



Local & Regional  
Europe

# TERRI Report

Territorial, Governance,  
Powers and Reforms  
in Europe

2021 Edition:  
Focus on Local Health Care Systems



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## Foreword

Territorial and governance reforms are well underway on our continent, a development that can be viewed as an indication of democracy in motion. These reforms have encouraged greater decentralisation and a more effectual share of responsibility between the different spheres of government. Now, the unparalleled challenges that have arisen since the start of the pandemic have moved the issue of effective coordinated actions by governments centre stage and the efforts of local and regional governments (LRGs) and their national associations into the spotlight.

In this context, we are pleased to present this first edition of the TERRI Report, a publication that builds on the work of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in its earlier studies entitled, 'Local and Regional governments in Europe – Structures and Competences'. For the first time and as compared to CEMR's earlier study on the remit of responsibilities and tasks of our members, the TERRI report goes further by examining the evolution of territorial and governance reforms of recent years. It explores the changing nature of relationships between central and subnational governments, as seen through the eyes of CEMR's national associations.

Since its creation in 1951, CEMR has shown itself to be a key European player, pursuing a Europe constructed on the principles of local self-government, respect for subsidiarity and rule of law. Both the oldest and broadest of the European associations representing subnational governments' interests, CEMR brings together national associations of local and regional governments from 40 European countries and represents them at all tiers of government – local, intermediate and regional. At the heart of CEMR's core values are governance-in-partnership, true fiscal decentralisation and democratic governance, the basic essentials for the competent and accountable discharge of public policy. Rarely have these elements, which are also a metric of effective governance, proven so important and necessary as during recent times. We wish to thank all those who contributed to this important work, including the experts from our member associations, and the academics who generously shared their knowledge and expertise.



**Rutger De Reu**  
*CEMR Spokesperson on Governance,  
Vice-Mayor of Deinze*



**Gunn Marit Helgesen**  
*CEMR Co-President, KS President  
Councillor of Vestfold and Telemark*



## **Recommendations for effective territorial and governance reforms**

### **1. Establish a multi-dimensional approach and active consultation involving all stakeholders when undertaking and assessing territorial reforms**

Whilst the rationale for undertaking territorial reforms may be explained by the need to increase efficiency, cut costs, decentralise or transfer the delivery of services, the value of such reforms should never be assessed solely on the basis of cost savings. The potential impacts of a reform on democracy and accountability are factors much too important to not be considered as well. It is crucial that preliminary steps be taken to anticipate, prepare and arm against all possible risks arising from a territorial reform, not only the budgetary ones. Having these ex-ante assessments will then help in determining how best to prepare the ground and execute the process. The use of financial incentives in implementing reforms can also be a success factor. Once the territorial reform has been carried out, an ex-post assessment should also be performed to mitigate any negative effects and adapt as needed. Lastly, other accompanying voluntary reforms such as mergers, which may be the most effective territorial reform approach, can also be considered.

### **2. Guarantee Local and Regional Governments adequate financial transfers and powers**

Any changes to the responsibilities or powers exercised by LRGs as the result of territorial reforms, particularly when decentralisation is involved, must be accompanied by the appropriate fiscal transfers to carry out the new tasks and functions. Decentralisation often involves a greater number of functions and responsibilities being delegated to local and regional governments but without the means necessary to properly execute them. It is essential that any transfer of powers from the central government to other tiers of government not create the problem of underfunded assignments. This is particularly relevant in the domain of public health which, in some countries, can be managed through shared competences across different tiers of government.

### **3. Clarify and respect the division of responsibilities between different tiers of government**

It should be generally accepted that a clear demarcation of powers and responsibilities is beneficial for effective governance processes. It fosters the ability of local and regional governments to identify and implement relevant place-based solutions. By redressing the balance of power and enabling all tiers of government to fulfil their role and governance potential, this in turn allows national governments to better manage their own responsibilities. These responsibilities include preparedness in the face of future crises.

### **4. Foster governance-in-partnership through collaboration and co-ordination across different tiers of government**

Most responsibilities for delivering public services, including public health care provision, are shared across tiers of government. Although there is no clear evidence as to whether federal or unitary systems responded best to the pandemic, it can be said with certainty that collaboration and coordination in the area of healthcare have been determining factors in producing an effective response to the COVID-19 crisis. Local and regional governments are best suited to provide place-based knowledge, an important contribution to cultivate effective joined-up policy-making. To best achieve this, along with objectives such as improving service delivery or boosting territorial regeneration, it is vital that they be associated in the early stages of preparing and implementing plans. Transparent mechanisms for defining joint responsibilities, areas for collaboration and coordination and clear lines of accountability must be put in place. The process of collaboration and coordination needs to be responsive and adaptive. There must be assurances that any experience gained at the local and regional tier in terms of service provision will be subsequently shared across tiers of government and taken into account, further improving upon the functioning of governance processes and the delivery of public services. This involvement also extends to any changes being planned to adapt Europe's health care systems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which demonstrated only too well the need for effective joined-up policy processes.

### **5. Maximise the impact of the Future of Europe Conference to strengthen our municipalities and regions**

As we make our way forward into a future where solutions to challenges are being cultivated at the local and regional tiers, Europe's governance model needs to adapt to this new reality in order to deliver change and to strengthen our towns, municipalities and regions. The Conference on the Future of Europe is a unique opportunity for Europe's leaders to engage citizens through their elected local and regional representatives. Given their proximity to the communities that they serve, LRGs are best placed to come forward with practical ideas, suggestions and workable solutions, for both the national and European contexts, to address present and future challenges. They must be present and heard during the discussions on the future that we want for Europe and its territories.

## Acknowledgements

CEMR would like to thank all the partners and members, **national associations** and their member local and regional governments who answered the survey, as well as all the **CEMR team members** involved, who contributed to the production of this publication.

Special thanks to the scientific proof-readers of the analysis: **Rossella Soldi** and **Stéphane Guérard**. Special thanks as well to Prof. Dr. **Habil Adam Bosiacki**, PhD, Full Professor and Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Jarosław Kostrubiec**, PhD, members of the university network OLA (Observatory on Local Autonomy), for their work on the polish country profile.

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Authors' Team led by **Nathalie Noupadja**, CEMR Head of Research and Studies: **Carol Thomas**, Adviser – Governance and Institutional Relations, with the invaluable help of **Tanja Traub**, **Damiano Ravera**, and **Elisa Decourcelle**, CEMR Research Interns

Managing editors: **Frédéric Vallier**, CEMR Secretary General, **Marlène Siméon**, CEMR Director of Operations, and **Durmish Guri**, CEMR Director of External Resources and Knowledge Strategy

Editing and liaison with graphic design team: **Pierre Vander Auwera**, CEMR Communications Adviser, and **Craig James Willy**, CEMR Copy Editor

Copy editing: **Penny Yim-Barbieri**

Design: **InExtremis** - Brussels, January 2022

Translation into French: **Domenica Pistoia**

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## Executive summary

In this study, CEMR will examine territorial developments that took place across its national associations during the period from 2012 to 2021. It will also explore territorial reform trends and the factors inducing these changes, unleashing the winds of centralisation and decentralisation across a vast swath of CEMR's members. The unique set of data compiled provides valuable insights into how local and regional governments have been evolving in Europe.

The first-hand information provided by CEMR's members shows that almost all the countries covered by the study underwent some sort of territorial reform between 2012 and 2021, either on a large scale or a small one. A large share of the reforms and reorganisation took place at the local and municipal tier, where the pace of reforms has even intensified in some cases in recent years.

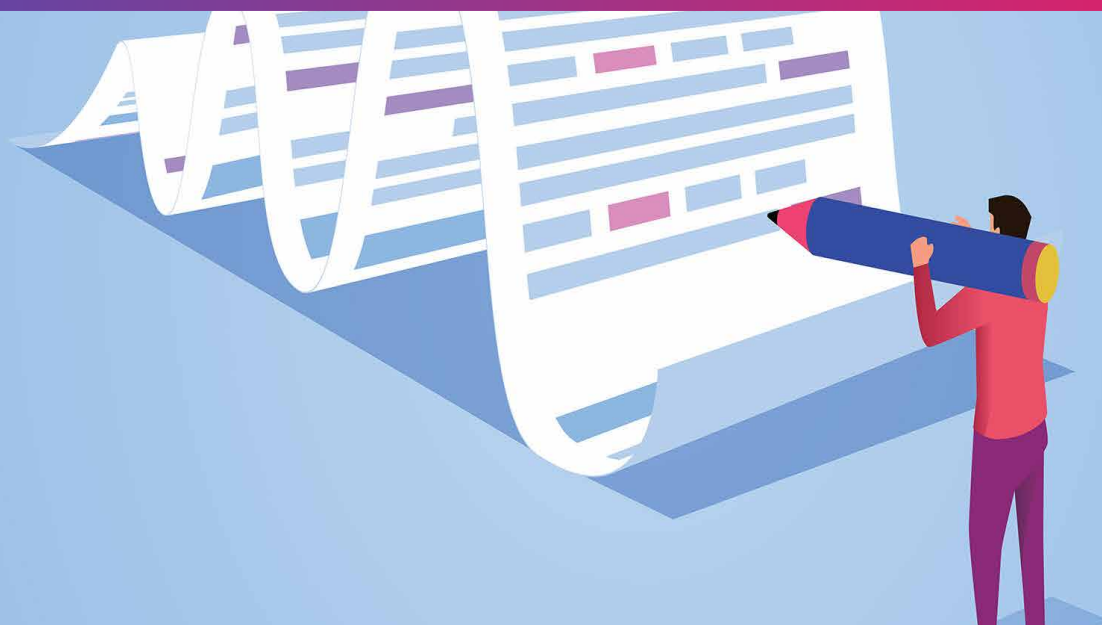
Different types of reforms have been carried out with a wide range of outcomes: some have led to more decentralisation, others have resulted in better collaboration between levels of governments and, in several cases, they have contributed to making the attribution of responsibilities across different government tiers more complex. Regardless, the most common reasons cited for the undertaking of any reforms are to secure greater cost efficiency or to improve service delivery to citizens.

This paper will also highlight how CEMR's national associations are effective vital actors in supporting and promoting the governance-in-partnership model in their countries. When necessary, they can also be essential in fostering change at the national level and helping to advance the modernisation of democracy.

Public health care and local and regional governments' remit and responsibilities in this field will also be investigated in this study. To facilitate this task, a set of 21 health 'functions' have been defined and used to compare different types of public health care responsibilities and their attribution across Europe. The information collected is evidence of the wide diversity of LRGs' responsibilities in this field and how the situation is evolving.

Over the past decade, European health systems have been the subject of significant reforms as well, which often entailed a review and reorganisation of both the authorities overseeing them – in most cases, subnational governments – and their competences, powers and responsibilities. Our study's findings reveal an unmistakable trend towards greater decentralisation and a devolution of powers to LRGs in the delivery of public health care. While decision-making for public health remains predominantly role of central governments, LRGs have been witnessing an increase in their responsibilities for delivery of certain types of public health services.

On account of the ongoing pandemic and its dramatic implications for local and regional governments, the impact of COVID-19 on local health systems and governance arrangements remains topical. This study therefore delves into how COVID-19 specifically affected the responsibilities of LRGs in the field of public health and whether this provoked any changes to the number or types of tasks that subnational governments had to undertake during the pandemic. Examples directly recounted by CEMR's members show the central role played by LRGs in the vaccination roll-out. Lastly, the study also details how the pandemic transformed governance arrangements between central and local governments in many countries, underscoring how good collaboration between the different levels of governments was crucial in managing the pandemic effectively.



## Introduction

As the precursor to this study was published in 2012, **the first part of the current study will contrast and compare changes and trends in territorial governance since then in all the countries where there are CEMR members.**<sup>1</sup> Much of the data underscores territorial developments that have been ongoing and observed for many years, such as decentralisation, devolution of powers and responsibilities, and a shift in the direction of intermunicipal cooperation. However, the experiences of local and regional governments across Europe also recount new cases of shared responsibilities with the national governments delivering public services, even during a health crisis. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Council of Europe (CoE) have all published insightful work that confirm many of CEMR's findings.<sup>2</sup>

**The second and third parts of this study also take a close look at the powers and responsibilities of local and regional governments with respect to public health.** The overriding aim is to understand how public health management and delivery are exercised in Europe in actual practice. Furthermore, the data collected through CEMR's national associations provide insights into the different approaches adopted by governments to coordinate a pandemic response with the other tiers of government.

Conclusions are already being drawn and lessons learnt from recent events about how different governance models affect the ability of institutions to manage emergency situations and crises. We have seen that the governance models most capable of delivering successful responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were those that allowed for effective coordination within and across tiers of government.<sup>3</sup>

1 40 countries listed on our website: <https://www.ccre.org/fr/pays/map>

2 For further reading, see Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Making decentralization work – A handbook for policy-makers* (2019), <https://www.oecd.org/regional/making-decentralisation-work-g2g9faa7-en.htm>, and the bibliography, page 146

3 Information based on the experiences of our members collated by CEMR's Covid-19 task force in 2020.

However, this study goes beyond simply highlighting the changing nature of powers and responsibilities owing to territorial reforms and evolving governance processes in Europe in recent years. It also underlines the work of national associations and their key role in fostering effective and empowered local and regional governments, as well as in stimulating critical peer-learning that cuts across tiers of governments and national boundaries.

Even as we begin to reset our economies, the repercussions of the pandemic will continue to be felt for many years to come. It is therefore important to examine how different tiers of government can best combine their strengths to deliver policies and results that correspond to the needs of people, communities and businesses and research centres. The experiences of CEMR's members give us an inside look at how governance is exercised and how governance relationships are evolving as a result of digitalisation, climate, social, economic and demographic changes as well as of the pandemic. These are all major drivers that impact how public policies are prepared and delivered.

Using the detailed information and experiences from CEMR's members, we have been able to put together an overview of the evolution of local governments and local governance over the past decade (2012-2021) (Part 1), an update on local public health systems and previous reforms (Part 2) as well as an analysis of the impact that one year of pandemic management has had on governance in general, and on local public health management in particular (Part 3).

It is our sincere hope that this study will prove instrumental in shaping governance processes at the national, European and international levels and foster the attainment of stronger governance arrangements and better policy outcomes. This is vital given the importance of relaunching our economies and ensuring that funding packages, such as that of the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility, will achieve the desired outcome of boosting Europe's economies and putting them on the path towards greener, sustainable growth.



## Methodology

### Area of Research and Definitions

The stated aim of this study is to analyse reforms that have occurred over the past decade (2012-2021) in CEMR member countries and that have affected the shape, numbers and structures of local and regional governments (territorial reforms) as well as their competences, their ability to self-govern, and local autonomy in general. For the purpose of this study, they are broadly referred to as “territorial reforms” and include “governance reforms” and any other type of reform considered to have had an impact on territories.

Therefore, any numbers pertaining to local governments refer exclusively to “decentralised governments” or “self-governments”, which are also political entities with decision-making bodies, in addition to being an administrative territorial unit, that are constituted through elections. Infranational governments, subnational governments, etc. are all generally categorised as “Local and Regional Governments” (LRGs) and are thus used interchangeably in this study.

Deconcentrated governments, territorial units or administrative representatives of the central government, such as the “prefectures” (*préfectures*) in France or the administrative regions (*mkhare*) in Georgia, are not covered by this study, neither in the analysis nor in the country sheets. Sometimes, certain systems co-exist (capital cities or large metropolitan areas), in which case their particular structure of local self-government generally functions alongside the state administration; but these exceptions are not addressed here.

### Geographical Scope

The main figures and graphics used in this study have been put together based on the responses received from national associations of LRGs covering 40 countries, including 26 EU Member States.<sup>4</sup> In total, these 40 countries encompass more than 115,000 local and regional governments, nearly 678 million people,<sup>5</sup> and the national associations represent 94% of these countries’ populations.<sup>6</sup>

4 All the EU Member states except Ireland

5 Source (population of the 29 countries): Eurostat (September 2021) and Worldometer (population in Israel)

6 Source (representativeness of the associations): CEMR Study *National Associations of Local and Regional Governments in Europe*, January 2019. <https://bit.ly/3g0K5wD>

## Data Sources

The data for this study was primarily compiled through a survey conducted in the first quarter of 2021 as well as from phone interviews. Our analysis also relied on desk research to complement the information provided by CEMR's member national associations of local and regional governments, and to deepen our knowledge on the relevant topics.<sup>7</sup> The statistical data were primarily obtained from experts from associations of towns, municipalities and regions.

For the statistics concerning population, land area or the like, Eurostat was the main source used. For the population data, the figures for 2021 were up-to-date for all the countries with six exceptions. For Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Israel and the United Kingdom, we resorted to data from the World Bank.

## Questionnaire

In order to collect primary data and pick up on any trends relating to territorial reforms in Europe, we used a template similar to what was used for previous editions of the study,<sup>8</sup> namely a description of the local systems in each country, including a comprehensive list of local competences and general facts particular to that country. The country sheets presented in this study are based on this template.<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that, for this edition of the TERRI report, a decision was taken to narrow the focus of our analysis to look specifically at the public health competence and how governance systems adapted to manage responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on this foundation, we broadened our enquiry by adding a section to the questionnaire regarding the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on governance as well as on public health systems and functions.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to learn about territorial reforms, irrespective of whether they occurred because of a governmental decision or specific situations stemming from COVID-19 crisis management. The survey was divided into several parts and drafted so as to assess any changes in the numbers of local and regional governments, the date and nature of territorial and health reforms, the result of the reforms, i.e. whether they pointed to more decentralisation, re-centralisation, or enhanced collaboration between governments and/or more responsibilities for LRGs, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 crisis response on the governance-in-partnership and the role of national associations of LRGs.

