

Environment in the Czech Republic

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On a regular basis, the Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění (Public Opinion Research Centre) asks questions relating to the environment several times a year. A part of the questions focuses on the behaviour of respondents and their households, to what degree they themselves try to do well to the environment and whether at all they think that such efforts may have any meaning. Other questions deal with assessing activities of various institutions active in environmental protection and, in general, the behaviour of companies, residents and legislation. I would like to focus on the second group of questions in my article.

Based on results from the October research, 53% of residents are satisfied with the environment in the Czech Republic and 44% are not satisfied. People evaluate the condition of the environment in the place of their residence more positively. 69% express satisfaction with the environment and 30% of residents voiced dissatisfaction in this respect¹. The following table shows more detailed results.

Table 1: Satisfaction with environment (in %)

	Very satisfied	Tend to be satisfied	Tend to be dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
In the entire country	2	51	37	7
In place of residence	8	61	24	6

Note: To reach 100 in the lines, the "Does not know" answers need to be added

Source: CVVM, Naše společnost 2004 (Our Society 2004) survey, investigation 04-10

Residents from small villages of population up to 1,000 and people living the South Bohemia, Olomouc, Central Bohemia and Southern Moravia regions tend to be satisfied with the environment more frequently. To the contrary, dissatisfaction reigns among the Prague residents, people living in the Ústecký and Moravia-Silesia regions. Also, people living in towns with population of 50,000 to 100,000 are less satisfied.

Satisfaction with the environment (both in their residence and in the Czech Republic as a whole) is linked to the living standard of respondents – those who assess their standard of living as good tend to be more satisfied with the environment and, on the other hand – people who are not very well off in their own opinion, tend to assess the environment rather negatively. A similar connection can be found for overall satisfaction with life – those satisfied with their own life express higher satisfaction with the environment.

Time comparison of satisfaction with the environment from recent years is included in the following table.

Table 2: Satisfaction with environment (in %) – time comparison

	Satisfied			Dissatisfied		
	VI/2002	III/2004	XI/2004	VI/2002	III/2004	XI/2004
In the entire country	40	47	53	53	46	44
In place of residence	74	76	69	25	23	30

Note: To reach 100 in the lines, the "Does not know" answers need to be added

Source: CVVM, Naše společnost 2004 (Our Society 2004) survey, 2004

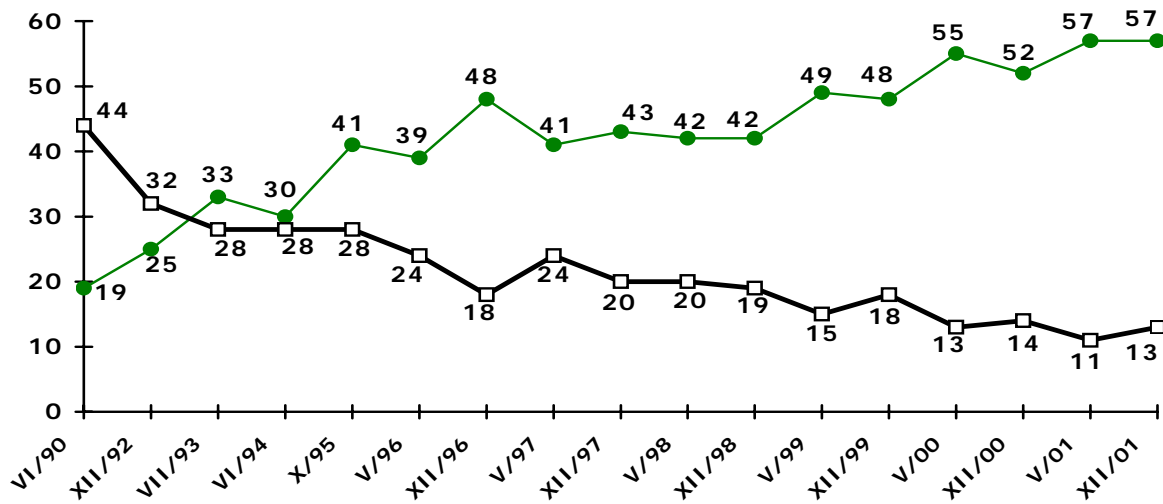
In respect of environment in the whole of our country, satisfaction has increased rather distinctly over the past 2 years but people are a bit less satisfied with the environment in their places of residence. In respect of environment in the country, people obtain

¹ Question: "How satisfied are you with the environment in your place of residence and in our country as a whole?"

information in mediated manner and with certain delay, in their residence, they are eye-witnesses to changes in environment, they see that more and more vehicles pass on the road behind their house and that a group of grown-up trees had to give way to the construction of a new hypermarket. This may give rise to a slight increase in dissatisfaction with environment in places of residence.

