Little Dictionary of Sociology (1970: 252) further states, that “originally, the notion of commune was used in social sciences to describe an administratively limited area inhabited by the population, which is engaged in the mutually interdependent economic activities, and also for an area forming a politically self-governing unit. As communes, there were therefore regarded villages, townships, towns as well as cities.”

Characteristic features of a commune are: its own area (spatial base of the commune), legal subjectivity (legal base of the commune), own property and economic activities according to own budget (economic base of the commune) (Koudelka 2001: 51).

CRITERIA FOR DEFINING COUNTRYSIDE

As mentioned above, the borders between towns and countryside have disappeared gradually during the historical development and at present they are overlapping. Therefore, in the process of looking for the borders of countryside, we meet with many problems. Firstly, we have to decide whether we are looking for the borders of the rural space or rural communes, secondly, it regards the criteria according to which we will define the countryside, and, last but not least, quantification of these criteria (if possible at all).

The solution of the first problem is not very complicated. With regard to the fact that most of the criteria of countryside regard communes, it will rather mean

defining the differences between a rural settlement and a town. Only some of the qualitative features can be applied also to the whole regions of different size, which will be précised in the text.

Since it is possible to find a whole series of the different criteria to define countryside, I have tried to find a system in them and to divide them into several categories and sub-categories. The main viewpoint for the differentiation was the possibility to quantify the given criteria. The characteristics of the individual categories are as follows:

1. Subjective definition – the criteria are only subjective, based on impressions and feelings of people
2. Objective definition qualitative – the criteria are more or less precisely specified, but they are difficult to quantify (measure) – e.g. architectonical features, structure of inhabitation, historical development etc. There belong also the social criteria which can be followed through sociological research. This group is on the margin between the subjective and objective. Even qualitative features can be precisely specified and used; setting the border is, however, the matter of the subjective opinion of the specialist.
3. Objective definition quantitative – the criteria for defining countryside are precisely defined, they are measurable and their following and measuring is easy, their utilisation brings about, however, possible problems.

The categorisation of certain criteria into thus defined groups might be perhaps disputable – a certain viewpoint might seem rather subjective than objective or vice versa. However, this depends on the aim of the given criterion utilisation and its precise specification. Many of the mentioned criteria are the privilege of other scientific disciplines and are described in more detail in the literature than it is possible inside this text.

Subjective definition

This definition is based only on such non-measurable criteria like the first impression or feeling of the local people. It regards simply the impression when you first enter the commune and look it over. Usually, you are easily able to distinguish a typical village and a typical town. Thus, it regards the set of criteria like the size, the look, the style of buildings... It is not necessary to know any definitions, and yet it is possible to categorize thus the communes. There exists, however, a big group of communes where the distinguishing is more difficult (small historical towns, communes in

the vicinity or at the outskirts of bigger towns etc.). In the latter case, even the commune which in fact is a part of the town (typical in the suburbs of Plzen or Brno), but which sustains its look and character, can be described as a village. In the dubious cases, there can be used another criterion based on the local inhabitants feelings. It is enough simply to ask them, if they feel to be villagers. R. Perlín (according to his personal expression) uses the following procedure: Ask the randomly selected inhabitant, what is the usual name for the space in the middle of the commune and for the several-storey-houses on the outskirts of it. If he or she answers, that it is the village green (náves) and the tenement houses (bytovky), you are in a village. If, however he or she answers, that it is the square and panel houses (the panel-house dwelling – sídliště), you are in the town.

A very specific type of settlement is at present still more often so-called satellite townships. They are not, in principle, towns, but new parts connected to the original rural communes in the neighbourhood of bigger towns. These parts are not, however, organically interconnected with the original commune and it is disputable whether their inhabitants feel as rural inhabitants (or whether they rather feel this label as an offence).

Objective definition – qualitative

Urbanistic structure and architectonic features

In the Middle Ages, the differences between town and village were pronounced both in the complex urbanistic structure of the commune and the details of the individual houses – their look, functional setting, used materials, ornaments etc. Many of these features were influenced by the regional conditions, like natural conditions, the type of the countryside or soil fertility, but in general, the urban type settlements differed considerably from the villages from the beginning. With simplification, we can say that the medieval towns were specific by their defensive city-walls, which protected the groupings of streets and public spaces (squares, market places) and which were usually of irregular ground-plan. A considerable growth of towns occurred only after the development of industry in the XIX. century, which started the process of urbanisation, i.e. of the population concentration.