The questionnaire was made up of 32 questions, five of which were open-ended, divided up into four sections. One question in the health section was a comprehensive table listing 21 preselected health functions. The European Committee of the Regions published reports on the local and regional authorities and their role and tasks in the health sector.<sup>10</sup> Using the country profiles presented in these reports, we identified a set of 21 health functions (Box 3) covering LRGs' likely roles in the area of public health, allowing us to conduct an in-depth

7 See Bibliography page 146

8 2016: [https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR\\_structures\\_and\\_competences\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_structures_and_competences_2016_EN.pdf); 2013: [https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CCRE\\_broch\\_EN\\_complete\\_low.pdf](https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CCRE_broch_EN_complete_low.pdf); 2005: [https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/local\\_regional\\_structures\\_2005\\_en.pdf](https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/local_regional_structures_2005_en.pdf)

9 See Country Sheets, page 69

10 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/health-systems/health-systems-en.pdf>

analysis of the position as well as the remit and responsibilities of LRGs and their national associations in the health sector.

It is important to note that even though additional desk research was carried out regarding certain points, the main data used in our analysis comes from survey responses, which may of course be subject to individual points of view.

## Financial Data

Examining local competences and trends also calls for a look at the state of local finances. The sources for this data were Eurostat, the World Bank, and the World Observatory on Subnational Finance and Investment. When needed, we used the European Commission's currency converter, InforEuro, to obtain the official monthly accounting rate.

In Part 2 on the local health systems, we looked at the overall expenditure of LRGs, compared it against the national GDP, and then calculated how much LRG expenditure went specifically to health. To make it easier to screen the data and determine the LRG heavyweights in terms of health care spending, the respondent countries were broken down into four groups (Groups 1 to 4, always ranked respectively lowest to highest) based on three indicators:

- national GDP,
- LRG expenditure as a percentage of national GDP,
- LRG expenditure on health.

The aim of this clustering exercise was to help us assess whether there was any correlation between the LRGs coming from the wealthiest countries and the level of their expenditure on health. The results are presented in part 2 of the study in Figure 5.<sup>11</sup>

## Scientific Revision

To corroborate the conclusions reached from our data collection and desk research, we arranged to have two experts, with specialised knowledge in, respectively, decentralisation trends and local health systems in Europe, partner with us and scientifically scrutinise our analysis.

**Stéphane Guérard**, Associate Professor of Public Law at the University of Lille in France, is the founder and head of the network, the “Observatory of Local Autonomy” (OLA), made up of academics from 43 European states and 12 non-European states. It is organised into 71 European teams and 12 non-European teams of researchers from 100 universities. Mr Guérard is a specialist on local autonomy and decentralisation trends and reforms in Europe and worldwide.

**Rossella Soldi** is the Managing Director of Progress Consulting S.r.l., a private consultancy on sustainable development that specialises in analysing the impact of European policies from the perspective of local and regional governments. Ms Soldi has also authored a number of studies commissioned by the European Committee of the Regions on public health

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11 Clusters presented in Annex 1.

management at the subnational level, and her latest work focused on 'Regional differences in COVID-19 response: exposure and strategy'.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, this analysis has been proofread several times and validated by experts from the LRG national associations involved in the study.

Using this research approach, we compiled an overview covering the evolution of local governments and governance over the past decade (2012-2021) and the state of local public health systems and recent reforms (Parts 1 and 2). The research then analysed implications for the management of governance arrangements in general, and the affects of managing local public health in particular (Part 3).

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12 Committee of the Regions, Regional differences in COVID-19 response: exposure and strategy, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4a25e68a-2d64-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1>



## **Part 1: Overview of Territorial Reforms between 2012 and 2021**

National territorial reforms leading to a significant reorganisation of public administrations have become a common phenomenon in recent decades, both in Europe and worldwide. This trend, which intensified in the wake of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, has been confirmed by the member responses to CEMR's survey. This section of the study will provide a general summary of how local governments and local governance arrangements in Europe have evolved during the period under review. Almost all the associations that responded mentioned legislative changes that had affected local and regional governments in their country within the past decade. The reasons for these territorial reforms are diverse, ranging from a desire to achieve economies of scale and greater efficiency to the aim of modernising public administrations.

## A. Changes in the number of Local/Regional Governments

This first section of the study focuses on the changes in the numbers of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) between 2012 and 2021, examining both the broad comparative trends as well as any specificities observed pertaining to the different tiers of governance.

### General comparative trends

Amongst the 40 CEMR countries covered by this study, there are 36 unitary countries (including regional states like Spain and Italy), four with federal systems and eight countries<sup>13</sup> have an intermediary tier of governance, e.g. provinces or counties, and more than half<sup>14</sup> have a regional government.

One major development that stood out was the fact that territorial reforms have been introduced in a sizeable majority of the 40 countries covered by the study. A quarter<sup>15</sup> however experienced no change in the number of territorial governments during the period studied. Of this 25% of CEMR countries that did not observe any change in the number of their subnational governments, eight of these included regional authorities.

The second trend that was noteworthy shows the majority of changes taking place at the local or municipal tier. We therefore regrouped the countries so as to compare changes in Europe at the local level only and reclassified them into categories according to whether or not these changes were insignificant (below 10%), moderate (between 10 and 50%) or major (change greater than 50%). This can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 1 below.

Western Europe		Northern Europe		Eastern Europe		Southern Europe	
Netherlands	-15.8%	Estonia	-65.0%	Ukraine	-84.6%	Albania	-83.6%
Austria	-11.1%	Latvia	-64.7%	Georgia	-7.2%	Turkey	-47.4%
Germany	-5.9%	Norway	-17.2%	Hungary	-0.72%	Portugal	-30%
France	-5%	Iceland	-9.2%	Poland	-0.08%	North Macedonia	-4.7%
Luxembourg	-3.8%	Finland	-8.0%	Moldova	0%	Italy	-2.3%
Belgium	-1.4%	United Kingdom	-6.7%	Romania	0%	Israel	-1.2%
		Denmark	0%	Slovakia	0%	Croatia	0%
		Lithuania	0%	Czech Republic	0.13%	Cyprus	0%
		Sweden	0%	Bulgaria	0.4%	Malta	0%
						Serbia	0%
						Spain	0%
						Slovenia	0.5%
						Greece	2%

<sup>13</sup> Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Ukraine

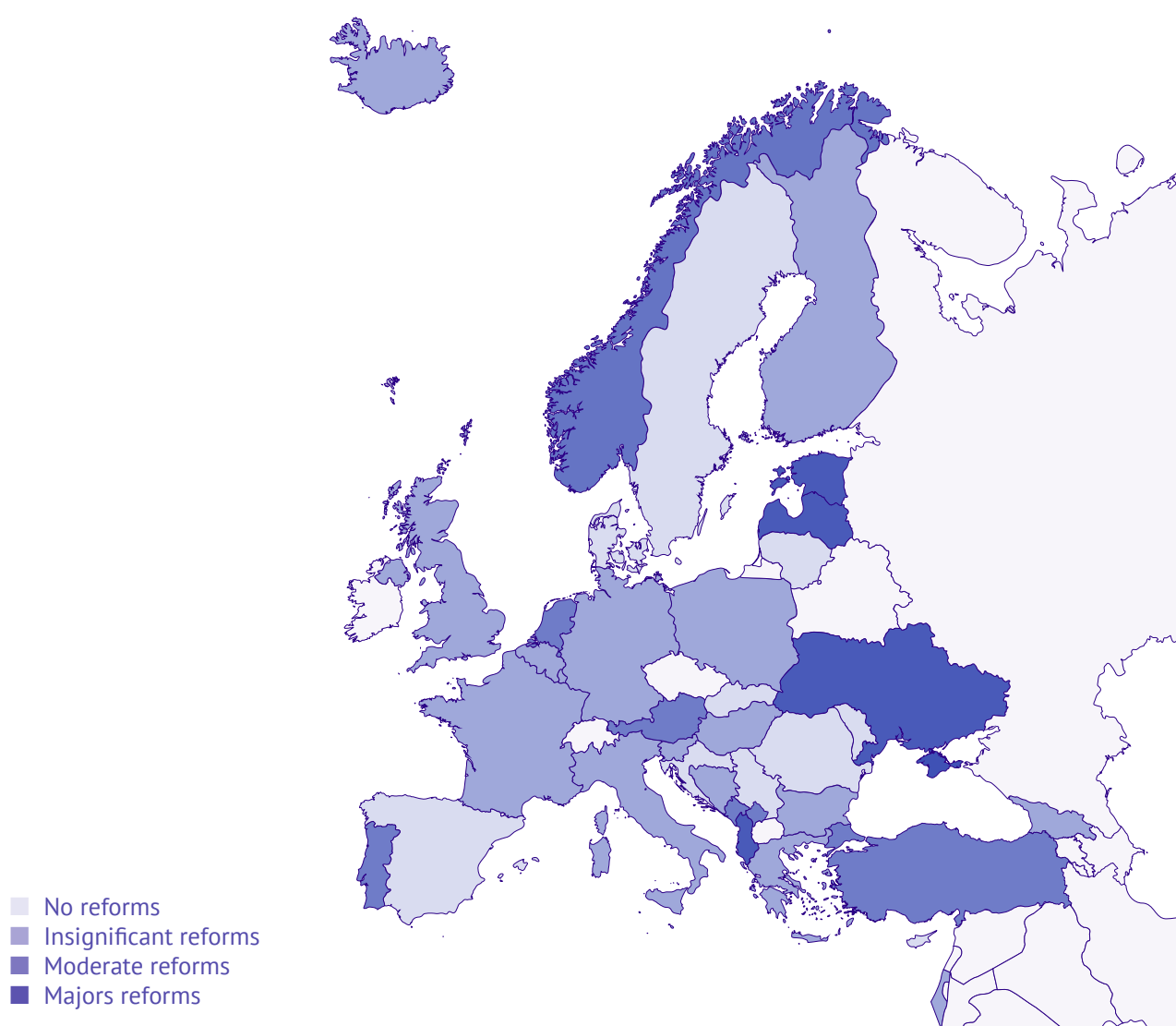
<sup>14</sup> Twenty-seven countries possess a regional tier: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom

<sup>15</sup> Eleven countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden

Western Europe		Northern Europe		Eastern Europe		Southern Europe	
						Bosnia and Herzegovina	6%
						Kosovo	13.9%
						Montenegro	19.0%

**Table 1.1 - Changes in the number of local governments between 2012 and 2021<sup>16</sup>**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR<sup>17</sup>.



**Figure 1 – Map of territorial reforms in Europe**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR

<sup>16</sup> With the exception of Kosovo, the comparison for which is between 2016 and 2021.

<sup>17</sup> The geographical regions have been listed according to the United Nations' system of classification of European countries. Reference used: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>  
 Layout inspired by the following source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03003930.2018.1530660?needAccess=true>, p. 2ff

It is interesting to note that a large number of territorial reforms that took place over the past decade seem **mainly focused on reducing the number of local governments in order to establish larger units**. In the case of Finland for example, there were 23 municipal amalgamations from 2013 to 2021, with a decrease in the number of municipalities from 336 to 309, and an increase in the size of local governments. In Albania, 12 regions were created alongside the reduction of the number of municipalities from 373 to 61. In Malta, five regional councils were established in 2021 (previously called “Regional Committees”), following the Local Government Reform Process and the publication of Act No. XIV of 2019. Their legal basis was strengthened and the powers of these regional councils were boosted. Many of the examples listed below confirm this pattern of a decrease in the number of municipalities and/or an increase in amalgamations over the years.

## **In-depth look at each tier of governance**

### **Municipal/communal governments**

In general, the municipal/communal tier of government is the tier of government that has undergone the greatest change in recent years and is also where the overall decrease in number is undeniable. Yet, while this has been validated across the 40 countries that responded to CEMR’s survey, there are also some divergent cases.

Of the 22 countries<sup>18</sup> where the number of municipalities decreased, the decrease in the number of municipalities in 13 countries<sup>19</sup> was limited (from 0 to 10%). In 3 countries,<sup>20</sup> the number of municipalities fell between 10% and 20% and, in Portugal by 30%. In Turkey, the number of municipalities decreased by more than 45%. The most significant decreases were seen in Ukraine (-85%), Albania (-84%), Estonia (-65%) and Latvia (-65%).<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, there are cases in seven countries where the number of municipalities has increased over the period under observation. In Bulgaria (increase of +0.4%), the Czech Republic (+0.13%), Greece (+2%) and Slovenia (+0.5%), the increase recorded was minimal. A more perceptible increase could be witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (+6%) and Kosovo (+14%). However, the biggest increase of note was in Montenegro (+19%).

In 11 countries,<sup>22</sup> the number of municipalities has remained unchanged over the last decade.

### **Intermediate governments**

An intermediate tier, meaning that there are provinces or counties functioning both as an administrative and a political unit, currently exists in eight countries.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the countries that have this intermediary tier also have regional governments, with the exception of Hungary and the Netherlands.

18 Albania, Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom

19 Belgium, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Poland, United Kingdom

20 Austria, Netherlands, Norway

21 As of 1st July 2021, there will be 42 municipalities in Latvia, as set forth in the Administrative Territorial Reform approved by the *Saeima* in its final reading on Wednesday, 10 June 2021

22 Eleven countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden

23 Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Ukraine

Generally speaking, there have been no significant changes in the number of this tier of subnational government. The difference ranges between 0.0% to 2.7%, as shown in Table 1.2.

Western Europe		Northern Europe	Eastern Europe		Southern Europe	
France	-1.0%	no intermediate tier	Ukraine	-72.1%	Italy	-2.7%
Germany	-0.3%		Hungary	0%		
Belgium	0%		Poland	0.3%		
Netherlands	0%					

**Table 1.2 – Changes in the number of intermediate governments between 2012 and 2021**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR<sup>24</sup>

### Box 01 – Finland takes a local leap: counties created to tackle health

In Finland, a new “self-government level” is being established: 21 counties in charge of well-being services. The Health and Social Services reform bill was adopted by the Finnish Parliament in June 2021.<sup>25</sup> For the first time, counties are being established that will be entrusted with the organisation of health and social services and rescue services from the local government level (municipalities and joint municipal authorities).<sup>26</sup>

At first glance, this reform seems to amount to the creation of a new deconcentrated level of the central government, particularly since the three pertinent Ministries in this area will be appointing advisory boards for the “wellbeing services counties” and will conduct annual negotiations to monitor, assess, and direct the organisation of services in the counties.

Nonetheless, a county council, elected by direct popular vote, will constitute the highest decision-making body of each well-being service county. The first county elections will be held on 23 January 2022.

Two exceptions, found in Finland (see box 01) and Ukraine, are worth highlighting. In the latter, administrative and territorial reforms introduced from 2015 to 2021 led to significant changes in the territorial structure of the country. A voluntary amalgamation process has been underway since 2015, resulting not only in the reduction of territorial communities or “*hromadas*”<sup>27</sup> at the local tier, which dropped from 11,517 to 1,775, but also at the intermediate tier, where the administrative units termed “*rayons*” shrunk from 488 to 136.<sup>28</sup> According to the Association of Ukrainian Cities and the Ukrainian Association of District

24 The geographical regions have been listed according to the United Nations’ system of classification of European countries. Reference used: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>  
 Layout inspired by the following source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03003930.2018.1530660?needAccess=true>, p. 2ff

25 For more information, see: <https://soteuudistus.fi/en/-/1271139/government-proposal-for-health-and-social-services-reform-and-related-legislation-proceeds-to-parliament>

26 For more information on the establishment of new counties in connection with health reforms, see Part 3.A page 53

27 Territorial communities

28 For more information, see PLATFORMA’s publication: <https://platforma-dev.eu/fr/new-publications-decentralisation-and-local-public-administration-reform-in-georgia-moldova-and-ukraine/>

and Regional Councils, the district councils lost all their competences following the 2020 territorial reform.<sup>29</sup>

## Regional governments

Based on the responses to the questionnaire, 27 of the countries surveyed have a regional tier of governance.<sup>30</sup> Over the past decade, there has been no change in the number of regional tiers in 24 of these countries.

In two countries however, the number of regions greatly decreased: in France (decrease of -33%) and in Norway (-42%). In the case of Norway, decentralisation and government reforms were prompted by the goal of cutting costs, as well as to adapt services to citizens' needs and improve democratic accountability. In Malta, a regional tier of government was created in 2021.

Western Europe		Northern Europe		Eastern Europe		Southern Europe	
France	-33%	Norway	-42%	Czech Republic	0%	Albania	0%
Austria	0%	Latvia	0%	Georgia	0%	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0%
Germany	0%	Finland	0%	Moldova	0%	Croatia	0%
Belgium	0%	United Kingdom	0%	Poland	0%	Greece	0%
		Denmark	0%	Romania	0%	Israel	0%
		Sweden	0%	Slovakia	0%	Italy	0%
				Ukraine	0%	Malta	100%
						Portugal	0%
						Serbia	0%
						Spain	0%

**Table 1.3 – Changes in the number of regional governments between 2012 and 2021**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion, the territorial reforms that have taken place within the past decade have been implemented predominantly at the local tier, followed by changes occurring at the regional tier, with only few changes happening at the intermediate tier. These findings are in line with the data and statistics from earlier studies carried out by the OECD<sup>32</sup> and UCLG<sup>33</sup> at the global level that highlighted similar decentralisation tendencies. These developments have

29 Decision of the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine (assembly) on formation of rayons (July 17, 2020)

30 The twenty-seven countries are: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom

31 The geographical regions have been listed according to the United Nations' system of classification of European countries. Reference used: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>  
 Layout inspired by the following source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03003930.2018.1530660?needAccess=true>, p. 2ff

32 OECD, *Making Decentralisation Work, A Handbook for Policy-makers*, <https://www.oecd.org/regional/making-decentralisation-work-g2g9faa7-en.htm>

33 UCLG, Dialogue for the post COVID-19 era, [https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/decalogue\\_for\\_the\\_post\\_covid-19\\_era](https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/decalogue_for_the_post_covid-19_era)

oftentimes led to increased municipal autonomy, strengthening the link between citizens and local decision-making bodies.