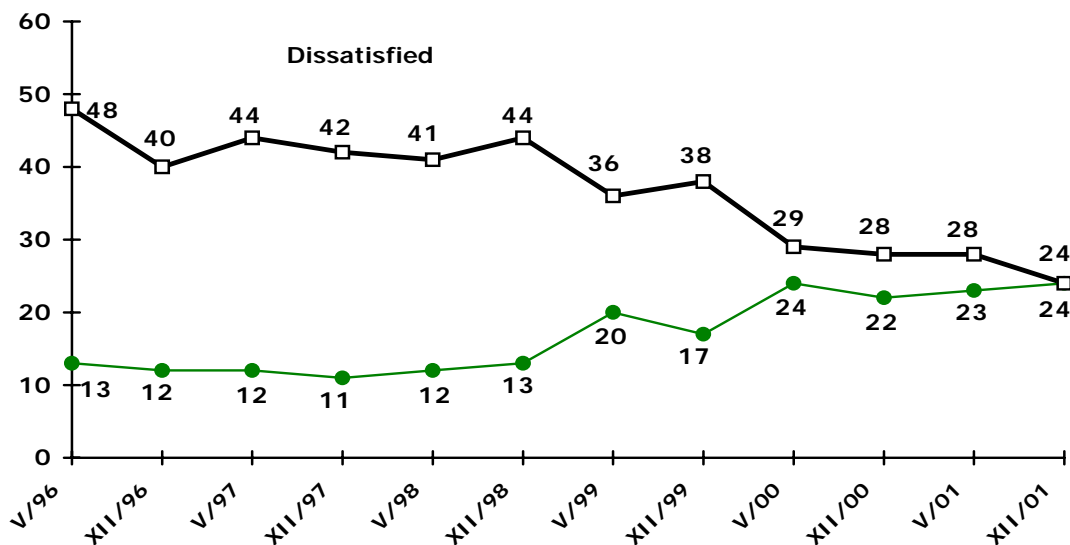
The same question was asked already in the 1990s; however, the results are not comparable with the most up-to-date data – another scale of responses was offered. Respondents were also presented with the possibility to answer "half-satisfied". (The remainder up to 100 % to each pair of information in the two following charts contains, in addition to this neutral answer, the "I do not know" answer.) The charts suggest that satisfaction with the environment in the Czech Republic as well as in the place of residence has grown over the entire period save for 1996 to 1998, when it remained at approximately the same level.

Chart 1: Development of satisfaction with environment in place of residence



Source: IVVM/CVVM

Chart 2: Development of satisfaction with environment in the Czech Republic



Source: IVVM/CVVM

In another section of October survey, we have asked the respondents to assess the situation in several areas related to the environment. These are actually various activities of people which activities have impact on the quality of the environment – behaviour of residents and companies towards the environment, extent of raw material mining, the issue of penalties for environmental damage². Similar results can be found in the following table.

Table 3: Evaluation of the situation in the Czech Republic (in %)

	Very good	Quite good	Quite bad	Very bad	DK	Good/Bad
a) Sanctioning those damaging environment	0	15	49	26	10	15/75
b) Behaviour of businesses, firms towards environment	0	14	54	24	8	14/78
c) Behaviour of residents towards environment	1	26	57	14	2	27/71
d) Extent of raw materials mining	1	20	37	13	29	21/50
e) Extent of timber mining	0	15	39	26	20	15/65
f) Economy of consumption of raw materials and energies in our production	1	16	40	18	25	17/58
g) Economy of consumption of raw materials and energies by residents	3	39	37	10	11	42/47
h) Consideration for natural areas in construction	0	17	44	28	11	17/72
i) Austerity of environmental law	1	27	41	16	15	28/57

Source: CVVM, Naše společnost 2004 (Our Society 2004) survey, 2004

As the table suggests, negative assessment prevails over positive assessment in all presented items, sometimes very noticeably. The behaviour of residents in raw material and energy consumption came out best from this evaluation. To the contrary, people are most critical of the behaviour of businesses and firms towards the environment and the manner in which natural areas are treated in construction. Dissatisfaction also rules in the issue of sanctions of those who damage the environment and we also give highly negative assessment of our behaviour towards the environment.