Another typical feature of towns is a dense concentration of buildings, often of several storeys, which used to have space for trade or crafts on the ground floor. A specific kind of buildings were palaces, town

halls, legal courts or schools. The town also differed from the village by some specific building elements, like e.g. pavement of the streets and squares, a fountain or a pillory.

Villages usually originated at the fertile places suitable for farming. Village houses were usually built from wood or the local materials (sand-stone, lime-stone etc.). They connected the living, husbandry and other functions. The stables were often directly beside the living space, to them there were connected the barns and other storing buildings.

The criteria for defining countryside can be found at the architects or urbanists, who distinguish communes for example according to the share of the built-on area, the share of the multi-storey buildings in the commune, the share of the functional areas or the share of buildings used for recreation. These criteria serve primarily for comparing the communes among themselves, for setting of the clear border between countryside and town, it is necessary to consider more circumstances.

Historical development

Considering their history and period of existence, many Czech or Moravian villages can easily compete with many towns. The first settlements of the urban type originated in our area already in the period of the Great Moravia Empire (e.g. the Staré Město by the Uherské Hradiště); however, the rural settlement was here even earlier. During the time, the original function of the bigger settlements (housing and catering) was extended by other functions – not only market, but crafts, administration, religion and education, and later on they become the centres of industrial development. The most important towns developed at the trade cross-roads or in ports.

Many former villages remained villages till present, even if they underwent a considerable development since their foundation or origin, some other developed into townships, yet another become parts of bigger towns. However, there also exist examples (usually from the recent past) when a prosperous town or township become (according to the present measures) a village again – for example many communes in the area of the Sudety, from which the German population was expatriated after the WW2.

Economic features

As already mentioned, the medieval towns served as the centres of trade and craft. The crucial points of the feudal economy were the castle, the church, the monastery and the market, i.e. the urban elements,

strengthened in the later periods by the exclusive “rights” – of keeping market, beer-brewing etc. On the other hand, the countryside secured agricultural production, some communes had, however, also other functions – for example timbering, mining (in the areas suitable for mining ores).

At present, it is possible to distinguish town and countryside according to the structural criterion, i.e. according to the socio-demographic structure of population. As typically rural, there are regarded the sector of agriculture, forestry and fishery. On the opposite, industry, constructions and also trade, services, state and public administration and other similar sectors are typical for urban population. (Roubíček 1997: 198)

Social features – life style

Since the Middle Ages up to present, there perseveres the notion of countryside as the backwards area, where there live non-educated and non-cultural people little touched by civilisation, oriented mainly at cultivation of land or animal husbandry. Only since the abolishing of servitude and the starting of industrialisation, some of the rural inhabitants began to work in towns. The number of these people increased in the process of industrialisation, so the villages urbanised, since there people transferred urban habits and urban style of living to the countryside. (Votrúbec 1980: 120)

The Big Dictionary of Sociology (1996: 1380) states that the rural community is usually defined, in contradiction to the urban community, by the following features:

- higher level of the mutual social interdependence
- lower variability of professional possibilities
- lower social differentiation and thus also narrower space of social mobility
- stronger tie to tradition and weaker inclination to social change
- stronger determination by the natural environment.

Ibid, it is also stated that: “...the rural (non-urban) society, resp. community (Gemeinschaft) can be characterised by the sacral element, mechanical solidarity, statute, folk element, traditionalism, and on the contrary, the urban society (Gesellschaft) by the secular element, organic solidarity, contract and rationality.”

In the subconscious of people, there remain the fixed ideas of countrymen, which are further sustained in the literature, films as well as in folk sayings and

proverbs. A country person is labelled as a “boor” or “hayseed” (buran, křupan), who still “has straw in his boots” (“čouhá mu sláma z bot”). The common idea of stupid villagers is still utilised even by the TV advertisements. It is true that the education structure of the rural inhabitants is even at present different compared to the urban population (there is a higher share of people with lower education) (Maříková 2004: 42–43), but this is not given by the place of birth, but by the fact that the higher schools are in towns only and people have to move after them (and, unfortunately, they often do not return to the countryside).

On the other hand, the intelligence of the villagers uses to be called “the healthy peasant reason” and the whole rural society is regarded as being “better” because it observes “the traditional values”.