To some extent, these reorganisations can be traced back to the last economic and financial crisis in 2008, which spurred a major push towards cost savings in the provision of public services, as fragmented municipal services were often seen as an obstacle to achieving greater cost efficiency. This desire for more cost effectiveness at the municipal tier may have accelerated the pace towards intermunicipal cooperation and hastened the rising role of regions. Later in the study, we will assess how and to what extent these changes have influenced the number and/or types of local and regional governments (LRGs).

## B. Reforms of local and regional competences, powers and responsibilities

This study will now delve deeper into the exact nature of the governance reforms that have taken place within the past ten years. The reforms resulting in changes to the numbers of LRGs have been broken down according to the type of restructuring involved and their impact on LRGs' powers and responsibilities so that their specific particularities can be explored further in the following sections.

### Types of reforms

Governance reforms that have brought about changes in the number of LRGs can be either voluntary or compulsory reforms. In addition, territorial reforms can be carried out at once, straightaway, or as a gradual process taking effect over several years. Decentralisation can often be introduced alongside other complementary territorial processes, such as regionalisation, which has often been used as a means to reduce municipal fragmentation.

For instance, in 2014, territorial and administrative reforms in Albania arose from the implementation of a 2014 law,<sup>34</sup> the objective of which was to reduce fragmentation of local government and to promote decentralisation. This led to the abolition of communes as well as a reduction in the number of municipalities from 373 to 61. This outcome followed the earlier establishment of 12 regions, which resulted in the creation of new territorial entities within a relatively short time span.

As stated previously, territorial reforms can be carried out on a voluntary or compulsory basis. This survey looked at the extent to which changes were the result of an official governance reform or whether they grew more organically out of a desire for greater intermunicipal cooperation. The data obtained from CEMR's associations tend to indicate that in 30 countries<sup>35</sup>, territorial (and other) reforms were implemented in response to official national government reforms (in addition to voluntary processes).

It may be that mandatory territorial reforms are used as a means of instituting changes to respond to evolving demographic or political needs. For instance, in Iceland, compulsory intermunicipal cooperation was used to introduce progressive services aimed at assisting people with disabilities in municipalities with fewer than 8,000 inhabitants.<sup>36</sup> In Italy, legislation was introduced in 2014 that required municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants to join intermunicipal cooperation structures.<sup>37</sup> In France, since 2015, all

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34 Law No. 115/2014 on Administrative-Territorial Division of the Local Government Units in the Republic of Albania

35 Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom

36 2011 revision of the Icelandic Local Government Act

37 Italian legislation No. 56/2014 of 7 April 2014, which led to the restructuring of the country's territorial organisation

municipalities are required to be associated with a larger intermunicipal cooperation structure.<sup>38</sup>

When governance reforms are introduced, it is important to consider such reforms by way of a thorough and multi-dimensional approach, not discounting the territorial, political and economic ramifications, not to mention all the citizens impacted by the changes. In the case of official or “mandatory” reforms, there is always the risk of encountering failure or disappointing outcomes, particularly when the aims and/or desired outcome of the changes handed down are not clear or ones universally shared by all the actors concerned.

For example, in Sweden, an attempt was made in 2017 to introduce significant reform that would have reduced the number of regions from 21 to 6, however despite extensive debate the proposal could never move forward. In Slovenia, the Ministry of the Interior proposed a territorial reform in 2013 that would have reduced the number of municipalities from 212 to 122. However, since the proposals were put forward without prior consultation of the municipalities and their representative organisations, they encountered strong opposition and were subsequently abandoned.

In their responses, CEMR’s associations also provided examples of territorial restructuring carried out in recent years that grew more organically, in tandem with voluntary mergers and/or as a result of increased cooperation between municipalities or regions, i.e. the amalgamation of public services to create larger intermunicipal entities. There have also been cases where territorial reforms were encouraged, rather than introduced as part of official measures. Other times, the LRGs involved in these voluntary mergers have also received financial incentives to mitigate the changes that accompany their expanded remit and responsibilities.

In Iceland for example, the most recent territorial reform caused the number of municipalities to drop from 74 to 69. Local governments then voluntarily decided to merge in order to resolve the issue of the fragmented delivery of public services, increase sources of funding for smaller municipalities and to strengthen the municipal administration.

Mergers in Luxembourg have also resulted in fewer municipalities. These mergers were decided on a voluntary basis through referendums held beforehand in the municipalities concerned. The central government supported this development financially. The Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities (SYVICOL) provided support for these mergers by sharing knowledge and experiences.

In the Netherlands, the voluntary merging of municipalities has been an ongoing trend since 2012. In Germany, municipal mergers in the states newly created between 1995 and 2005 explained a cut of 38% in municipalities. This process of merging municipalities is still underway and LRGs have been strongly encouraged to favour the path of intermunicipal cooperation.

In France, the intermunicipal cooperation movement that has arisen over the past two decades has progressed even further in recent years with ever more competences being transferred

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38 French legislation No. 2015-991, known as the “NOTRe” law. See this interesting article on France’s intermunicipal structures (in French only): <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/38665-lintercommunalite-une-constante-des-reformes-territoriales>

away from local authorities towards the intermunicipal cooperation units. Alongside this tendency, a parallel movement of merging municipalities has popped up, leading to a drop of 1,735 in the number of municipalities (from 36,700 in 2012 to 34,965 in 2021).

In 2013, Spain passed an act to regulate such mergers between local authorities, even providing a set of incentives to spur on these amalgamations. In Ukraine, the years from 2015 to 2019 witnessed a period of voluntary consolidations of communities. Even though strictly voluntary, mechanisms were used to promote this regrouping of territorial communities and the result was the consolidation of more than 4,700 “communities” and the establishment of 980 new “Amalgamated Territorial Communities”.

Sometimes, change came about as an unintended consequence of reforms not specifically aimed at any kind of overhaul in the public administration. This shows how territorial reforms can be triggered as part of broader political or economic reforms. In Denmark, where a reform was introduced in 2018 to improve support services for business development, provides a good example of this. As a result of the reform, this led to a change in the structure of LRGs as the responsibility for business promotion activities was then transferred from the regional to the local tier.

There are many factors that determine whether territorial reforms will in the end achieve their intended outcomes. With their introduction, a new clear delineation of responsibilities between the different tiers of government needs to be agreed upon. This is even more essential in the case of shared competences between different tiers of government that are affected by the territorial reforms. Effective dialogue is critical to the success of territorial reforms and roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

It is also important to anticipate, based on local needs, in what ways territorial reforms may affect the efficient delivery of services. Even efforts to implement territorial reforms as a cost-cutting exercise can unleash other problems, such as confusion as to which administrative unit is responsible for delivering a service, or a sudden lack of accountability that leads to poor service delivery.

A number of tools are available to assist with and support efficient decentralisation reforms. For instance, by using the Council of Europe’s toolkits, described in detail in **Box 02** below, LRGs can ensure their readiness to carry out territorial reforms and foster the conditions necessary for effective change.

**Box 02: How to ensure successful efficient territorial reform – Support and Advice in the Council of Europe’s Toolkits**

Ensuring good governance is a key part of the Council of Europe’s (CoE) work, and this includes providing support to local, regional and national authorities as they go about reforming their public administrations and local government. The Council of Europe’s Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform<sup>39</sup> has thus developed toolkits and guidelines on democratic reforms based on the principles of good governance in order to promote public authorities’ effective governance and improve public service delivery.

39 Centre of Expertise for Good Governance webpage, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/centre-of-expertise>

The CoE developed the European Label of Governance Excellence, ELoGE,<sup>40</sup> making it possible to assess a local authority's progress according to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, which include Openness and Transparency, Rule of Law, Sustainability and Long-term Orientation and Accountability. With this label, LRGs have a benchmark (using a questionnaire provided to citizens) and can gauge their adherence to the 12 principles as well as the willingness of citizens to enact territorial reforms.

With regard to territorial mergers, the CoE put together 12 recommendations<sup>41</sup> to guide LRGs and compel them to provide specifics laying out their planned reform strategy to guarantee its effectiveness; justifying the need for reform is the first key point. Other important tasks consist of ensuring political support and consulting existing municipalities on potential changes. These recommendations also detail steps to follow for successful territorial amalgamation, including how to assess progress and determine what transitional provisions need to be dealt with beforehand.

Intermunicipal cooperation (IMC) is another topic studied by the Council of Europe<sup>42</sup>. It concluded that, to successfully carry out intermunicipal reform, LRGs should:

- Understand the concept of IMC and its different facets: IMC varies greatly according to the country; it can consist of informal coordination networks or function according to more formal arrangements through agreements and contracts that establish legal entities
- Create an IMC-friendly environment by tackling obstacles and addressing possible objections, e.g. responding to any ignorance or apprehensions felt by local councils, citizens and central governments regarding the actual exercise of IMC
- Plan phases and steps to follow for the implementation of IMC to ensure a robust framework for action
- Choose the appropriate legal form, an important strategic decision for the future of the IMC being devised. The Council of Europe describes five possible forms: Non-formal, Contract-based, Private law entity, Single or multi-purpose public entity and Integrated territorial public entity
- Determine the finances of the new structure and define its areas of responsibility
- Address accountability issues, respect for democracy and the rules of good governance

These are all key metrics that need to be assessed and should be prerequisites for the implementation of any new intermunicipal structure.

## **Local shift in social and health competences in many countries**

In addition to any territorial reforms that led to changes in the number of regional and local government units, CEMR's members were asked to indicate whether these territorial reforms had also resulted in changes to the competences and/or responsibilities of LRGs.

40 European Label of Governance Excellence Benchmarking, <https://rm.coe.int/1680746d9f>

41 Territorial reforms in Europe: Does size matter?, <https://rm.coe.int/territorial-reforms-in-europe-does-size-matter-territorial-amalgamation/168076cf16>

42 Toolkit Manual Inter-Municipal Cooperation, <https://rm.coe.int/1680746ec3>

The survey responses highlighted the fact that many of the reforms did indeed affect the remit and responsibilities of local and regional governments, altering or strengthening them, even in the cases where there had been no actual change in the number of LRGs.

The vast majority of survey respondents believed that their territorial reforms did produce an impact,<sup>43</sup> with only five<sup>44</sup> answering that the reforms had had no impact on the local and regional competences in the area concerned.

Responsibility for social and healthcare provision holds an important place amongst local and regional governments' missions. Moreover, insights from CEMR's associations seem to underscore how efforts to improve social and healthcare provision have even propelled territorial reforms forward at times and led to greater decentralisation in several countries. As a result, many municipal governments have undergone modifications to their powers and responsibilities in the field of social services.

For example, in the Netherlands, it was decided in 2015 to decentralise the provision of social and health services to municipalities, which entailed entrusting greater responsibilities to local authorities in the areas of childcare, elderly care, mental healthcare and employment. It should be noted however that, in the Netherlands, public health is viewed as a shared responsibility between the national government, municipalities and the private sector.

In Portugal, since 2018, a wide range of new competences have been devolved from the central government to the local governments, including powers over education, health, and social matters. This transfer process is expected to be concluded by the end of 2022.

### **Recent decentralisation strategies**

From the data provided by several of CEMR's non-EU members, the most recent decentralisation strategies are to be found in non-EU member states. Territorial reforms in those countries have been for the most part driven by the desire for greater decentralisation. The aim is twofold: to foster democratisation and a balanced economic development whilst increasing the responsibilities and resources that are delegated to the governments closest to citizens.

In Georgia, a clear roadmap has been put in place for the implementation of a new decentralisation strategy for the 2020-2025 period that targets political, administrative and financial decentralisation.

In Albania, the introduction of the 2015-2020 Intersectoral Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Governance and a new 2015 law on local self-government are signature elements of the country's moves towards more decentralised public service provision.

In Moldova, major efforts were undertaken from 2012 to 2016 to implement the National Decentralisation Strategy, the goal of which was to introduce major decentralisation reforms. However, processes have slowed significantly in recent years and are fragmented.

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43 Thirty-two countries

44 Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia (with three N/A answers: Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania)

In Scotland, the Scottish national association (COSLA) reported that there had been no significant change in terms of the number of local authorities but that three laws were passed by the Scottish Parliament (in 2015, 2018 and 2021) designed to empower infra-municipal local communities.

### Increased governance-in-partnership

Another recent development in territorial reforms that has been apparent from the accounts of a majority of CEMR's members, a total of 29 out of the 40 responding countries, has been the steps in the direction of increased or enhanced governance-in-partnership (**Figure 02**).

Survey responses revealed that, for associations in nine countries,<sup>45</sup> the reforms undertaken had resulted in enhanced collaboration between different tiers of government, but not necessarily according to a discernible pattern of more or less centralisation or decentralisation. Territorial reforms of this nature are often motivated solely by the objective of cost-savings.

Eight other CEMR associations<sup>46</sup> indicated however that the reforms had indeed resulted in greater decentralisation. Furthermore, associations in 12 different countries<sup>47</sup> reported that the reforms had led both towards greater collaboration between tiers of government and more decentralisation of competences.

Two countries stood out as the exception to the latter, with an increase in centralisation following territorial reforms: Austria and Latvia. It should be pointed out however that, in Austria, the reform in question, the "*Gemeindestrukturreform*", led to greater centralisation only in the region of Steiermark, which resulted in a decrease in the number of administrative subdivisions.

In the case of Latvia, the content of the reform, and thus its exact impact, currently remains unclear and is dependent on the outcome of discussions regarding new legislation on local self-government, ongoing at the time of preparation of this study.<sup>48</sup>

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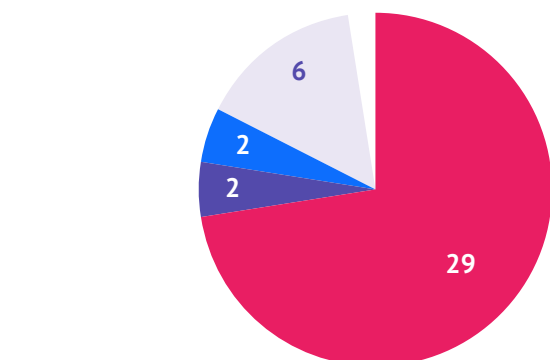
45 Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain

46 Associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Finland, Malta, Montenegro, Romania, Sweden, Turkey

47 Albania, Belgium, France, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Ukraine, United Kingdom

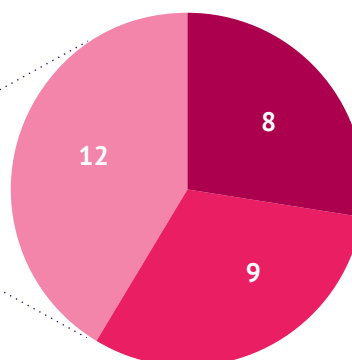
48 The Latvian Association has voiced concerns regarding the nature of the changes being proposed. It fears a weakening of local government administrative infrastructures and a deterioration in the quality of public services, particularly in the case of the new amalgamated municipal hubs as the socio-economic situations of these centres are poor with few financial resources of their own.

### Impact of reforms on administrative structure



- Increasingly centralised
- Multiple impacts
- Not applicable
- Towards Governance-in-partnership

### Governance-in-partnership



- Towards more decentralisation
- Towards more collaboration between tiers of governments
- Towards greater collaboration and decentralisation

**Figure 02: Impact of reforms on administrative structure**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR

### Motivations for the territorial reforms

The reasons cited for territorial reforms vary from country to country. They are most often prompted by political, administrative or fiscal reasons or to rationalise operations. Nonetheless, for the majority of survey respondents, the most common driving rationale for undertaking territorial reforms was to take subsidiarity issues into greater account,<sup>49</sup> with cost-cutting and cost efficiency considerations.<sup>50</sup>

It was possible to tick more than one reason. Associations in nine countries<sup>51</sup> indicated that reforms transpired out of efforts to improve democratic [accountability](#). In seven countries, associations<sup>52</sup> cited the hope for more innovation.

In the cases of Latvia and Austria (the two countries where territorial reforms were said to have resulted in greater centralisation), the reasons given for the change were tied to cost-cutting efforts.

In Iceland, it was noted that the initial aim of reforms was to improve public services, but it was observed that these changes have thus far not resulted in lower costs.

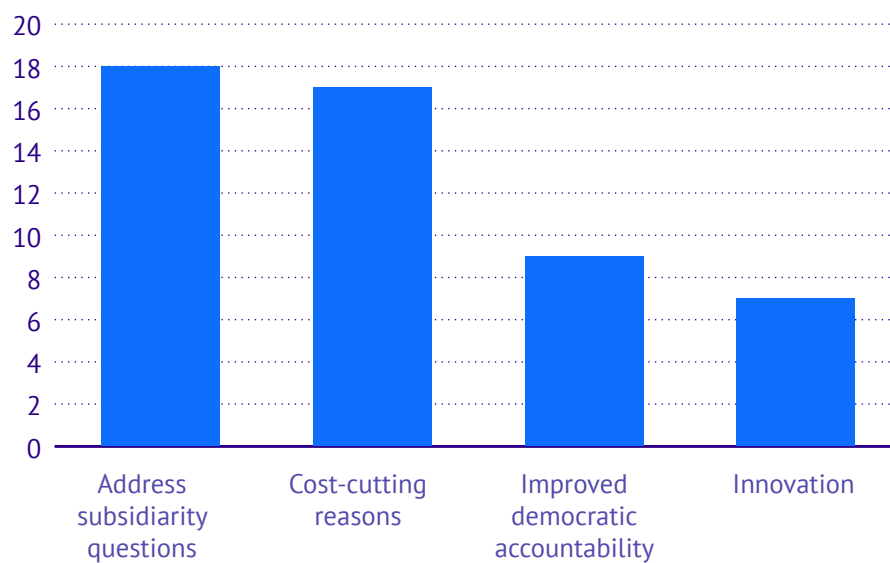
In the case of Denmark, the reform objectives were to simplify and improve public service support for business development. In Sweden, the reasons cited for the reforms were to strengthen and boost the legitimacy of regional self-government and to improve coordination between the tiers of government.