Let us look now who expresses the satisfaction and dissatisfaction with individual items. For all items presented, the evaluation of the situation is linked to satisfaction with the environment both in the place of residence as well as in the entire country. Respondents expressing satisfaction with the condition of the environment consider the behaviour of residents and businesses alike towards the environment as good, they are satisfied with the level of raw material mining, in their opinion, legislation in this area also works well.

Only when evaluating behaviour of residents towards the environment, no connection with any of the below social demography characteristics was established.

In all respects (save for evaluation of behaviour of residents), assessment is linked to the standard of living of respondents – those who indicated that it was good, resorted to positive evaluation of the situation.

Education only manifested itself rarely – university-educated people criticised more the thriftiness of residents as far as raw material and energy consumption is concerned; to the contrary, they are more satisfied with the extent of timber mining. People with

² Question: "What is, in your opinion, situation in the Czech Republic like as far as: a) Sanctioning those damaging environment, b) Behaviour of businesses, firms towards environment, c) Behaviour of residents towards environment, d) Extent of raw materials mining, e) Extent of timber mining, f) Economy of consumption of raw materials and energies in our production, g) Economy of consumption of raw materials and energies by residents, h) Consideration for natural areas in construction, i) Austerity of environmental law."

secondary education (with secondary school leaving examination called "maturita") gave negative evaluation more frequently to raw material mining and sanctions for damaging the environment than others.

From the point of view of age groups, especially young people (students) differentiated. More frequently, they were not able to assess the situation in a given area – this applies to sanctions for damaging environment, extent of timber mining, economy in raw materials and energy consumption by residents and consideration for nature when implementing constructions. Pensioners did not know more frequently how to evaluate the extent of mining and strictness of environmental protection legislation. People between 45 and 59 years, evaluated better than others the issue of sanctions for damaging nature, people slightly younger – 30 to 44 years – gave negative evaluation to the extent of timber mining.

Apparently, women are less oriented in this area of problems – in almost all items, they stated the Do not know answer more frequently. Men assessed the situation in the area of mining and economy of our production more favourably.

The degree of difference in opinions of residents in various regions is interesting only for a few items. Behaviour of businesses towards environment is evaluated more favourably by people living the Královehradecký and Liberecký regions; to the contrary, residents from Prague, the Zlínský and South Moravia regions evaluate the situation more negatively. The extent of raw material mining was evaluated more favourably by people from the South Moravia region, while people from the Ústecký region evaluated it rather negatively.