This area of life is the object of rural sociology and the sociology of village (and also the sociology of town) which at present concentrates on the questions of changes and forming of the way of life of all groups of rural inhabitants in consequence of the rural habitats urbanisation, on the questions of social and ecological changes.

It is of practical importance in the elaboration of the concepts of the social development of the area, of the structure of rural inhabitancy and in solution of the rural space social problems (the relationship town-countryside, the proper utilisation of natural conditions, the useful allocation and forming of habitats etc.)

Objective definition – quantitative

Position of the commune in the administration system (in the public administration system)

The first endeavours at the introduction of a certain system of the area and communes in them are connected with the rule of the empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II. In the frame of many economic, political and social reforms, there was also introduced the system of regional offices led by the regional executive officers. This system functioned up to the 1849, when it was re-organised and the former counties were replaced by districts. Since 1850, there went on a whole series of reforms, when the total numbers as well as area of districts were changed. Regions were renewed no sooner than by

the communist regional administration reforms in 1949 (Jeleček 2000).

During the existence of the Austria-Hungary, also communal offices were introduced, which existed practically in every, even rural, commune. These were sustained also after the change of the state adjustment and the origin of the Czechoslovak Republic. In 1987, there was introduced a new hierarchy of settlements based on the category of the national committees. As towns, there were regarded all towns and communes with the town national committee (MěNV), i.e. with the national committee of the level II or III:

After 1989, many competencies were returned back to the communes and their self-governance was renewed.¹ However, the above mentioned categorisation of communes became the base of the limitation of towns. As such, there were again marked the same communes as before, but then they received the statute (see further).

Characterisation (statute) of commune

In the period of the medieval habitations foundation, the communes were granted different privileges or rights from the emperor, for example guild privileges or rights (beer-brewing, markets etc.). The right of the emperor was also to raise the settling to town, which could be the king's or for example mining (if ores were mined in its vicinity). The town was entitled to its own flag or coat of arms. These rights and insignia were therefore carefully kept and protected.

The criterion of the historical statute of town is not, however, fully usable at present – for example one of such “towns” has at present less than 50 inhabitants and is only a local part of another commune.

The notion of the town statute can be found in the Act No. 128/2000 Coll., On communes (communal establishment), which includes, according to the Act No. 2/2003 Coll., the taxative list of the statutory towns the activity of which is managed by the statute of the town.²

At the beginning of the 90ies, all communes in which there formerly acted the national committee of the level II and III, were proclaimed towns, the other were understood as rural communes. However, each of them could ask for the right to use the title town, which could be granted to it, in accordance with the constitutional order, by the Chamber of Deputies chairman. It changed only after the passing of the new act on communes (No. 128/2000 Coll.) of 3 000

¹ Act No. 367/1990 Coll., On communes (on the communal structure).

² These are Brno, České Budějovice, Havířov, Hradec Králové, Jihlava, Karlovy Vary, Karviná, Kladno, Liberec, Mladá Boleslav, Most, Olomouc, Opava, Ostrava, Pardubice, Plzeň, Teplice, Ústí nad Labem and Zlín.

and other conditions set by the Ministry of Interior. It regards the combination of the functional and size criterion. It considers the building viewpoint (houses of the urban character, sewage, water supply system etc.), the basic facilities viewpoint (hotel or other housing facility with more than 200 beds, elementary school, cultural-social hall), further the level of services and coincidence (whether the facilities serve not only to the own inhabitants, but also to another area).

Number of inhabitants

Setting the borders of countryside by the maximum number of inhabitants in the commune is a simple and the most often used criterion. The limit of 2 000 inhabitants is commonly used not only in the CR, smaller communes are regarded as rural and their complex forms the countryside. This limit was set as a definition already by J. Korčák in 1929 his study on the depopulation of Bohemia in the period 1850–1930.

Officially, this criterion for delimitation of rural population was recommended by the International Statistical Office in 1938. Other population was regarded as urban. In the consequence of the still growing concentration of population, later on there began to be regarded alternatively for urban population the criterion of communes of 10 000 and more inhabitants. However, some countries are using also other limits (from 200 to 12 000 inhabitants) (Pavlík 2005).

Another possibility for setting the borders of countryside is setting the border for the town, as rural then can be regarded all other communes. In our conditions, there was used the border of 2 000 or 5 000 inhabitants. In the official Czechoslovak statistics from the beginning of the 60s, there were regarded as towns the communes of 10 000 and more inhabitants and other smaller district towns, for which more detailed information were published.