49 Seventeen countries: Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Israel, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom

50 Seventeen countries: Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom (LGA-England and WLGA-Wales)

51 Albania, Belgium, Finland, Georgia, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Ukraine, United Kingdom

52 Malta, Norway, Portugal, Ukraine, United Kingdom



**Figure 03: Reasons for territorial reforms**

*Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR*

## C. Local and regional finances: state allocation vs. taxation

The impact of public administration and territorial reforms are not limited solely to the number of governmental units existing at the regional or local tier. The changes that ensue may also significantly alter the nature of local and regional governments' finances, depending on the territorial reforms' intended objectives. In the case of territorial reforms aimed at advancing decentralisation processes and thereby modifying subnational governments' remit and responsibilities, it is crucial that thought be given to their funding. This should either be through the transfer of additional funds or the mobilisation of own resources through taxation. This can support fiscal decentralisation, i.e. the delegation of spending and revenue responsibilities from central governments to lower tiers of government, enabling LRGs to efficiently take on their new additional tasks.

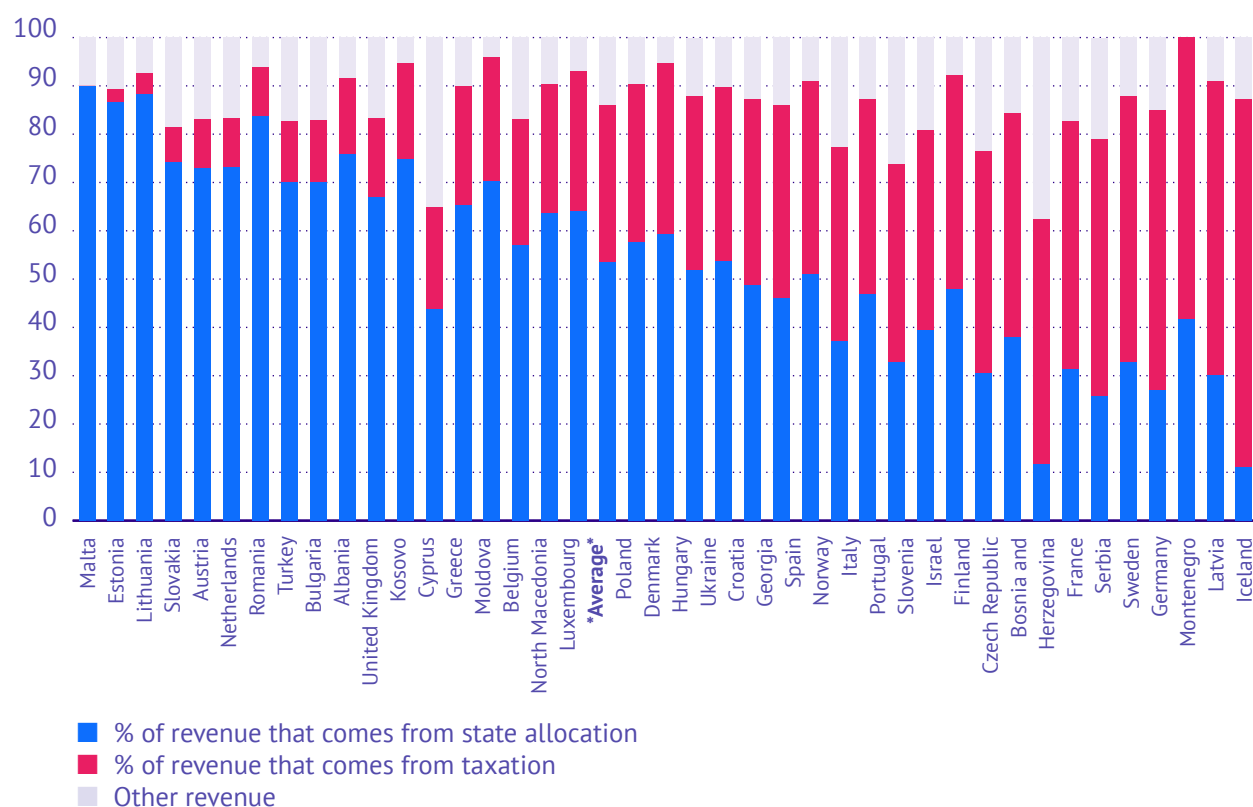
Over the past decade, many CEMR members have witnessed numerous changes to the public financial framework aimed at improving the powers of municipal and regional councils. These reforms have also had the effect of increasing local financial autonomy. Examples provided by our associations include: Bulgaria (reform in 2019), Moldova (reform in 2019), Portugal (reforms in 2013 and 2018), Slovakia (2020-2024: Real Estate tax reform) and Serbia (2020: Amendments to the Law on Property Taxes and the Law on Tax Procedure and Tax Administration).

As prescribed in the European Charter of Local Self-Government, Article 9 – Financial resources of local authorities: “*Local authorities shall be entitled, within national economic policy, to adequate financial resources of their own, of which they may dispose freely within the framework of their powers*”. The third paragraph of this Article clearly stipulates that “[*At least part*] of the financial resources of local authorities shall derive from local taxes and charges of which, within the limits of statute, they have the power to determine the rate”.

Local financial autonomy is therefore an important dimension of local autonomy and local governance. Regrettably, responses to our survey comparing LRG revenue sources, namely fiscal taxation or state allocations, revealed that, in the countries under study, state allocations from central governments in Europe still constitute, on average, 71.7% of the revenues of LRGs. Revenues from taxation accounted for only an average of 15.3% of LRG funding sources<sup>53</sup> (see **Figure 4**).

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53 Data source: OECD, 2017



**Figure 04 – Local and regional government revenue: share of state allocation and subnational taxation**

Source: World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment | SNGWOFI<sup>54</sup>

54 SNG World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment : <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/>

## **D. The central role of national associations in territorial reforms**

Given CEMR's unique membership profile of national associations of territorial governments, it was interesting to explore whether any national associations were involved in territorial reforms and whether they played a role in shaping national discussions on this issue. As expected, the nature and extent of involvement varied widely across CEMR's member associations. Broadly speaking, national associations did play a role in both the early preparatory and planning stages (proposal of ideas, drafting plans, etc.) as well as in the later stages (e.g. promoting the implementation of territorial reforms among local government units).

Regardless of whether their position is officially recognised by a country's legal provision or framework,<sup>55</sup> national associations are essential players in advancing developments related to territorial and public administration reforms. The following section explores the role played by national associations in supporting governance-in-partnership in their country, maximising and adapting tools designed to foster territorial transformation, but developed at European level, to the specific needs of their country. National associations can also play a vital role in boosting efforts towards the modernisation of democracy in their country.

### **A key link in the chain of governance**

Several examples provided by CEMR's members highlight the vital role played by national associations in ensuring effective partnership arrangements. Their contribution adds value to the functioning of governance and provides critical support at the subnational government level.

In Georgia for example, the National Association of Local Governments (NALAG) has played a pivotal role in the decentralisation process, which will gradually implement reforms devolving powers over the next two years. NALAG is one of only two institutions, the other being the Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia (MRDI), which have an official role in advancing the reform processes.

There are cases, such as that of the Croatian County Association (CCA), where the national associations fulfil an important coordination function between the central government and the subnational level. CCA was a key intermediary and advocate for the interests of Croatian counties in discussions with the central government during the preparation and coordination phase of their territorial reform. Similarly, in Portugal, the National Association of Municipalities (ANMP) negotiated with the central government and reached a consensus on all sectoral legal texts, thus ensuring coherence regarding the decentralisation taking place all across various sectors of the public administration.

In Latvia, the Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) played an important role in securing the place and contribution of the views of territorial governments in

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<sup>55</sup> For more detailed information, see CEMR's study on national associations of LRGs: [https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR\\_study\\_association\\_local\\_government\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_study_association_local_government_EN.pdf)

talks with the national level. Additional details are provided in the next section about the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The national associations can truly excel in their role as an essential partner in discussions with central governments, as can be seen in the case of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), which represents towns and municipalities in Serbia. They are viewed as governmental partners for the preparation of strategy, policy and the implementation of legislation. At the same time, SCTM always advocates for the needs of its members according to the results of its consultative and analytical work. It also carries out various capacity-building activities with LRGs, such as providing training.

## **The European Charter of Local Self-Government**

The European Charter of Local Self-Government<sup>56</sup> (the European Charter) is a legally binding instrument that was adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE). Its aim is to guarantee the political, administrative and financial independence of local governments. Several associations have taken inspiration from the European Charter to initiate territorial reforms at the national level.

The European Charter has often proven very helpful in ensuring that LRG associations are given a role in national discussions. The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) could capitalise on the European Charter, citing the provisions of Article 5, to fully participate in all talks and discussions about territorial reform at every stage. LALRG's efforts went so far as to influence the opinion of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and enabled the Latvian Association to successfully participate in discussions with Ministers and in the Constitutional Court, prior to parliamentary readings.

In Scotland, the European Charter of Local Self-Government was transposed in March 2020 by an Act of the Scottish Parliament, making Scotland the only United Kingdom jurisdiction with detailed legal protections on the right of local self-government.

These examples highlight the capacity of national associations to stand up for the correct application of the European Charter and for the interests of LRGs in governance reforms.

## **Revitalising local democracy**

National associations often play a pivotal role in efforts to modernise democracy, while also upholding the rights and interests of subnational governments, ensuring that these are not overlooked in the process of advancing territorial reforms.

The proactive role of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) provides a good example of how national associations can act as a catalyst for action and change. In August 2020, NAMRB took the initiative of relaunching the Council for Decentralisation of State Governance, whose work had been interrupted for a period of over four years. At its first meeting, the decision was taken to update the Strategy for Decentralisation of the State Governance 2016-2025<sup>57</sup> and develop a roadmap for its

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/european-charter-of-local-self-government?desktop=true>

<sup>57</sup> Strategy for Decentralisation of the State Governance 2016-2025, NAMRB [http://self.government.bg/decentralization\\_counsel/strategy/?mid=6](http://self.government.bg/decentralization_counsel/strategy/?mid=6) - select your language next to the search button

implementation from 2021-2025. A working group was established to prepare the draft texts and NAMRB's main proposals were included in the drafts.

Many other examples can be found of associations that support and facilitate the modernisation of democracy, including recent cases in the United Kingdom. Over the last four years, Scotland's national association, COSLA, has been carrying out a Local Governance Review with the Scottish Government. This has been an extensive exercise involving both tiers of government, as well as academia and civic groups. Yet, the collaboration has highlighted the clear desire for a reinvigorated modern democracy across Scotland that can tackle such issues as reducing inequalities and redistributing power and resources within the UK governance system. Successfully passing this legislation would give Scotland, for the first time, the power to legally exercise the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

In 2021, the purpose of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act was to reform electoral arrangements for local governments and promote public participation in local democracy. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) played an active role in the development of this new legislation with elected members and senior officers from across Welsh local authorities involved in high-level engagement with the Welsh Government throughout the process of developing the Act. A number of different working groups were held to ensure that the legislation was developed and designed with input from local government.

These instances provided by CEMR's members demonstrate the variety of roles played by national associations in shaping both territorial reforms and their outcomes, and in advancing democracy in their countries.

## Part 2: Local Public Healthcare Responsibilities

Healthcare is an essential public service and its provision has undergone substantial changes in recent years. Decision-making in healthcare often tends to be the prerogative of central governments, given their role in ensuring that health services are delivered efficiently and equitably across territories. Nonetheless, decentralisation is also a fundamental characteristic of many healthcare systems, given the key role played by LRGs with respect to the inputs and outputs from the health sector, not to mention their capacity to closely monitor actual delivery of healthcare services.

The next section of this study analyses local and regional governments' powers and responsibilities specifically in the field of health, using primary data shared by CEMR's members. This data provides an in-depth look at LRGs' responsibilities which, due to the differing structures of health systems across Europe, vary enormously from country to country. What's more, the current reality of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it possible to gain important insights, through the experiences of regional and local governments, into how an unparalleled health emergency is being managed across Europe.

This analysis includes a review of local competences relating to health care, including details regarding a number of health tasks and whether they fall under the planning and /or implementation level. Recent reforms and trends in the domain of health and their implications for local powers and finances are discussed as well.

## A. Mapping local and regional health tasks by country

The public health sector varies widely across Europe and includes the management of a vast array of individual services. The aim of this part of the study is not only to look more closely at what public health provision means in concrete terms at the local and regional tier, but also to gain insight into the individual functions, responsibilities and tasks of LRGs in the health domain.

Box 03 is a list of 21 functions which might fall under the remit and responsibilities of LRGs.<sup>58</sup> To determine this, CEMR's members were asked to state, with respect to each function, whether the local and regional tier was responsible for taking decisions only regarding its planning, only regarding its implementation, for both its planning and implementation or whether the situation was more complex.

### Box 03: List of 21 healthcare tasks

- **Policy development and / or enforcement legislation:** Are LRGs involved in the policy development process? Are local and regional inputs taken into account?
- **Hospital care:** Are LRGs responsible for ensuring hospital care?
- **Hospital infrastructure:** Are LRGs responsible for the maintenance of hospital infrastructure?
- **Managing healthcare facilities:** Are LRGs responsible for health centres?
- **Primary Care:** Do LRGs organise day-to-day healthcare, with healthcare providers as the first contact and principal point of continuing care for patients within a healthcare system?
- **Secondary care and specialist treatment:** Are LRGs responsible for providing specialised doctors, and organising secondary care health centres?
- **Social welfare service and benefits related to health care:** Are LRGs responsible for providing assistance to individuals and families in need?
- **Licensing and monitoring of the medicines market:** Do LRGs issue licenses and monitor the medicines market?
- **Recruitment of healthcare personnel:** Are LRGs responsible for the recruitment of healthcare personnel?
- **Health promotion and prevention service:** Do LRGs engage and empower individuals and communities to choose healthy behaviours, and make changes that reduce the risk of developing diseases?
- **School health service:** Do LRGs organise school health services that are aimed at improving the health and well-being of children and in some cases of whole families?
- **Maternity and child health care:** Do LRGs organise health services for pregnant women during pregnancy, delivery and after-care delivery?
- **Youth health care:** Do LRGs organise healthcare services for young people, specifically tailored to their specific needs?

58 For more information on the 21 functions, please refer to the Methodology, page 11

- **Nursing care, care for the elderly, care homes:** Are LRGs responsible for the fulfilment of the special needs and requirements that are unique to senior citizens?
- **Palliative care:** Are LRGs responsible for optimising quality of life support for people suffering from long or complex illnesses in view of relieving the symptoms and stress caused by the illness?
- **Mental well-being:** Are LRGs responsible for ensuring mental care, and/or engaging to improve mental well-being or to reduce mental illness?
- **Medical screenings:** Do LRGs organise medical screenings in order to provide health check-ups and reduce the spread of diseases?
- **Emergency care:** Are LRGs responsible for acting as the first point of contact for emergencies?
- **Rehabilitation and occupational care:** Do LRGs organise a system of rehabilitation and support to help reintegrate injured workers back into their workplace?
- **Pharmaceutical care:** Are LRGs responsible for organising medicine supplies to improve patients' quality of life?
- **COVID-vaccinations:** Are LRGs responsible for the organisation of the vaccination campaigns, centres, or management?

Note that in the on-line version the following words are underlined. This underlining needs to be removed:

- Patients (under point 5)
- Healthcare system (under pt 5)
- Diseases (under point 10)
- Senior citizens (point 14)

To identify the nature and importance of the role played by LRGs with respect to health functions, we have sorted these tasks according to how often they were mentioned in the responses provided to CEMR's questionnaire.

From our analysis of the data, LRGs do exercise significant powers and responsibilities with regard to both the planning and implementation of 7 of the 21 key functions. Topping the list is the **provision of social welfare services** (function #7). In fact, in 25 countries,<sup>59</sup> providing these services is the responsibility of the local or regional governments.

**General health promotion and prevention service** (#10) was the next most frequently cited function. LRGs hold powers and responsibilities for the planning and implementation of these services in 19 countries. LRGs also play a prominent role in the provision of **nursing care, care for the elderly and the provision of care homes** (function #14), both at the planning and implementation level. Other important functions at the subnational level include the planning and implementation of school health services (function #11), primary care (function #5), and youth health care (function #13).

<sup>59</sup> Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom (WLGA – Wales)

Although we have seen that LRGs are actively responsible for both the planning and implementation of these functions, there are other areas where the importance of their role revolves more around implementation (service provision), whereas the planning is entrusted to the central government. Examples of such functions include the provision, maintenance, and management of health centres and the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations. In certain countries, with other functions, the reverse is true, with LRGs solely being in charge of the planning phase. Examples include the cases of Austria (recruitment of health personnel), Bulgaria (COVID-19 vaccination centres), Czech Republic (palliative care, which is primarily the responsibility of regions and non-profit organisations), Serbia (maternity and child healthcare) and Slovenia (managing healthcare facilities/provision of health centres). With respect to the latter, Slovenian municipalities set up health centres (*zdravstveni dom*), provide infrastructure, and have representatives on these entities' boards/councils but are not involved in their day-to-day operations.

In France, LRGs are responsible for managing healthcare facilities (function #4). The French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AFCCRE) viewed this as a means for LRGs to tackle concerns such as the potential shortage of medical care in rural areas and in suburbs. In these cases, LRGs have leeway to provide financial support to encourage doctors to set up their practices in these areas or to support the construction of multidisciplinary medical facilities and public health centres.

The data showed that, in five countries,<sup>60</sup> none of the 21 health functions identified fell within LRGs' remit of responsibilities. Moreover, there are some functions that are rarely implemented or planned at the LRG level, and even some that are never entrusted to LRGs at any stage. This essentially concerns the licensing and monitoring of the medicines market (function #8), secondary care and specialist treatment (function #6), medical screenings (function #17) and pharmaceutical care (function #20).

A quantification of the functions polled is given in **Table 2**. The table clearly shows that decision-making powers for a large number of health functions remain firmly in the hands of the central government in many respondent countries.

The table also highlights the fact that a large proportion of CEMR's countries implement less than a dozen functions.

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60 Albania, Israel, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia. There was no response for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Greece.