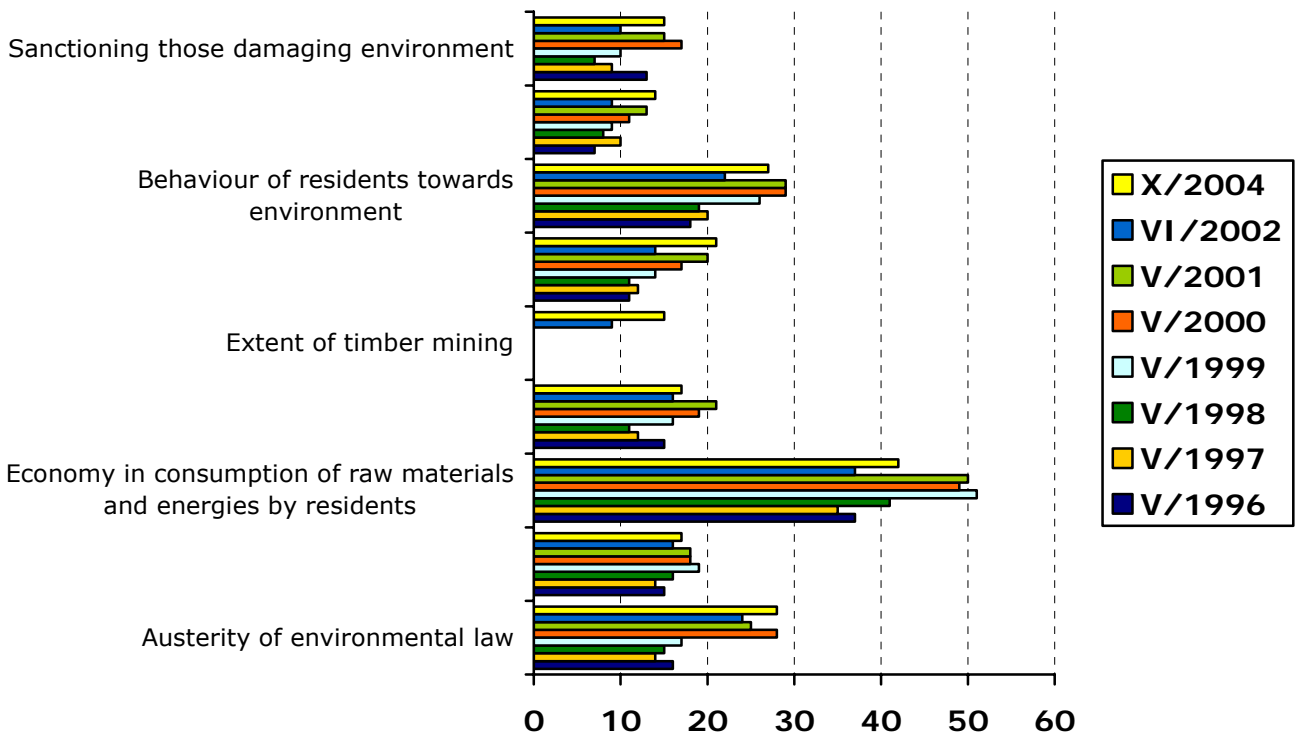
The size of settlement in which people live showed certain connection in the case of the extent of mining – people from the largest cities have had a problem with evaluating this item in any way whatsoever. The extent to which people act economically in raw material and energy consumption is seen more positively by people from small villages of up to 800 residents, as opposed to residents of Prague. The latter ones do not have much illusion about people in this respect. People from towns of 5 to 15 thousand inhabitants see that construction is careful to nature while residents of towns of 30 to 80 thousand see the situation in bleaker terms.

Potential ODS voters and people favouring liberal type of political programme evaluate well the consideration towards nature in implementing constructions and the strictness of laws. People with environmental focus are more frequently than others dissatisfied with the carefulness towards nature in implementing constructions and with the strictness of laws related to environmental protection.

The following two charts show time comparison from 1996³.