The utilised indicators have their advantages as well as disadvantages which limit their utilisation. Setting the borders of the countryside according to the number of inhabitants is simple, but not always reliable. Then, there exist communes which are, according to many other indicators (historical development, urbanistic structure, economic structure of inhabitants), typical villages, but they have, at the same time, over 2 000 of inhabitants and therefore we do not regard them as rural according to this criterion (this situation often occurs at the South Moravia). The majority of communes are also composed from several parts which de facto create independent habitats. Therefore, even a commune of more than 2 000 inhabitants can be

composed of several smaller parts which fulfil the criterion, but the commune in total is not regarded as rural.

Density of inhabitancy

Density of inhabitancy expresses the number of inhabitants related to the size of the area (cadastre) of the given commune. In the CR, this criterion is still not used very much, but in the EU, it is one of the most important viewpoints used for the delimitation of rural areas. This criterion issues from the prerequisite that for urban areas, there is typical a higher concentration of population.

The methodology of the territorial delimitation of rural areas of the OECD used by the EUROSTAT, issues from two hierarchical levels of the administration territorial units:

- **local level** (commune) – as a rural commune, there is regarded such a commune in which there live less than 150 inhabitants per 1 km²
- **regional level** (rural area – NUTS 3 or districts) – as a rural region, there is regarded a functional, administration region structured according to the level of the “rurality” expressed by the share of population in rural communes:
 - Predominantly rural region – PRR – more than 50% of inhabitants live in rural communes;
 - Significantly rural region – SRR – 15 – 50% of inhabitants live in rural communes;
 - Predominantly urban region – PUR – less than 15% of inhabitants live in rural communes.

An advantage of this division of countryside are concise, clear and precisely defined criteria (recorded and collected as obligatory by the Statistical Office). The disadvantage lays in a high level of simplification – in this way; we do not learn anything new on our countryside, since the categorisation issues from too complex criteria which have to be valid for the whole Europe and thus cannot reflect the specific regional differences. Applied to the higher territorial units (NUTS 3, kraje), the whole area of the CR (with the exception of Prague) becomes a rural area.

DISCUSSION

Delimitation of countryside can be regarded as a similar problem as the delimitation of towns. One of the basic definitions states that countryside is in fact everything outside towns. Therefore, we can say that it regards seeking the same borders. Regarding the problems of the geographical limits of towns, Votrubec

writes (Votrubec 1980: 199) that "...it is impossible to draw them based on a single indicator, since a town is a too complex organism; the individual phenomena are closely and dialectically interconnected and are mutually interdependent. Therefore, it is necessary to search all the elements characterising a town when setting its geographical borders."

Each of the above listed "attempts" to define the borders of countryside has its advantages and disadvantages. Some of them are more simple, another one is more complex, however, neither is perfect. Some of them are stable in time; others are changing continually, what also influences their usability. From the viewpoint of the regional differences at our area, the utilisation of the subjective and qualitative criteria would be more suitable, however, from the international comparison viewpoint it is necessary to use the quantitative criteria, which are regularly followed in statistics and easily found, even if they are not always sufficiently reflecting the specific reality of Czech and Moravian countryside.

Comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of criteria, we cannot state unanimously which of these criteria or of the combined typologies the best one is, reflecting reality in the best way. Each of them has its pros and cons. A subjective evaluation might seem to be the most precise; however, subjectivity itself only reflects the opinion of an individual which might differ from the opinion of another person. Also the realisation of such an evaluation is not real – one person would have to visit more than 6 000 communes at our area.

An evaluation based on the objective quantitative criteria is also disputable. There exist precise and quantifiable criteria (like e.g. the share of the built-on area or the share of workers in agriculture), but setting of the limits which would define where town ends and countryside begins is problematic. Even at our not too big area, there exist considerable regional differences. Therefore, such evaluation always calls for several viewpoints and thus for the utilisation of a whole complex of criteria.

We can also be satisfied with the more simple, but less precise delimitation of C. Votrubec (Votrubec 1980: 40): "In the Czech countries, we can regard as rural all communes with less than 2 000 inhabitants and a part of communes with 2 000–5 000 inhabitants." This definition, however, lacks the criteria for bigger communes.

From the Table 1, we can see the differences among the results of delimiting countryside in the CR according to the quantifiable objective criteria.