COUNTRY function	"1. Policy development and / or Enforcement legislation"	2. Hospital care	3. Hospital infrastructure	4. Managing healthcare facilities / Provide health centres	5. Primary Care	6. Secondary care and specialist treatment	7. Social welfare services and benefits	8. Licensing and monitoring of the medicines market	9. Recruitment of health personnel	10. General Health promotion and prevention service	11. School health services	12. Maternity and child health care	13. Youth health care	14. Nursing care, care for elderly, care homes	15. Palliative care	16. Mental well-being	17. Medical screenings	18. Emergency care	19. Rehabilitation and occupational care	20. Pharmaceutical care	21. Covid-19 Vaccinations
Albania	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Austria	3	3	3	2	5	5	3	5	1	3	2	3	3	3	5	4	2	3	5	2	3
Belgium	2	5	5	2	5	5	3	5	5	2	5	5	5	2	5	2	2	4	5	5	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	3	2	2	2	5	2	5	5	2	2	2	2	5	2	2	5	2	5	5	5	1
Croatia	3	2	2	2	3	5	2	5	3	3	3	5	3	2	5	5	5	3	5	5	2
Cyprus	5	5	5	2	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	2	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Czech Republic	2	2	3	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	5	2	5	3	1	4	5	3	4	4	2
Denmark	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Estonia	5	5	3	3	4	5	3	5	4	3	3	3	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	4
Finland	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
France	2	5	5	2	5	5	2	5	5	2	2	2	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	2
Georgia	5	5	5	4	5	5	2	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	5
Germany	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	5	5	3	5	5	2
Greece	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	5	5	5
Iceland	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Israel	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Italy	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Kosovo	5	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	2	5	2	5	5	2	2	5	2	2
Latvia	5	2	2	2	4	4	3	5	2	4	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2
Lithuania	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	3	3	5	3
Luxemburg	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2
Malta	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Moldova	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Montenegro	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Netherlands	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	3	3	3	5	3	5	5	5	5	3
North Macedonia	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Norway	5	5	5	3	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	3	3	5	3
Poland	2	4	1	1	4	4	3	5	2	3	4	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	4	2	2

COUNTRY function	"1. Policy development and / or Enforcement legislation"	2. Hospital care	3. Hospital infrastructure	4. Managing healthcare facilities / Provide health centres	5. Primary Care	6. Secondary care and specialist treatment	7. Social welfare services and benefits	8. Licensing and monitoring of the medicines market	9. Recruitment of health personnel	10. General Health promotion and prevention service	11. School health services	12. Maternity and child health care	13. Youth health care	14. Nursing care, care for elderly, care homes	15. Palliative care	16. Mental well-being	17. Medical screenings	18. Emergency care	19. Rehabilitation and occupational care	20. Pharmaceutical care	21. Covid-19 Vaccinations
Portugal	2	5	5	2	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2
Romania	2	3	3	3	5	5	3	5	5	2	5	2	2	3	2	2	5	2	3	2	2
Serbia	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	5	1	5	3	3	3	1	2	5	5	2
Slovakia	1	2	5	2	5	5	3	4	2	2	5	5	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	5	5
Slovenia	5	5	5	1	3	5	3	5	4	3	2	2	4	5	5	2	2	2	2	3	2
Spain	1	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	1
Sweden	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Turkey	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	3	5	3	3	5	5
Ukraine	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	3
UK-LGA	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	3	5	3
UK-WLGA	4	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	4	3	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	5	3	5	4
UK-COSLA	3	2	5	2	2	5	2	5	2	3	5	5	5	2	2	2	5	5	2	2	3

1= Planning only

2= Implementation only

3= Both

4= More complicated

5= No competences for LRG

0= No response

**Table 02 – Exercise of responsibilities for the 21 health functions by LRGs at the planning and implementation level**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR

## B. The necessary role of national associations in the health system

All of CEMR's national associations indicated that they performed, to a greater or lesser degree, an intermediary function in supporting the effective management of their public health systems.

The survey responses highlighted their **active role in discussions and negotiations with the central government and other tiers of government**. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) represents all Dutch municipalities in negotiations with the national ministries with powers over social and health services provided by municipalities to their residents even if, in terms of delivery, many of these services are delivered by private or semi-private companies. The system in the Netherlands is known to be quite unique. In Hungary, the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ) takes part in discussions with the government on all issues that concern the day-to-day operations of local governments in the area of healthcare. This is also the case in Malta where the national association, the Local Councils' Association (LCA), performs a facilitator role between the central and local governments, which is also similar to role of the national Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (ZELS), which too acts as a coordinator between the central and local governments.

In Spain, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) created a network of "healthy cities",<sup>61</sup> which federates more than 250 local governments, supports the exchange of good practices and prepares guides and manuals. Working with the Ministry for Health, this network promotes citizens' well-being and a safe local health system.

In Kosovo, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) has been granted an exclusive mandate to represent municipalities in dialogues with the central government and, through its executive board, it has become directly involved in developing the national health system. In Norway, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) acts as a contact point and coordinator for the entire local government sector, the parliament, the government, and the directorates. As a result, it has become a one-stop shop providing expert knowledge and information on critical aspects relating to local health services and local social contexts (in each municipality), as well as a source for shared digital tools (contact tracing, etc.).

The national associations in countries operating under a federal system also play a key role in negotiations relating to public health matters between the central and regional tiers. In Germany, the national associations are consulted and active in the national legislative consultation process and this involvement extends to legislation concerning the health sector as well. Furthermore, they act as a liaison between the municipal and the federal tiers. In Belgium, the associations of LRGs advocate for their members' interests in discussions with the other tiers of government on public health matters.

In Latvia, the national association LALRG performs a key service by preventing health service delivery from being overly concentrated at one tier of government. Since 1997, regional governments have had wide-ranging responsibilities for the financing and organisation of

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61 <http://recs.es/>

primary and secondary health care; whereas for local governments, the ability to ensure accessibility to health care services and health promotion is highly dependent on questions of budget and local priorities.

In Bulgaria, representatives of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) participate in national councils, working groups and other bodies tasked with preparing regulatory amendments for the healthcare sector. Bulgaria's central government is authorised to provide subsidies to hospital care institutions established by municipalities, for their activities in difficult to access and/or remote areas. What's more, these subsidies are ultimately determined based on proposals put forth by NAMRB.

In Serbia, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)'s work has led to the signing of a co-operation agreement between the Ministry of Health and public health institutes. The Serbian association SCTM was also able to take part in the drafting of the Law on Public Health and the National Public Health Strategy. In Slovenia, the national association has been active in monitoring health legislation in view of shaping future legislative changes through its proposals.

National associations have also proven to be vital actors when it comes to **negotiating the overall healthcare budget**, but also in securing extra funding when needed due to emergencies, as has been the case with the COVID-19 crisis.

Every year, Local Government Denmark (LGDK), representing the municipal tier and Danish Regions (KL – representing the regional one) negotiate the complete economic framework for both the local and regional sectors with the central government. In addition, both LGDK and KL act as the employer organisations for each of their respective tiers, in collective agreements.

In Finland, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA), which represents local and regional governments, advocates for local self-government and the modernisation of municipal services on behalf of all Finnish municipalities. During COVID-19, AFLRA ensured that municipalities received extra funding for the additional work caused by the pandemic.

The national association in Croatia reported that the pandemic had in fact reinforced the importance of cooperation between the national government and LRGs. One of the best examples of this is that the coordination between the national and local crisis headquarters managed to keep citizens informed and safe.

The Local Government Association (LGA) in England has long supported and collaborated with the councils (local tier) to help their citizens achieve the best possible outcomes across health and social care. This work has been achieved alongside partners in health and social care, including the National Health Service. During the pandemic, support was offered to Directors of Public Health and their teams, with a focus on testing, contact tracing and outbreak management.

A number of CEMR's associations highlighted their role in **supporting exchanges of information, knowledge and practice** amongst their members. In Estonia, the national Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (ELVL) has no direct role in the healthcare system but works to collect information and mediate between its members and interested

parties. Support for capacity-building efforts was also underlined as a valuable contribution of national associations to boosting national health systems. In Sweden, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) is not involved in the daily operations concerning the financing and provision of health services, but it actively assists its members, functions as a platform for cooperation between regional and local authorities and runs various types of quality improvement projects.

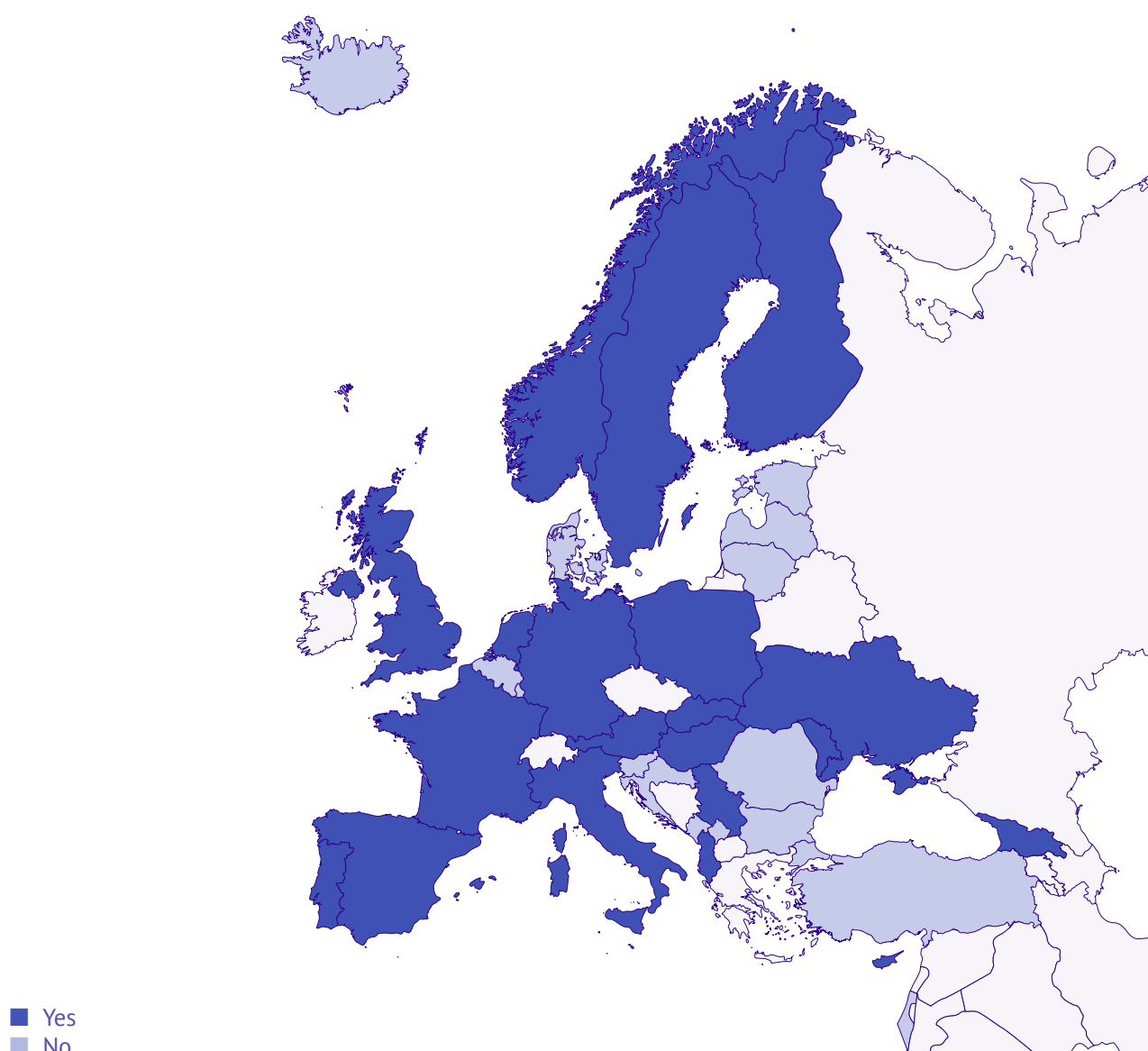
In Turkey, the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT) does not have a defined role in the area of health; it does however work to support municipalities indirectly in this domain through capacity-building projects and also assists the national government by supporting national campaigns.

## C. Trends in local and regional healthcare

This section of the study explores the major developments in health systems across Europe over the past decade based on the responses to the survey carried out amongst CEMR's associations. Other issues that were the focus of the survey, were whether or not these reforms had any effect on the competences of LRGs in the area of health. Furthermore if there were effects, whether the impact was of a decentralising or centralising nature, or whether other changes to governance arrangements were triggered.

### Health reforms since 2010

In the last decade, health systems in 22 countries have undergone a major overall reorganisation, as can be seen in **Figure 05**. Some reforms have significantly affected many governance aspects of these systems. In Austria, health reforms undertaken in 2012 and 2013 introduced a 'target-based governance' system to foster closer cooperation and increased coordination of operations between key target stakeholders as well as between different areas of care. Later in 2019, structural reforms led to mergers among the 21 existing social insurance institutions, reducing their number to only 5. Additional healthcare reforms currently underway for the 2017-2021 period aim to strengthen primary care.



**Figure 05 – Health reforms in the past 10 years in 38 CEMR countries**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR<sup>62</sup>

Other important recent developments mentioned in responses include modernisation efforts to improve the performance of health systems. In Scotland, COSLA has been working alongside the Scottish Government spearheading efforts to improve the health system through greater collaboration between tiers of government, which has also entailed collaboration with the National Public Health system and local governments. Nonetheless, concerns remain as to whether this national health and local social care integration may foster advances in centralisation, given the announcement by the Scottish Government in September 2021 that it aims to set up a new National Care Service.

The goal of increased financing for health systems has also been a major driver behind reorganisation efforts. The experience of Portugal provides a good example of this kind of cost-efficiency reform initiative. Partial privatisation of health care is also increasingly used

62 Two countries did not respond to this question: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Greece

as a means of reducing the cost of public financing and new developments, as can be seen in Slovakia, which has undergone extensive privatisation in the area of healthcare provision. This has led to a system of shared competences where responsibilities have been divided between the state, the regional governments and the private sector. In addition, lucrative medical procedures have been privatised and several health insurance companies have been established. In Poland, primary and secondary care have been largely privatised, even if such entities enjoy contracts with the National Health Fund.

It has been observed that, frequently, these reforms take place over a period of several years or that multiple reforms are often carried out one after the other. This holds true in Austria and in Finland, where social and healthcare reforms have taken on a variety of forms and date as far back as 2006. In France too, discussions on reforms to the health sector have been ongoing for many years, given the interconnection between this issue and the wider concerns about financing of the social security system. All this goes to underline that health system reform is an inherently complex process. It takes time to gain a deep understanding of the system to ensure that any changes will produce positive and desired outcomes.

### Impact of health reforms on local and regional competences, powers and responsibilities

The trend over the last few decades has been towards the **decentralisation of government responsibilities in the health domain** and, as a result a greater devolution of powers to the subnational level. So, while decision-making over health care tends to remain in the hands of the central governments, LRGs are often tasked with the delivery of health services and, therefore, inherently possess important decision-making powers over healthcare inputs and resources. CEMR members' survey responses regarding recent health reforms substantiate these observations.

A majority of respondents (17 associations),<sup>63</sup> out of the 22 countries where health sector reforms have taken place in the past decade, stated that the changes did have an impact on LRGs' tasks and responsibilities.

Only five associations<sup>64</sup> reported that the reforms had had no impact on LRGs' health-related responsibilities. The case of Moldova stands out given that, ordinarily, LRGs there have no powers or responsibilities in health care. Nevertheless, they were called upon to execute a few specific actions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking a closer look at the data, of the 17 associations who responded that health reforms affected LRGs' responsibilities, the majority stated that the changes had led to greater collaboration and/or decentralisation (13 associations).<sup>65</sup>

In France, health reforms have led to improved territorial cooperation. The 2009 "HPST" law<sup>66</sup> (*Hôpital Patient Santé Territoire*) confirmed the role of the central government in defining and

63 Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom (LGA)

64 Albania, Cyprus, Georgia, Malta, Moldova (the responses for the remaining respondents were N/A or blank)

65 Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom (LGA)

66 Law No. 2009-879 of 21 July 2009

implementing health policy and reinforced a territorial approach through the creation of a regional health agency (the 'ARS'), an authority responsible for implementing national policy at the regional tier. LRGs have the option of signing local health contracts with their ARS, the role of which is to coordinate actions developed by LRGs to ensure that they are in line with the health objectives and policy defined by the ARS for the regional tier.

In the case of the Netherlands, important healthcare reforms have resulted in both decentralisation and closer collaboration between health actors.

Undertaking health reforms with the aim of providing services that are more 'patient-focused', as highlighted by the examples from Norway and Sweden, demonstrates how health system reforms can coincide with better collaboration and/or decentralisation outcomes.

In Norway, the Care Coordination Reform set out to address three main challenges and needs: provide patients with more coordinated services, boost prevention and address the changing health needs associated with demographic changes. Key outcomes of the reform include having achieved improved coordination of care between municipalities and hospitals, strengthened primary care and public health and greater public choice.

Similarly, in Sweden, new legislation improving patient choice for outpatient care has increased the power of patients/citizens. Furthermore, this new legislation fostering greater cooperation relating to discharge from in-patient care has led to increased collaboration between municipalities and regions.

Although it is the case in Hungary and North Macedonia, the survey results provide few examples to **highlight health reforms that have resulted in greater centralisation**.

CEMR's members have confirmed however, that the responsibilities and powers of subnational governments in the domain of health continue to evolve, following the broader pattern of governance and territorial reforms underway. Although decisions on healthcare are likely to remain in the hands of the central governments, the management of public health will continue to be shaped by shared competences across different tiers of government. As demands increase for more efficient, cost effective, joined-up, patient-centric services, LRGs are increasingly likely to be delegated responsibilities and powers to implement and deliver on these health provision objectives. The nature of shared responsibilities between different tiers of government and the management of the COVID-19 crisis is explored in Part Three of this study.