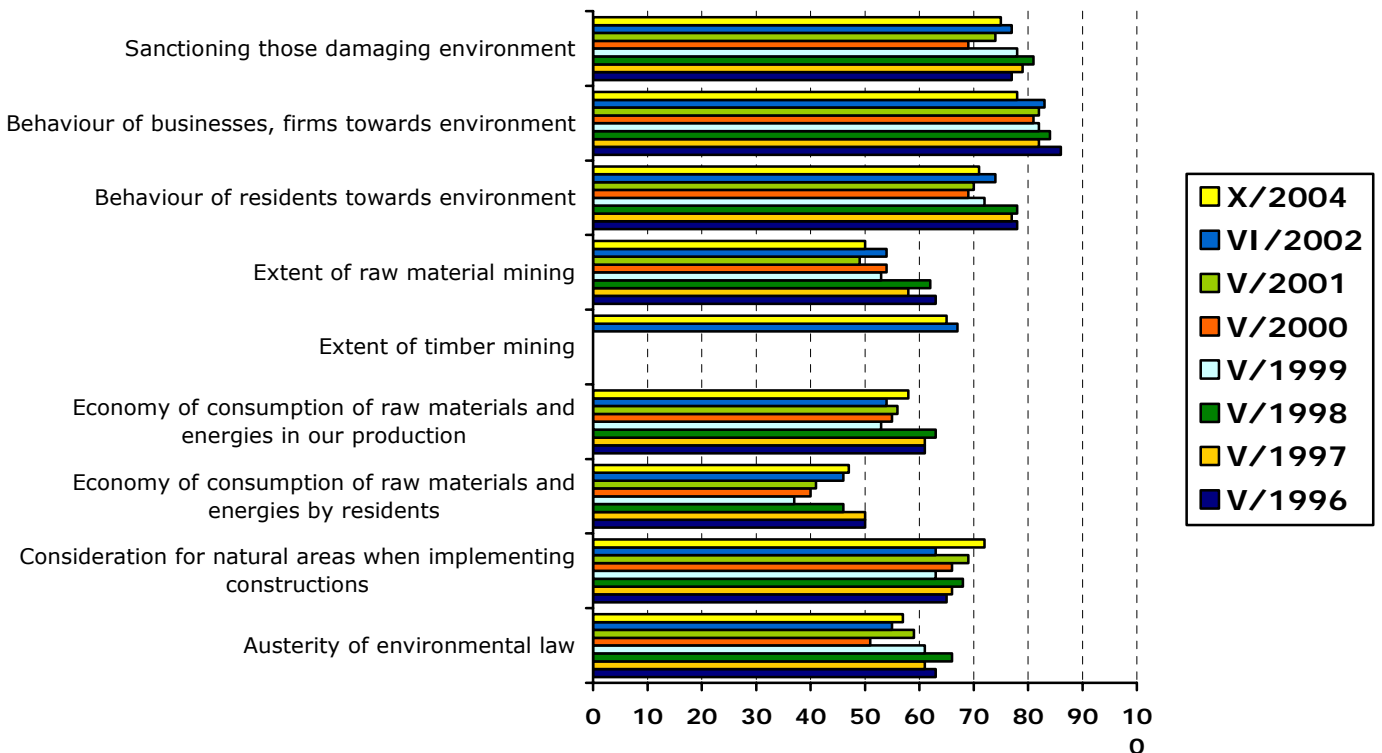
³ Between 1996 and 2001, certain items were presented in a slightly different format: a) Sanctioning those damaging environment, d) Extent of raw materials mining in the Czech Republic, g) Economy of consumption of raw materials and energies by residents, h) Consideration for natural areas in construction of new buildings.

Chart 3: Positive evaluation of situation in the Czech Republic (in %) – time comparison



Source: IVVM/CVVM

Chart 4: Negative evaluation of situation in the Czech Republic (in %) – time comparison



Source: IVVM/CVVM

The most apparent change in the course of the period under review has appeared in evaluation of environmental protection laws – respondents evaluate their present austerity in a distinctly better way than in the second half of the 1990s. Also, they evaluate much more favourably behaviour of residents towards environment and the extent of raw material mining today than in the 1990s. It is also interesting to point out that evaluation of economy of raw materials and energy consumption does not come out so positively for residents – it improved around 2000, however, today, the number of negative evaluations is again increasing. Evaluation of carefulness in relation to natural areas when implementing constructions has undergone a clear development over the period under review; here, negative voices have increased in recent years.

In the next question, we offered six institutions for evaluation in respect of their activities in environmental protection⁴.

Table 4: Environmental protection – evaluation of activities of institutions (in %)

	Very well	Quite well	Quite poorly	Very poorly	DK	Well/ Poorly
a) Government	2	33	38	10	17	35/48
b) Ministry of Environment	4	48	28	7	13	52/35
c) Parliament	1	21	40	12	26	22/52
d) Regional Authorities	2	34	26	6	32	36/32
e) Municipal Authorities	7	52	20	6	15	59/26
f) Environmental Organisations	12	50	16	4	18	62/20

Source: CVVM, Naše společnost 2004 (Our Society 2004) survey, investigation 04-10

From the presented institutions, residents evaluated the activities of environmental organisations best – almost two thirds of respondents have evaluated their activities in environmental protection well. Positive evaluation markedly prevails over negative evaluation also for municipal authorities and the Ministry of Environment. To the contrary, people tend to evaluate activities of the Government quite negatively and the Parliament came out the worst.

Satisfaction with activities of all above institutions in the area of environmental protection has been expressed by those who are satisfied with the condition of the environment in the Czech Republic as well as in their place of residence. Activities of all above institutions are praised by residents who see situation in items presented in the previous question as good – i.e. behaviour and economy of firms, residents, the extent of mining, austerity of laws and sanctions, consideration for nature when implementing construction.