The problem thus is that the division according to the acquired data in relation to the area and the number of inhabitants differ considerably. Moreover, each of these criteria, even if their utilisation is advantageous for international comparison and therefore favoured by the statisticians, has its own problems. The most often utilised criterion is that of the number of inhabitants. The margin of 2 000 inhabitants is suitable in most cases –with the exception of South Moravia. Owing to the fertility of the region, there exist really "typical" and "traditional" villages (according to their look, historical development as well as social features) which, however, have more than 2 000 inhabitants (sometimes even up to 5 000 inhabitants), which therefore fall out of thus defined countryside.

Rural communes defined as a complement to the communes with the town statute are also not the optimum solution. This criterion issues from the former position of a commune in the public administration system and from the historical context and it is at present defined also by number of inhabitants. However, there exist also towns which have less than 1 000 inhabitants (Bečov upon Teplá, Janské Lázně or Pec under Sněžka – 608 inhabitants), and on the opposite, also communes with more than 5 000 inhabitants (Bystrice, Králův Dvůr – 5 805 inhabitants in the year 2004), which cannot be regarded as villages any more.

The problem of the criterion of population density lays in its hitherto minimal utilisation. On the international level, where every comparison is more

Table 1. Delimitation of the CR countryside according to the different criteria

Countryside as	Communes		Inhabitants		Cadastral area	
	number	%	number	%	ha	%
Communes up to 2 000 inhabitants	5 614	89.85	2 676 362	26.21	5 806 561	73.62
Communes without the town statute	5 722	91.58	3 032 203	29.69	5 998 033	76.05
Communes with population density lower than 150 inhabitants/km ²	5 494	87.93	3 052 858	29.90	6 521 117	82.69
Rural regions (OECD)	6 247	99.98	9 045 874	88.59	7 837 099	99.37

Table 2. Number of communes according to different criteria of rural area classification – comparison

Number of inhabitants	Statute	Population density	Number of communes	% share in total communes
Countryside	other (countryside)	countryside	5 226	83.6
Countryside	other (countryside)	town	331	5.3
Countryside	town	countryside	49	0.8
Countryside	town	town	8	0.1
Other (town)	other (countryside)	countryside	85	1.4
Other (town)	other (countryside)	town	80	1.3
Other (town)	town	countryside	134	2.1
Other (town)	town	town	335	5.4
Communes total			6 248	100.0

Source: Communes of the Czech Republic according to districts 2004, CSO 2005, own computation

complicated, a unified border has to be applied, but regarding this criterion, several limits are being used – 100 or 150 (sometimes even 120) inhabitants per 1 km². At present, it seems that the methodologies have been already harmonised and the EU used only the border of 150 inhabitants. In the above table, there are included the results of comparison of the latter three mentioned criteria for delimitation of rural communes on the CR area. The difference among the individual classifications can be expressed by the number of communes which either fulfil or do not fulfil the criteria of these categories (Table 2).

The first and last rows show the communes fulfilling all three criteria for being included among towns or villages. The remaining rows show all the possible combinations of fulfilling or not fulfilling of the given criteria. We can e.g. find out, that there exist 794 communes in the CR with less than 2 000 inhabitants, which do not have the statute of town and their population density is higher than 100 per 1 km² (therefore, they are of a small cadastre) – the EU would then regard them as towns. At the same time, we also have 134 towns with the town statute and more than 2 000 inhabitants but the area of which is so large that they do not fulfil the criterion of population density.

Another problem area is represented by the “villages” which are, from the territorial administration viewpoint, a part (local part) of towns or bigger communes. Also of these cases there are hundreds at our area. These “non-communes” are, however, difficult to register from the statistical viewpoint, since this level (the level of commune parts and basic habitation units) is followed only in censuses and the data are difficult to reach.

CONCLUSIONS

The notion of countryside has not a unified definition either in the CR or in the EU. This notion is used by scientists, specialists as well as administration officers; however, they often quote only several statistical data from which it is not obvious to which “countryside” they are in fact related. The problems can occur e.g. in the international as well as regional comparison in the case it is not stated in the resource material from which definition of countryside it issues. As it is obvious from Table 1, the results regarding countryside in the CR can differ even by the tens of percentage points (e.g. the area of the “countryside” can cover, according to the different criteria, from 74 to 99% of the area, even bigger differences exist in the share of inhabitants – from 26 to 89%). It is thus strictly necessary that it is stated in each text or other data on countryside according to which definition the countryside has been defined. It could prevent many misunderstandings and problems.

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