## D. Local and regional healthcare spending<sup>67</sup>

In addition to comparing the involvement of subnational governments in public health management, it was also decided to explore LRG expenditure in this domain. The aim was to seek further confirmation validating the nature of LRGs' responsibilities in the field of health. This was done by first establishing a baseline in terms of subnational governments' general expenditure and then determining the amount of LRG expenditure that is allocated to public health.

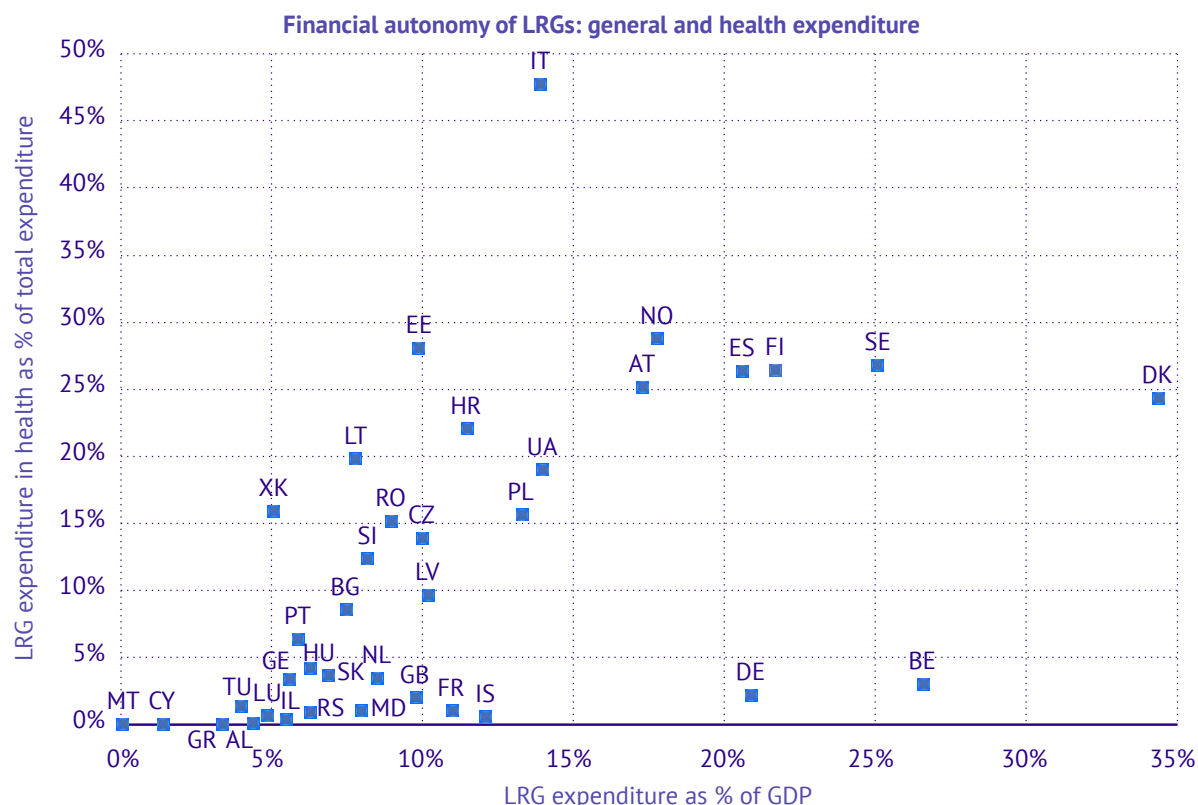
Firstly, we ranked the respondent countries based on the share of the national GDP attributable to LRG expenditure. This data was also intended to provide an indication of the degree of LRGs' "financial autonomy", i.e. the ability of LRGs to adjust subnational funding to meet local needs.<sup>68</sup> The survey found that LRGs in Denmark spend the equivalent of 34.4% of the national GDP, representing the highest value, while 0.1% represented the lowest (in Malta). The average is 11.1%.

Secondly, using the same countries, we examined LRG expenditure allocated to healthcare as a percentage of total LRG expenditure. Italian regions spend 47.7% of their total expenditure on health, the highest value; the lowest value corresponds to no spending at all on health (the case in Cyprus, Greece and Malta). The average is 11.3%.

**Figure 6** shows that in the countries where LRG expenditure only amounts to a small percentage of the national GDP, the percentage of LRG expenditure on health is also correspondingly low. Nevertheless, the following exceptions should be noted: Belgium and Germany are federal States where LRGs (*Régions* and *Länder*) have among the highest expenditure rates in Europe. However, health is not an area that is covered by these LRGs' main expenditures. The reason for this is that these health systems are centralised and therefore financed at the federal tier in the countries concerned.

<sup>67</sup> Note on methodology: we considered the infra-national governments as a whole: local and regional (and intermediate) tiers together

<sup>68</sup> Allain-Dupré, D. "Assigning responsibilities across tiers of government: Trends, challenges and guidelines for policy-makers", OECD Working papers on Fiscal federalism, No. 24 OECD Publishing Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f0944eae-en>



**Figure 06 – Local and regional government spending on healthcare**

Source: World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment | (SNGWOFI)<sup>69</sup>

Italy presents another unique case. Although LRG general expenditure is in line with the European average, local health expenditure is by far the highest in Europe. Another particularity is that the Italian health system is entirely managed by regions. This decentralisation of the health system almost makes Italy a “federal country” from the health management point of view.

#### Box 04: Healthcare in Italy: a regionalised system

The Italian health management system has been decentralised to the regional authorities; in fact, the regions enjoy unparalleled autonomy with mandates for legislative, administrative, planning, financing, delivering and monitoring functions in the health domain. Because of this high level of independence, health management and organisation can vary across the 20 regions. The central government still retains power however over certain legislative and other important functions to guarantee the equity, equality and quality of the whole system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the central government took the lead as it became evident that regions alone could not properly respond to the pandemic crisis. In addition, the crisis required the mobilisation of the national civil protection system which, in Italy, falls directly under the authority of the Presidency of the national Council of Ministers.

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/>

Funding for health is primarily tax-based (direct and indirect taxes). Part of the funding is collected nationally and then redistributed by the central level to regions. Financial revenues for the regional systems also come from the sale and/or co-payments by patients of certain services (diagnostic and specialist) and over-the-counter drugs. At the regional tier, the health system is organised into a network of Local Health Authorities (ASL – *Aziende Sanitarie Locali*) and of public and private hospitals. ASLs are public entities and are organised at the territorial level into ‘districts’ according to population.

Source: Italy’s profile in Soldi and Odone (2017)<sup>70</sup>

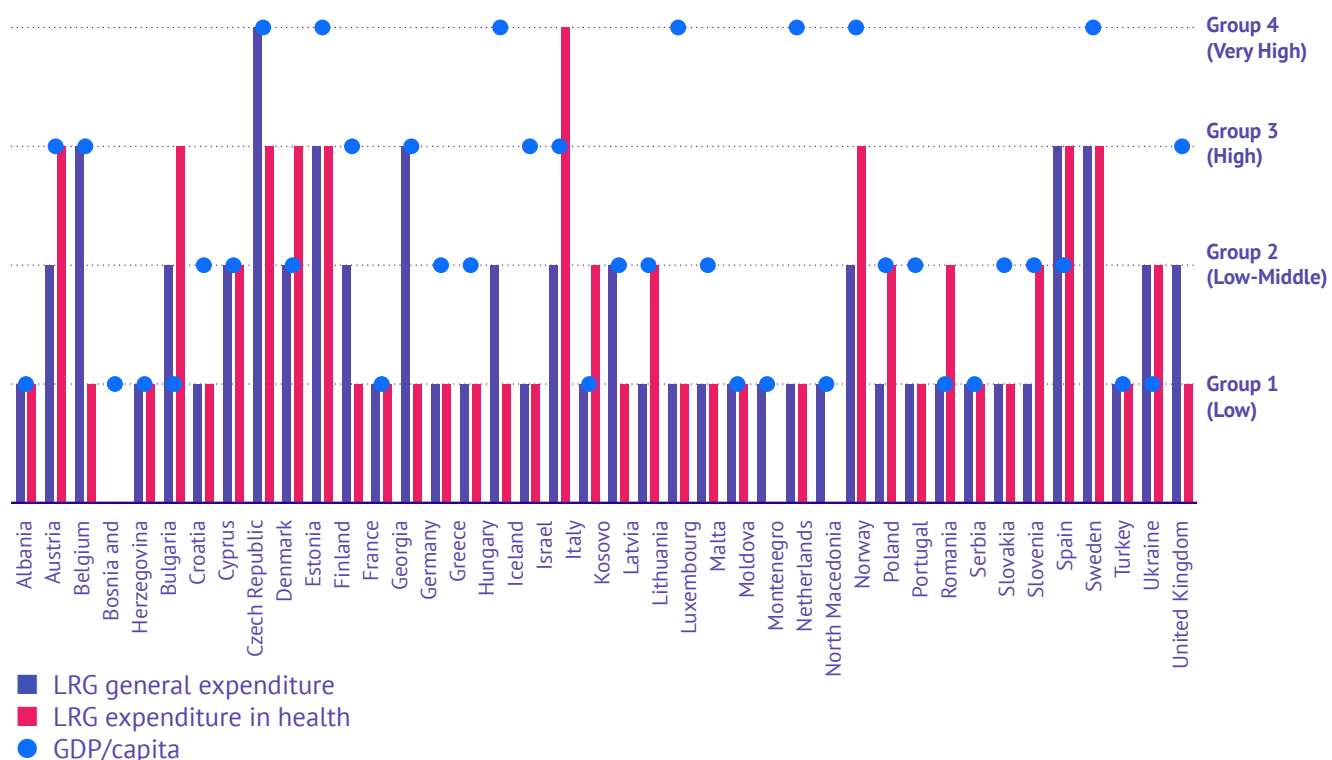
**Figure 7** presents a comparison of the survey countries according to their GDP, LRG expenditure as a percentage of GDP, and LRGs’ health expenditure.<sup>71</sup> The results show that the LRGs with the highest expenditure in terms of share of national GDP are from the higher and very high-income countries; yet, being from a high and very high-income country is not enough to guarantee that their LRGs will show a correspondingly high level of health expenditure (e.g. Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Iceland).

Also, it would appear that no simple correlation can be drawn between the level of expenditure by LRGs on public health and the size of the national GDP. Both low-income and high-income countries can have LRGs that spend sizeable amounts on their health provision.

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70 Soldi and Odone (2017) The management of health systems in the EU Member States, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/239062df-cb4b-11e7-a5d5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-114398517>

71 For more information, see the Methodology and Annex 1



**Figure 07 – Comparison of national GDP per capita, LRG general expenditure and LRG health expenditure**

Source: TERRI clusters 2021 | CEMR World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment (SNGWOFI)<sup>72</sup>

72 <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/>

## Part 3: COVID-19's Impact on Local Health Systems and Governance

As is well documented by now, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a crisis of unparalleled proportions since its onset in Europe in 2020. While all tiers of government were faced with extraordinary challenges, the heavy reliance by central governments on LRG leadership in providing support to citizens, businesses and communities apace, during an acute health and economic crisis, is undisputed. The pressure exerted by COVID-19 on health systems across the globe has been enormous, and the worsening pandemic was quick to reveal any shortcomings and weaknesses, as well as existing problems in countries' health systems. In countries all over, wide-ranging reflections are already underway on what can be done to strengthen public health systems and how to better govern-in-partnership, so as to improve preparedness for future crises.

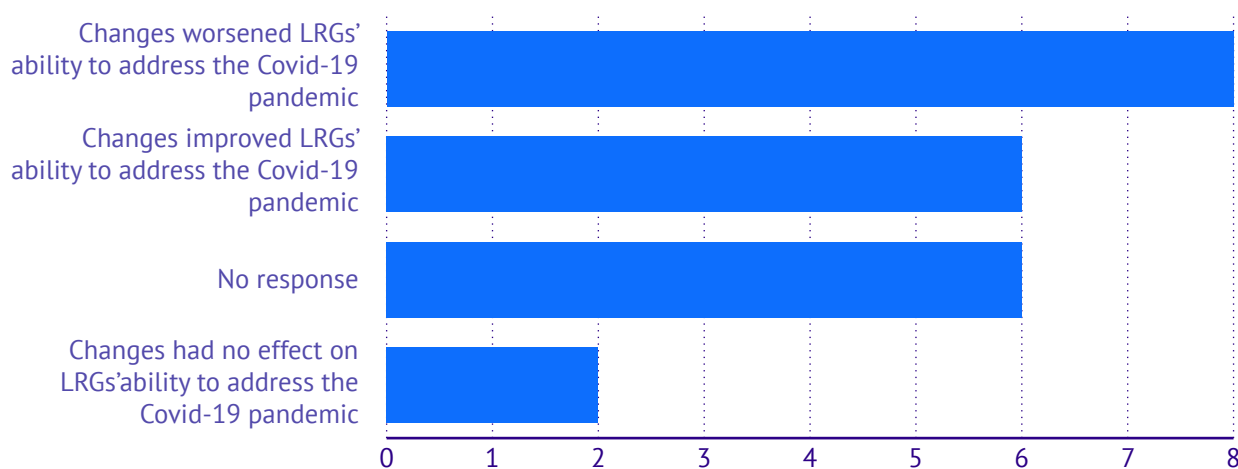
The following section focuses on whether the introduction of health reforms had any impact on LRG capacity to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The section also chronicles the different experiences of LRGs, as recounted by CEMR's national associations, in managing the crisis. It should be stressed that since the data was primarily collected during the first quarter of 2021, this information represents a snapshot in time. Given the fast-moving pace of managing such events, it is highly likely that the results presented in the following section have since evolved, but what follows seeks to document the ongoing changes faced by LRGs during the past months.

## A. Impact of health reforms on local and regional governments' pandemic preparedness

CEMR's members were asked to share their experiences regarding the degree to which recent health system reforms affected the ability of LRGs to confront the pandemic. The survey results established that there had been reforms during the period in question in 22 countries,<sup>73</sup> and associations in five countries<sup>74</sup> believed that the changes to their health systems had improved the ability of local governments to address the COVID-19 pandemic. For associations in eight countries,<sup>75</sup> the view was that health system reforms had had no effect on the ability of LRGs to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Slovakian municipalities were obliged to enter into cooperation agreements with non-public sector entities to carry out COVID-19 testing. Municipalities were presented with no other alternatives, and those that had no health competences of their own or insufficient medical staff and/or infrastructures at their disposal found themselves particularly powerless in this regard.

In the eyes of the national associations in Poland and Ukraine, it was felt that territorial reform changes had in fact worsened the capacity of local government to effectively address the pandemic.



**Figure 08 – Impact of health reforms on Local and regional governments' ability to address the COVID-19 pandemic**

*TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR*

Note that in the graph on-line, title is written '...Local and regional governments' ability..'; need to replace capital 'L' so that it should read 'local'

In Finland, it was the onset of the pandemic that triggered important changes in the domain of public health. Although there had been no major shifts in the management

<sup>73</sup> Albania, Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom

<sup>74</sup> Germany, Norway, Serbia, Spain, United Kingdom (COSLA and LGA)

<sup>75</sup> Austria, France, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia

of healthcare responsibilities in the ten previous years, this changed with the central government's proposal for a Health and Social Services reform bill at the end of 2020, which was adopted by the Parliament in June 2021. The acts stemming from this bill have progressively entered into force, with the final provision to take effect in January 2023.<sup>76</sup> For the first time, “wellbeing services counties” are being established, a development that has introduced significant changes to Finnish LRGs' healthcare roles as the authority responsible for organising health and social services and rescue services, given that these functions are being transitioned away from the local government level (municipalities) to the county government level.<sup>77</sup>

In Sweden, legislation on patient's choices in outpatient care has made it possible for Swedish residents to opt to be vaccinated in a region other than where they . According to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), other new legislation promoting collaboration at discharge from inpatient care has improved the cooperation between municipalities and regions, and thus led to better care and less contagion, especially among the elderly.

In Norway, a longstanding and systematic cooperation between hospitals (central government responsibility) and municipalities has fostered better understanding and trust between the different tiers, a very good platform for handling the various challenges arising during the crisis.

The health reforms, or the productive collaboration amongst tiers of governance, e.g. in Norway, had an impact on the management of the pandemic. But what was the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on local health systems in particular and on governance in general?

Having studied the response data on how the pandemic has been managed overall, the broad consensus is that a successful COVID-19 crisis response requires coordination both between and across governments. The information provided by CEMR's associations has provided useful insights into the management of powers and responsibilities during this time.

76 Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Ministry of the Interior (2020) *Government proposal for health and social services reform and related legislation proceeds to Parliament* <https://soteuudistus.fi/en/-/1271139/government-proposal-for-health-and-social-services-reform-and-related-legislation-proceeds-to-parliament>

77 For more information on the establishment of the new counties, see Part 1, Box 01, “Box 01 – Finland takes a local leap: counties created to tackle health” on page 19

**Box 5: Sweden – How COVID-19 accelerated the transition to local healthcare**

While healthcare responsibilities generally remained the same, the pandemic exerted substantial additional pressure on existing structures, all while causing the expansion and further development of certain services, e.g. the offering of digital health services.