Also respondents satisfied with their lives evaluated the above institutions positively. The standard of living of respondents has a great impact on evaluation of institutions; this does not apply solely to activities of environmental organisations. People who indicated that their standard of living was good, evaluate institutions better than others. Activities of all institutions with the exception of environmental organisations are criticised by people favouring environmental type of political programme.

More frequently, these were young people, students, who did not know more frequently how to evaluate most institutions – this was the case with the Government, the Parliament, regional and municipal authorities. To the contrary, pensioners did not manage to evaluate activities of environmental organisations more frequently. However, they are more satisfied with the activities of the Government and municipal authorities than other age groups.

⁴ Question: "As far as environmental protection is concerned, how do you evaluate activities of a) the Government, b) the Ministry of Environment, c) the Parliament, d) your regional authority, e) your municipal authority, f) environmental organisations."

Oftentimes, women are unable to evaluate an institution. In particular, this was the case with the Government and the Ministry of Environment. Men were highly dissatisfied with the activities of environmentalists and the Ministry of Environment.

University-educated individuals have evaluated the activities of the Government and the Ministry of Environment better than others. Those with secondary education with "maturita", see as poor the activities of the Government, the Ministry of Environment the Parliament and municipal authorities.

ODS sympathisers praise activities of the regions and environmentalists. However, they are dissatisfied with the Government. Potential electorate of KDU-ČSL praises more the activities of the Ministry of Environment (led by a member of their party). KSCM voters criticise environmentalists. ČSSD sympathisers are more satisfied with the Government, the Ministry of Environment, municipalities as well as environmentalists.

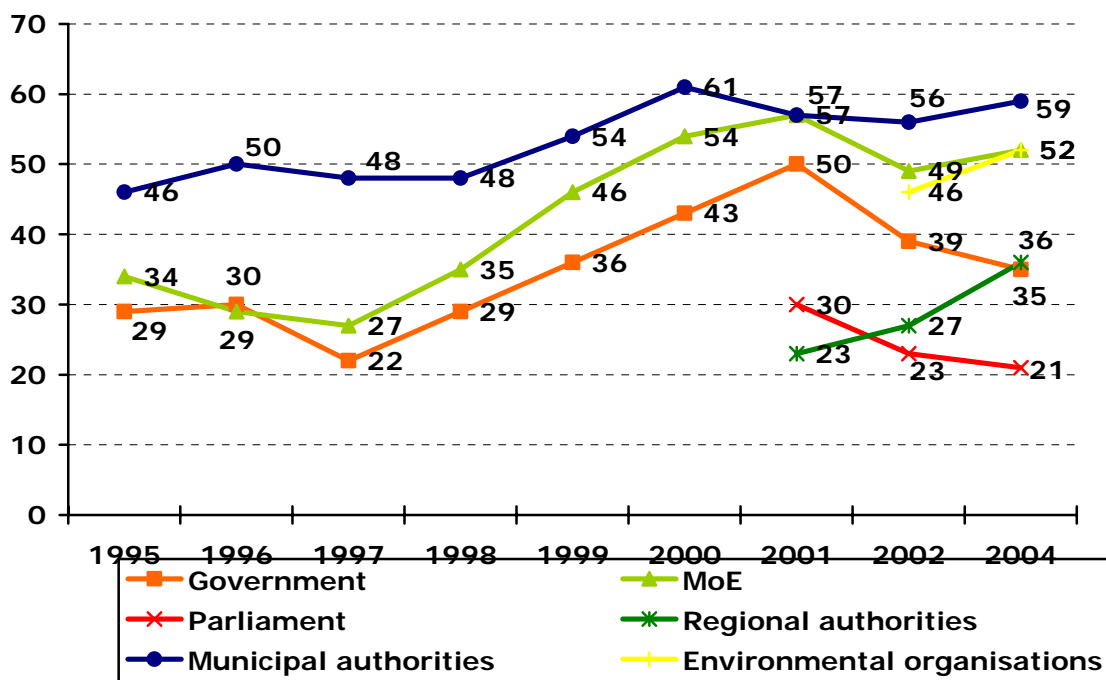
The Ministry of Environment works well in the opinion of residents of small municipalities and towns. People from large towns criticise it more. Regional authorities are praised by residents of towns with population of 100,000 to 1 million people. People from towns with population of 5,000 to 15,000 value positively the activities of environmental organisations; however, people from Prague relish their activities the least.