Excerpt from a Swedish report by SALAR:

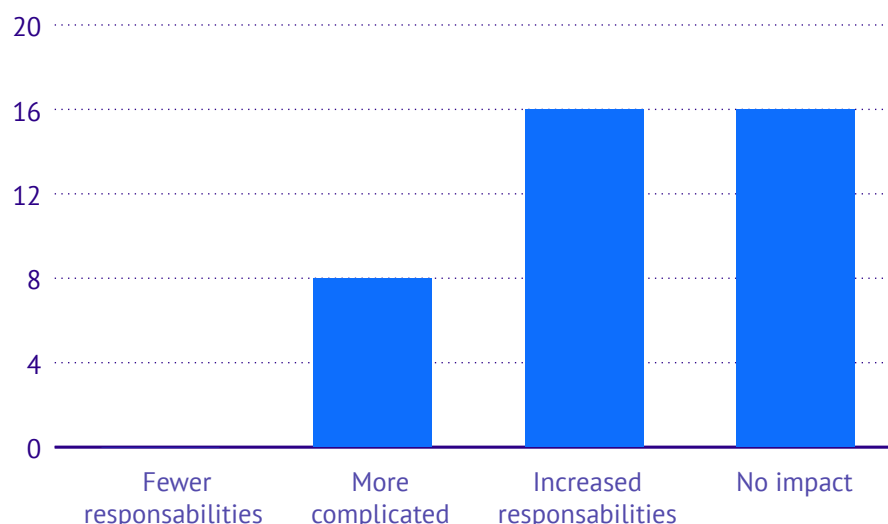
“The provision of healthcare [changed] rapidly so as to be able to care for a large number of contagious and severely ill patients and to contain transmission. The number of intensive care beds [more] than doubled, whilst at the same time planned healthcare decreased sharply, although the regions’ objective had been to maintain this service. In most regions, however, healthcare that could be postponed was moved to later dates; this applied to both operations and clinic visits. Cooperation with municipal healthcare has been developed, and part of the transition in healthcare has led to important advances. The transition to local healthcare has been given momentum. The collaboration between municipal healthcare and regional psychiatric services, in particular, has made important progress. Strategic development of services has had to be deferred to make space for everyday developments driven by the pandemic.”<sup>78</sup>

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78 An excerpt from SALAR’s “The Economy Report, October 2020: On Swedish Municipal and Regional Finances” (p. 9)

## B. Impact of COVID-19 on local and regional responsibilities in the field of public health

The chart below shows the extent to which CEMR members consider that measures undertaken to manage COVID-19 affected the responsibilities of local government in the field of public health, irrespective of the short or long term (**Figure 9**).



**Figure 09 – Impact of COVID-19 management measures on the responsibilities and tasks of local government in the area of public health**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR

As can be seen above, 16 associations<sup>79</sup> stated that LRG management of COVID-19 measures led to an officially recognised increase in their responsibilities in the area of public health. This underscores how LRGs in many countries have played a primary role in tackling the pandemic crisis on the ground.

At the opposite end, 16 associations as well<sup>80</sup> indicated that the measures to manage COVID-19 had no impact on the public health responsibilities and functions of local government. This tends to illustrate that, in those countries where LRGs have been entrusted with few responsibilities in public health and perform few health-related tasks, little has changed as a result of the crisis.

None of the national associations indicated that LRGs in their countries had lost any responsibilities in the domain of public health as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

In the case of eight countries,<sup>81</sup> the impact of COVID-19 on the public health responsibilities of LRGs was more nuanced, producing more complex outcomes. Many associations stated that, even though responsibilities had remained essentially the same, there was a significant

79 Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, UK-COSLA, UK-LGA

80 Albania, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Kosovo, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Slovenia, UK-WLGA

81 Austria, Belgium, France, Israel, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey

increase in demand for a timely rapid response to an extraordinarily challenging situation. Therefore, despite no formal outward change to internal structures, LRGs were faced with extra responsibilities or additional tasks, as pointed out by CEMR's associations in Austria, Luxembourg, Turkey, Sweden and Belgium.

Examples of additional tasks handled by LRGs included becoming actively involved in COVID-19 testing and tracing efforts as well as providing masks and supporting the vaccination rollout. In France, for instance, LRGs showed their readiness and capacity to respond to citizens' needs by offering masks at the start of the pandemic, providing free transport to support hospital staff, child care, etc. LRGs have also facilitated and supported the national test and vaccine strategy by opening vaccination centres.

In Israel, municipalities took on an active role by tracing COVID-19 cases in the cities, as well as by promoting and managing the vaccination campaigns, even when the planning function remained the responsibility of the national government. In Slovakia, the responsibility for ensuring widespread testing of the population for COVID-19 was transferred to the municipalities.

### LRG involvement in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout

The results of CEMR's survey underline how LRGs played a vital role with regard to the vaccination rollout.<sup>82</sup> Even in countries where LRGs would normally perform few health functions, LRGs proved pivotal in the efforts to administer vaccines. This was often due to LRGs' local knowledge and expertise, i.e. crucial factors in encouraging citizens from all parts of the community to get vaccinated and in running successful vaccination campaigns.

Responses to CEMR's survey indicate how LRGs in Germany, the Czech Republic and Luxembourg were involved in setting up vaccination centres (providing premises and technical staff in Luxembourg) or, in the case of the bigger municipalities in Slovenia, in providing the necessary sites for them.

In France, although administering vaccinations remains a national competence, LRGs have been providing important support, such as staff, facilities, centres or services to facilitate the access to vaccines.

There were numerous other examples of support provided by LRGs in advancing the vaccine rollout, such as providing additional staff (France, Luxembourg and Germany), organising transport for vulnerable citizens (Czech Republic, France and Estonia) or contacting target groups (Czech Republic). In some countries, LRGs' involvement went as far as the management the vaccination centres (Germany, the UK-Scotland, the Netherlands).

82 For more information, see publication by Rossella Soldi, chapter on "Vaccination progress and strategies in regions", p. 35 ff.: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/Regional%20differences%20in%20Covid-19%20response%20-%20exposure%20and%20strategy/regional%20response%20covid.pdf>

## C. Focus on COVID-19's impact on territorial governance

The following section looks at the effects of the current coronavirus pandemic on governance arrangements. During the various waves of the pandemic, national governments needed to respond quickly to events unfolding very rapidly. This unprecedented situation gave rise to changes in the nature of the relationship between central and subnational governments and shifts in responsibilities and powers extending beyond the health sector. It has since been made clear that a successful national response to the COVID-19 pandemic requires coordination within and across governments.

The responses provided by CEMR's associations help in discerning what trends and developments have arisen to address the crisis and their impacts on the remit of responsibilities and powers of LRGs. This collective information sheds valuable light on the degree to which LRGs were called upon to exercise additional or fewer tasks during the first wave of the pandemic, and whether or not they were financially compensated.

### General comparative trends

There has been much discussion<sup>83</sup> about whether federal or unitary states have come through the crisis better and which mechanisms have been the most effective in managing crisis situations. Considering LRGs' experiences as a whole as well as the accounts of CEMR's associations, it is difficult to state with certainty whether the patterns clearly lean towards specific countries becoming more decentralised or recentralised in their response to the pandemic.<sup>84</sup> However, one important finding revealed by the pandemic that is incontrovertible, is the need to coordinate any crisis response and actions between all tiers of government, to share information in a transparent manner and to organise the sharing of responsibilities as early as possible.

Tales from the past year underline how, early on during the pandemic, governments adopted a very top-down approach, resorting to centralised and rigidly controlled policymaking, in managing the crisis. Over time, as the situation evolved, LRGs were granted more opportunities to exercise decision-making, relying instead on a more place-specific, locally-led approach.

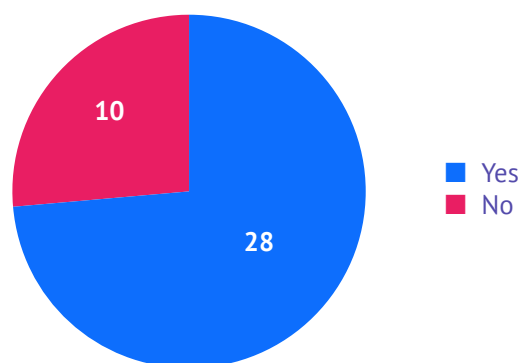
The results from 28 countries<sup>85</sup> show that managing the COVID-19 crisis had had a clear impact on the remit and responsibilities of LRGs, or that it had affected the relationship and

83 Read further: "Who's in charge and why? Centralisation within and between governments", <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/336279/Eurohealth-26-2-99-103-eng.pdf>; "DEMOCRATIC Governance and Covid-19 Report" CDDG (2020) 20, <https://rm.coe.int/cddg-2020-20e-final-reportdemocraticgovernancecovid19-for-publication-/1680a0beed>; "Patterns of democracy Matter in the Covid-19 Crisis: A comparison of French and German Policy Processes", <https://doi.org/10.4000/irpp.1788>

84 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/Regional%20differences%20in%20Covid-19%20response%20-%20exposure%20and%20strategy/regional%20response%20covid.pdf>

85 28 countries: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom (WLGA, COSLA, LGA)

the nature of LRGs' collaboration with the central government. In contrast, 10 countries<sup>86</sup> observed that managing the COVID-19 crisis had had no impact on the responsibilities of LRGs or had not affected the nature of their overall collaboration with the central government in their country.



**Figure 10 – Impact of COVID-19 crisis on the responsibilities of local and regional governments**

Source: TERRI Survey 2021 | CEMR

Given the need to respond swiftly, it is unsurprising that collaboration between and/or across tiers of government has been instrumental during the COVID-19 crisis. Associations in nineteen countries<sup>87</sup> responded that managing the COVID-19 crisis increased the degree of collaboration. However, associations in ten countries<sup>88</sup> also specified that the territorial structure and LRG collaboration in their country during the crisis was much more complex.

Some explained that LRGs had had to cope with several additional tasks during the crisis and that as a consequence, they were now exercising their competences at a higher level (the case in Austria). It is worth noting however that, for many countries, any additional competences were not subsequently devolved to LRGs in any official capacity. In Sweden and the Czech Republic for example, the national associations stressed that the changes simply represented a temporary emergency strengthening of LRGs.

From information supplied by CEMR's members and others, such as the OECD<sup>89</sup> and the World Health Organisation,<sup>90</sup> the countries that have been most successful in tackling the pandemic have been those able to effectively coordinate within and across tiers of government. Yet,

86 Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey. No response from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Greece.

87 Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom

88 Austria, Belgium, France, Georgia, Italy, Latvia, Moldova, Netherlands, Serbia, Slovenia

89 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government (2021), <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-and-recovery-across-levels-of-government-a2c6abaf/>

90 Strengthening the health system response to COVID-19: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/pages/strengthening-the-health-system-response-to-covid-19>

this capacity to cooperate and coordinate between various territorial tiers of government has been sorely tested. As some examples from CEMR's members will illustrate, even when productive, cooperation between different governmental tiers does not necessarily promise a smooth run right from the start.

In Belgium, for example, the national response to the crisis has been riddled with coordination problems, which have (re)ignited a debate about the future sustainability of the country's federal model. LRGs there were allocated additional tasks to combat the pandemic and were subjected to greater pressures in the exercise of their regular duties.<sup>91</sup>

In Austria, there were reports of mistakes being made and inconsistencies in the coordination between the governance tiers.<sup>92</sup>

In the early months of the pandemic, local governments in the Czech Republic did not have a representative on the Central Crisis Staff. Following repeated requests, the government finally agreed to the participation of a representative from the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO ČR), the national association, in the meetings of the Central Crisis Staff. In addition, State authorities began issuing so-called rulings, involving the imposition of new restrictions on the local and regional authorities, for example, on the gathering of persons and the requiring of testing of people in workplaces in the public sector.

In Poland, the Act of 2 March 2020 stipulates that *Voivodes* (regional tier) can issue orders that are binding for all government administration bodies acting within a "Voivodeship". In practice, this provision was used very often during the pandemic to delegate organisational and support tasks, particularly those that were supposed to be under the responsibility of the governmental administration, such as the organising of quarantine sites, providing support for the organisation of a COVID-19 vaccine administration system, setting up transport to receive vaccinations, as well as implementing organisational changes in healthcare entities (in hospitals for instance).

Associations in Romania highlighted the important steps made towards decentralisation, digitalisation and reduction of bureaucracy on account of the pandemic and also indicated that these changes would be maintained. For example, very few institutions accepted the electronic signature prior to the pandemic; now, many more readily consider it admissible.

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91 More information: <https://verfassungsblog.de/belgiums-accordion-response-to-Covid-19/>

92 More information: <http://www.forumfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AustriaCovid.pdf>

### Box 06: CDDG and OECD reviews on governance and the territorial impact of COVID-19

The European Committee on Democracy and Governance<sup>93</sup> and the OECD<sup>94</sup> both published analyses on democratic governance and COVID-19's impact on democratic and territorial governance. What were their principal conclusions?

- Their main observation is that local and regional governments played a key role as the closest tier of governance to citizens. Indeed, a place-based approach ensures democratic governance and a response adapted to local issues. Their success is the result of multilevel governance, each tier having its own powers and responsibilities.
- Both reports highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on the digitalisation and modernisation of public services; catalysing previous trends, the pandemic made these phenomena the new reality. Many services have now been digitalised and are thus more efficient and accessible to the public.
- While LRGs played an important role, states and central governments provided wide-scale support by enacting emergency legal and administrative measures encompassing healthcare emergency management, fiscal advantages or additional funding for LRGs.
- The differentiated approach to managing the pandemic has created inequalities between states or regions. To offset this imbalance, CDDG stresses the importance of having all actors of civil society participate in crisis management decisions.

In the end, the key message from the OECD and CDDG analyses is that, in times of crisis, we must look to local and regional governments to provide knowledge about the subnational concerns.

While having to respond to the pandemic and manage the crisis, countries had to contend with huge social, political and legal challenges that were suddenly unleashed all at once, without neglecting their responsibility to safeguard democracy, human rights and rule of law.

93 European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), *Democratic Governance and Covid-19* (2020), <https://rm.coe.int/cddg-2020-20e-final-reportdemocraticgovernancecovid19-for-publication-/1680a0beed>

94 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=128\\_128287-5agkkojaaa&title=The-territorial-impact-of-Covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=128_128287-5agkkojaaa&title=The-territorial-impact-of-Covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government)

### Box 07: The Council of Europe's Toolkit for respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of COVID-19<sup>95</sup>

*Since LRGs act as main partners in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are fully implicated in the process of respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights.*

The right to liberty and security may be limited “for the prevention of the spreading of infectious diseases” (Article 5 ECHR): this limitation has allowed states and local governments to take action promptly. However, it is recalled in the Council of Europe's Toolkit that respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights is still required. While derogations are possible for some of the human rights protected by the Convention,<sup>96</sup> there are still rules to follow:

- States shall inform the Secretary General
- Measures must be proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued, necessary, limited and established by law.

The CoE provides clarification regarding certain specific rights:

- The right to life, prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment cannot be subject to any derogation, even in times of public emergency such as COVID-19
- With isolation and confinement, domestic, sexual and gender-based violence increase: states must continue providing and even improve services offering support and protection to crime victims.

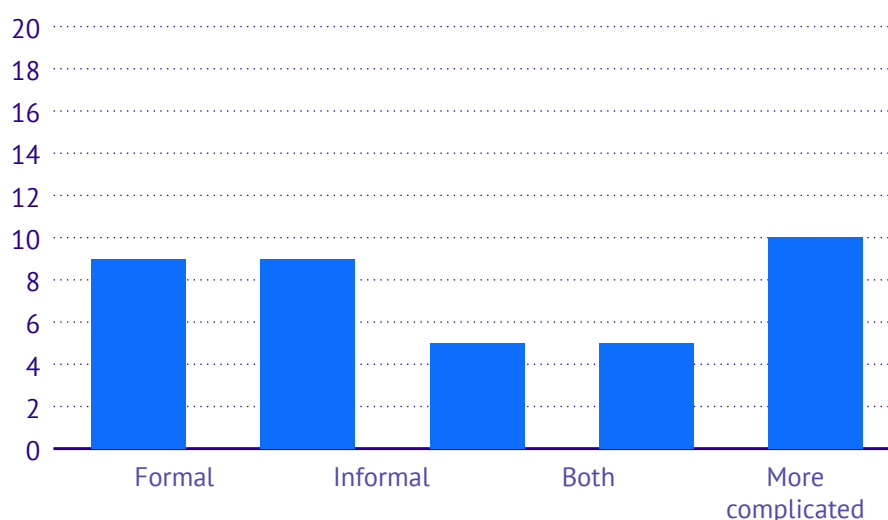
In response to the question of whether measures introduced to manage the emergency were introduced in an official or an informal way, associations in nine countries<sup>97</sup> responded that an informal approach was used (e.g. central state guidelines, LRGs taking the lead in operations, etc.) while nine associations<sup>98</sup> indicated that formal steps had been taken (e.g. legislative modification such as COVID-19 laws or State decrees, etc.). In the case of five countries (Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Ukraine), the changes occurred in response to the crisis following a combination of formal and informal approaches.

95 Respecting democracy, the rule of law and human rights in the framework of the COVID-19 sanitary crisis, <https://rm.coe.int/sg-inf-2020-11-respecting-democracy-rule-of-law-and-human-rights-in-th/16809e1f40>

96 European Convention on Human Rights, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

97 Albania, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Israel, Montenegro

98 Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, North Macedonia



**Figure 11 – Chosen approach for COVID-19 crisis' management**

Source: TERRI Report | CEMR)

#### Box 08: Adapting governance processes in Kosovo to manage the pandemic

In Kosovo, whenever local government played an active role by introducing measures to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, their own work in the municipalities was affected. Yet, all Kosovo municipalities managed to activate local crisis headquarters and set up field operational groups. There was also a continuous, comprehensive and efficient coordination between municipalities and the central government on the measures to be undertaken. To help its businesses, municipalities discharged those that use municipal property from paying municipal taxes and eased the associated administrative burdens.

However, the pandemic forced municipalities to adjourn meetings with citizens and their regular consultations on priorities affecting the communities. Yet, while these dialogues with citizens were halted, other forms of communication emerged. Some mayors sought innovative ways to connect to citizens, becoming highly active on social media. They used social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, to notify their citizens of new pandemic measures and plans and to amplify their calls to respect anti-COVID-19 measures such as social distancing.