The following two charts show time comparison of evaluation of the above institutions from 1995 or 2001 and 2002.

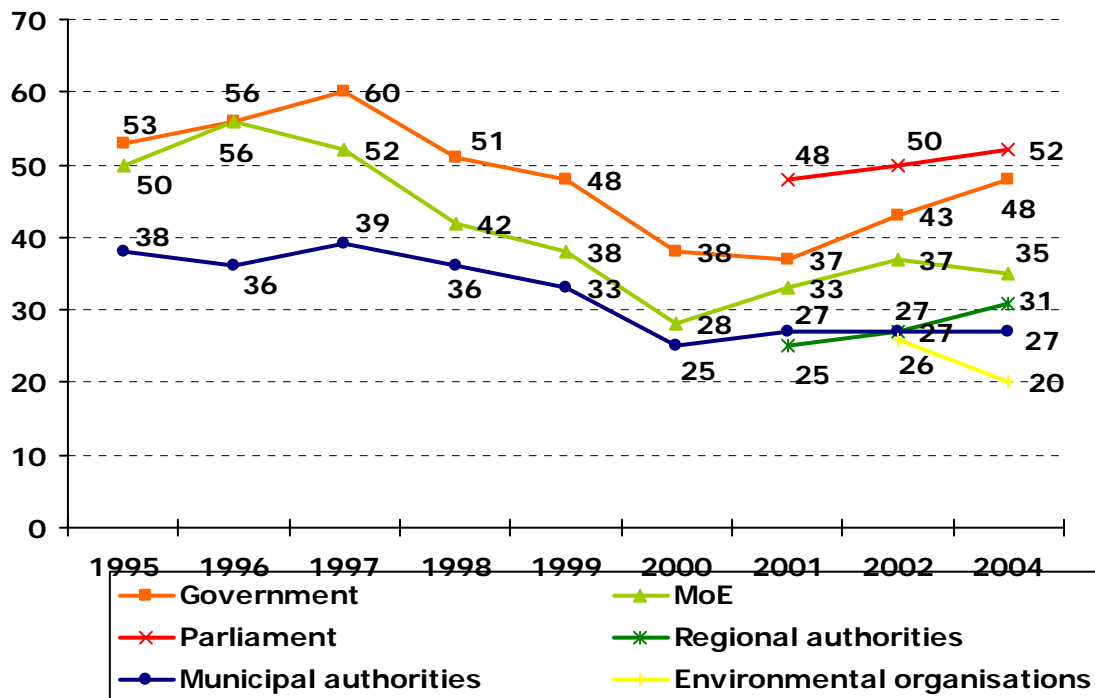
Over the period under review, evaluation of municipal authorities and the Ministry of Environment moved dramatically towards more positive assessment. Evaluation of the Government was at the top in 2001 and, since then, its assessment has deteriorated again. The Parliament, which has been evaluated since 2001, also sees reduction in approving voices. To the contrary, regional authorities are evaluated better and better. Environmental organisations were evaluated only in 2002 and, in 2004, there was even more good evaluation.

Chart 5: Evaluation of activities of institutions in environmental protection (in %)

a) Positive evaluation



b) Negative evaluation



A short summary in conclusion. For the environment in the Czech Republic, numbers of satisfied residents slightly prevail over numbers of dissatisfied ones. People regard their environment much better in the place of their residence. However, recently, the numbers of satisfied people have dropped slightly while for the environment in the country, the satisfaction is growing. When respondents assess the behaviour of residents, firms or laws in respect of environment, negative voices prevail over the approving ones. While our opinion of the behaviour of residents towards the environment has improved recently, when implementing constructions, much less consideration is applied towards nature. From among institutions, when we evaluate their activities with respect to environmental protection, the environmental organisations, municipal authorities and the Ministry of Environment have had the best reputation and their evaluation has improved over the recent years. To the contrary, people evaluated poorly activities of the Government and the Parliament in environmental protection, with which they are less satisfied than before. In particular people who indicate that their standard of living is good and who are satisfied with their life, fall back on positive evaluation. Those satisfied with the environment subsequently evaluate institutions, residents as well as firms better.