### Local and regional finances under pressure

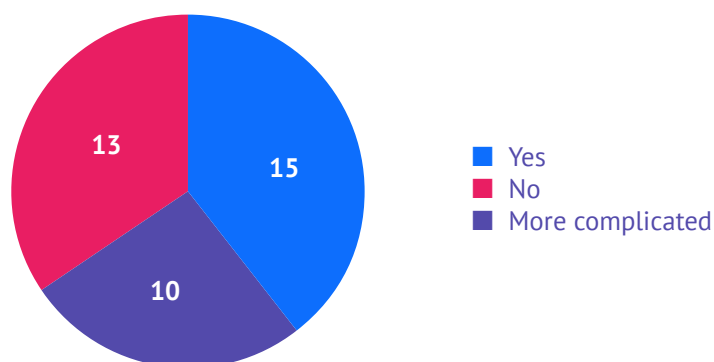
The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the unique frontline position of subnational governments, which were faced with the challenge of continuing to deliver essential services while also having to develop new services and approaches, both in the field of health and beyond, often taking the lead rather than waiting to be led by the central government. In its research into the financial implications for LRGs during this extraordinary period, CEMR's national associations proved once again to be a rich source of valuable primary information.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> For further details, see CEMR's Study on Covid-19's impact on local and regional finances: [https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/200629\\_Analysis\\_survey\\_COVID\\_local\\_finances\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/200629_Analysis_survey_COVID_local_finances_EN.pdf)

At the start of the crisis, many LRGs faced the problem of insufficient financial resources and, in particular, municipalities often found themselves shouldering added financial responsibilities without the necessary means, due to the unforeseen fall in local tax revenues resulting from fiscal and other relief measures. However, many confirmed that this problem was later rectified.<sup>100</sup>

According to CEMR's members, LRGs' experiences paint a mixed picture, depending on whether or not they received transfers from the state to compensate for losses owing to reduced local tax income, as well as to help fund additional expenditures.

Associations in 15 countries<sup>101</sup> reported that LRGs received such financial transfers to reimburse their additional expenditures. However, for ten other countries (Cyprus, Italy, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine), no additional resources were received by their subnational governments for carrying out extra tasks.



**Figure 12 – Additional financial resources provided by central governments to LRGs for COVID-19 crisis management**

Source: TERRI Survey (CEMR)

It should be noted however that, in the majority of cases, the situation concerning financial transfers from the central government to the subnational tier often proved to be more complicated. This was reported to be the case by associations in 13 countries<sup>102</sup> and was primarily as a result of the differing forms of support provided by central governments to LRGs during the crisis.

In many countries, existing rules were relaxed, giving LRGs more financial leeway. In Portugal, for example, approval was given to relax the balanced budget and spending rules. What's more, the authorisation process for short-term loans was simplified and recourse to medium and long-term borrowing was facilitated, suspending the need for prior agreement from municipal assemblies. In addition, local authorities could request an advance or early transfers of their portion of state taxes. In France, measures were also adopted to lessen the

100 European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), *Democratic Governance and Covid-19* (2020), <https://rm.coe.int/cddg-2020-20e-final-reportdemocraticgovernancecovid19-for-publication-/1680a0beed>

101 Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Lithuania, Malta, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom

102 Albania, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey

burden of the accounting and budgetary framework pertaining to expenses directly related to the COVID-19 crisis<sup>103</sup>.

These developments mirror similar actions at the EU level where the EU's Council of Ministers activated a special clause of the EU's Stability and Growth Pact. This clause allowed EU national governments to override the usual fiscal rules employed to keep budgetary spending below certain agreed ceilings.

Several associations noted that although financial assistance was made available, it was not fully received by the LRGs or only applied in limited cases. CEMR's Croatian and Slovakian associations clarified that the financial assistance from their central government was either insufficient to cover the financial costs borne by the municipalities or, when it was sufficient, that decisions were taken on an arbitrary basis, depending on the municipality concerned.

CEMR's Austrian associations also emphasised that the reimbursements did not cover the pandemic costs incurred (testing, contact tracing, vaccinations, tests for employees, home office, etc.).

Additional financial resources were provided to local authorities across Wales (United Kingdom), enabling them to play a central role in supporting their communities, citizens and businesses in managing the impact of the crisis. It also led to a much closer working relationship with the Welsh Government, with better and more regular dialogue and engagement, leading to improved outcomes.

For some countries, it was noted that the central government announced financial compensations for the subnational level, but only at a much later stage of the pandemic. This was the experience of LRGs in the Czech Republic, when the state decided to financially compensate the municipalities for the loss of income occurred in connection with COVID-19 measures and the arising economic crisis, but much later and only because new tax changes were introduced.

In France, the French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AFCCRE) reported that some measures were adopted by the government in order to offset local expenses related to COVID-19; for instance, the repayment of 50% of mask expenses at the start of the pandemic. Measures were also adopted to lighten the accounting and budgetary framework of direct COVID-19-related expenses for the subnational level.

The Spanish Association of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) pointed out that, from the outset, there had been excellent coordination between the Ministry of Internal Issues, FEMP and the regional tier (*Comunidades Autónomas*). This made it easy to align actions between all government tiers to respond to safety concerns and help support citizens during the lockdown. This example illustrates good practices that emerged from the management of the pandemic.

103 Statement of EU Ministers of Finance on the Stability and Growth Pact in light of the COVID-19 crisis, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/23/statement-of-eu-ministers-of-finance-on-the-stability-and-growth-pact-in-light-of-the-covid-19-crisis/pdf>

Even in those countries where the COVID-19 crisis has had no impact on the remit and on the responsibilities of LRGs, there have been instances where the central government provided financial help to LRGs.

This occurred in Turkey where the central government did not delegate any extra tasks or responsibilities to municipalities nor did it provide any additional financing for COVID-19-related management. Nonetheless, the central government deferred some of the municipal payments due and temporarily waived other payments in order to support the local tier's delivery of services during the COVID-19 crisis.

In Germany, the division of responsibilities and tasks did not change specifically in response to the pandemic at the subnational level, but the existing workload for municipalities increased and became more varied. For example, the Public Health Service for the counties and county-free cities, such as Berlin, began providing support to the Länder for COVID-19 vaccine planning, organisation and implementation by setting up vaccination centres. To mitigate the counties and county-free cities' costs, the federal government covered accommodation expenses for jobseekers and provided compensation for the shortfall in income from trade taxes. The Federal Health Ministry also established the "Pact for the public health service" in support of the local tier.<sup>104</sup>

There are key lessons to be learned about how governance arrangements have functioned in response to the pandemic and comparing the experiences of different countries has been illuminating in this respect. As previously mentioned, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this topic has already been widely studied, in particular by the Council of Europe and the OECD.<sup>105</sup>

#### **Box 09: EU's Recovery and Resilience Plans: LRGs push for strong involvement in their preparation and implementation**

In order to tackle the unprecedented situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission has put into place a major crisis response package, NextGenerationEU (NGEU), with the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) instrument as its centrepiece.<sup>106</sup> Under the RRF, the EU will borrow from the financial markets to provide grants and loans to EU member states who must first submit Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs), outlining a five-year reform and investment strategy to stimulate their recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>107</sup>

LRGs are pivotal in ensuring that any funding hits the right targets needed to boost local and regional regeneration, which is why they have sought to be meaningfully involved, both in the shaping of the RRP and in their implementation. As of autumn 2021, the time of completion of this study, most EU member states had submitted their RRP to

104 Adopted on 29 September 2020

105 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) The territorial Impact of Covid-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government (2020), [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=128\\_128287-5agkkojaa&title=The-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=128_128287-5agkkojaa&title=The-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government)

106 Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2021), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/241/oj>

107 European Commission (2021) Recovery and Resilience Facility. Webpage [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en)

the European Commission and were awaiting formal approval of their plans. However, many CEMR associations had already expressed concerns about the lack of subnational consultation while the RRP were being prepared, but also with regard to governance and RRP ownership issues and their capacity to attain green and sustainable outcomes. This trepidation was confirmed in a joint CEMR/Committee of the Regions study published in January 2021.<sup>108</sup> Effective governance arrangements are fundamental to the RRP being able to deliver desired outcomes. Only time will tell whether the EU's aspirations will be realised and the exact part that will be played in this by LRGs.

There is no doubt that effective coordination and collaboration were pivotal in responding to the pandemic, particularly when underpinned by a clear assignment of responsibilities between the different tiers of government. It is also evident that adequate funding to support or compensate LRGs for the additional responsibilities and tasks they undertook to ensure delivery of targeted and tailored responses strongly influenced the effectiveness of LRG efforts as well. These elements, rather than the degree of centralisation or decentralisation, were key determinants in attaining effective governance outcomes during the first year of the pandemic.

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108 Committee of the Regions/CEMR (2021) <https://webapi2016.cor.europa.eu/v1/documents/cor-2021-00131-00-00-tcd-tra-en.docx/pdf>

## Conclusion

The responsibility for providing efficient, high-quality, adapted public services rarely falls to a single tier of government. Local and regional governments across Europe are entrusted with a large number of complex roles and responsibilities that require strong, well-developed governance arrangements for well-designed and appropriate policies, which are effectively implemented on the ground. Recent experiences managing the COVID-19 crisis demonstrated the importance of robust governance arrangements in delivering responses tailored to diverse territorial contexts. This survey by CEMR of its members depicts how territorial reforms and decentralisation trends have led to the reconfiguration of relationships between central and subnational governments. These territorial developments have been the subject of numerous studies<sup>109</sup> and the responses from CEMR's members have now confirmed these shifts. Despite the progress achieved through territorial reforms in devolving more competences and responsibilities to the subnational tiers, these changes have not always led to a corresponding decentralisation towards the fiscal autonomy of LRGs.

As previously stipulated, the data provided by CEMR's members focused on the period from 2012 to 2021, a time when widespread territorial reforms were taking place across Europe. Although many changes were implemented at the local tier, which underwent a significant decrease in the number of municipalities, the situation remained somewhat static at the regional and intermediate tiers.

These reforms were often initiated in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, propelled by the need to achieve greater cost savings in the delivery of public services. Yet, there were other motivating factors behind the desire to reorganise territories, such as improving social and health care and procuring quality services closer to the citizens. In any case, this type of restructuring resulted in greater decentralisation and thus affected local and regional competences, responsibilities and resources. This explains in part why national associations of LRGs remain so actively engaged in any discussions concerning territorial and governance reforms. They play an indispensable role advocating for their members in discussions with national governments and help them to **adapt to territorial and governance reforms by promoting exchanges of knowledge and good practice**. National associations also perform an essential role within federal systems, negotiating with the different tiers of government on budget matters and any LRG-related legislation.

This study also concentrated on European local health systems in order to explore a specific domain in which many LRGs have been entrusted with important competences and responsibilities. In most countries, decision-making responsibilities over health and health care still fall to the central governments. However, recent shifts towards greater decentralisation have also enhanced the role of LRGs in the field of health. The

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109 For further details, read: "A comparative analysis of amalgamation reforms in selected European countries", R Steiner, C Kaiser, GT Eythórsson; Multi-Level Governance Reforms: overview of OECD Country Experiences, OECD Multi-level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272866-en>; Territorial reforms in Europe: Does size matter?: territorial Amalgamation Toolkit, Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, Council of Europe - 2017

reorganisation of health systems has been an ongoing process since the 1980s<sup>110</sup> and has been motivated not only by the need to instil more cooperation, coordination and modernisation in health care, but also to secure additional sources of financing to fund these systems. Increasingly, having a more patient-centric approach to service delivery is also growing in importance. Despite the level of complexity and variety of the different health systems across Europe, this study has shown that, in most cases, LRGs fulfilled a notable role performing implementation and planning functions, especially with regard to services touching on social care and welfare and general health promotion and prevention.

In addition, the survey revealed that, for more than two-thirds of the countries responding, the global pandemic did have an impact on LRGs' remit and responsibilities and/or affected their relationship with the central government by increasing collaboration between tiers of government. Although responses indicated that, while LRGs were attributed additional tasks because of COVID-19, in most cases this was provisional and did not result in any official devolution, even if LRGs saw their responsibilities in the domain of health temporarily increase. It is therefore still too early to draw conclusions as to the likelihood of these developments becoming more permanent. That being said, COVID-19 has undoubtedly lit the spark setting off fresh overhauls of Europe's health systems. The pandemic has both paved the way and accelerated the transition towards digitalisation in this sector, as can be seen in the important advances being made in e-health.

While there was no clear-cut answer as to whether federal or unitary states responded best to the pandemic, effective cooperation was undoubtedly vital in successfully managing the pandemic. The data from the study points to the need for proper coordination and transparency with and across government tiers to ensure the efficient functioning of local health services. Having access to place-based knowledge and expertise as well as recourse to adequate financial support for LRGs were both critical factors in delivering timely and effective responses to the pandemic.

Apart from the health crisis we are facing, many challenges lie ahead, including those related to climate change, biodiversity losses, security of energy supplies, demographic change, citizens' health and well-being, to name just a few. The quality of our governance arrangements is essential and determinant in producing effective policy outcomes. The post-pandemic recovery calls for effective governance-in-partnership, within and across tiers of governments, as we work to develop equitable, sustainable, green economies, adaptable to future shocks and crises. Yet, it is only by working together, with all tiers of government in a position to fully contribute through autonomous decision-making, that we will be able to achieve the 2030 agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in the context of the Paris Agreement. Steering the world towards a sustainable and resilient future requires bold leadership. For Europe to successfully transform in this direction, LRGs need to be further empowered and thus able to invest in the future of their territories.

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110 "Decentralization in Health Care: Strategies and Outcomes", R Saltman, V Bankauskaite and K Vrangbaek, European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies Series



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# REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

Albania is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*bashkia*) – the basic tier of local self-government, and the regions (*Qarku*) – the second tier of local self-government.

CEMR in Albania – Albanian Association of Municipalities  
([www.aam.org.al](http://www.aam.org.al))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	373	61	61
Regional	0	12	12

## Local governments

### 61 municipalities (*bashkia*)

The **municipal council** (*Këshilli Bashkiak*) is the local authority's deliberative body. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. The municipal council, among others, is responsible for the approval of the local budget, the usufruct right of its property, the organisation and supervision of the municipal administration, and local taxes.

The **mayor** (*Kryetari*) is the head of the executive body of the municipality and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year mandate. The mayor of the municipality is entitled to three consecutive mandates and is also a member of the regional council. He/she approves and implements municipal council decisions, guarantees that all the local authority's obligations are met, and represents the commune or municipality vis-à-vis third parties. The mayor has the right to ask the municipal council to reconsider decisions, should they be deemed harmful to the community's interest.

**Municipalities** can be subdivided into several **administrative units** that have traditional, historic, economic and social ties. The territory of the administrative units of a municipality, their name, and their creation shall be set forth in a law. The administrative units are comprised of towns (*qytete*) and/or villages (*fshatra*).

Towns may be divided into smaller units called quarters or neighborhoods (*lagje*). As a rule, a quarter can be established in territories with over 20,000 residents. A town's division into quarters and its territory shall be approved upon a decision of the municipal council.

**The administrative unit** (*njësia administrative*) is headed by the administrator (*administrator*). The administrator is appointed and discharged at the mayor's discretion and reports to him. The structure and the staff of the administrative unit is a part of the municipal administration.

## Competences

The functions and competences of municipalities in Albania are divided in two: the **exclusive functions** and the **functions and powers delegated** by the central government institutions.

### Exclusive functions

- Budget
- Public Infrastructure and Services
- Welfare Service
- Culture, Sports and Recreational Services
- Environmental Protection
- Agriculture
- Rural Development
- Public Forests and meadows
- Nature and Biodiversity
- Local Economic Development
- Public defence and security
- Pre-school education

### Delegated Functions and Powers

- Pre-university education
- Public health
- Social affairs
- Protection of the environment



Capital: Tirana



Geographical size:  
28,748 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
2,829,741



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Lek (ALL)

## Regional governments

### 12 regions (*Qarku*)

The regions have their own functions which are developing and implementing regional policies and ensuring their harmonisation with the national policies, as well as any other exclusive function granted by law.

Each region may perform any functions that are assigned to it by one or more municipalities within the region, according to an agreement reached between the parties. Each region shall perform those functions delegated to it by the central government.



# AUSTRIA

Austria is a federal state composed of municipalities (*Gemeinden*) and regions (*Länder*).

CEMR in Austria - Austrian Association of Municipalities ([www.gemeindebund.at](http://www.gemeindebund.at)) and Austrian Association of Cities and Towns ([www.staedtebund.gv.at](http://www.staedtebund.gv.at))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	2,357	2,100	2,095
Regional	9	9	9

## Local governments

2,095 municipalities (*Gemeinden*)

The **municipal council** (*Gemeinderat*) is the deliberative body of the municipality. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage based on the proportional representation system for a five or six-year term depending on the region. The municipal council appoints the members of the local administrative board.

The **local administrative board** (*Gemeindevorstand*) is the municipality's executive body. It is composed of the mayor, his deputies and members from the different political parties, proportionally to the electoral results of each party.

The **mayor** (*Bürgermeister*) is elected either by the municipal council or by direct universal suffrage, depending on the region, although the latter method is the most common. The mayor chairs the local administrative board and the municipal council.

## Competences

- Fire protection and rescue services
- Road construction and maintenance of municipal roads
- Maintaining elementary schools and secondary schools
- Civil status books and registry office
- local construction police
- public water pipelines
- Sewerage
- Municipal housing
- Waste management
- Social welfare (partly)
- Health (partly)



Capital: Vienna



Geographical size:  
83,879 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
8,932,664 (2% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Federal state



EU Member State  
since : 1995



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament : 19



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions : 12



Currency: Euro

## Regional governments 9 regions (*Länder*)

In Austria, regions have their own constitution as well as genuine legislative power in certain areas of relevance.

The **regional parliament** (*Landtag*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five or six-year term, depending on the region. It appoints the provincial governor and government. Some of the region's legislative competencies are exclusive to the regional government while others are shared with the national parliament.

The **regional government** (*Landesregierung*) is the executive board of the region and is headed by the governor. There are two systems for the election of the regional government, depending on the region: the proportional system (almost each party is represented within the regional government) and the majority system (not all parties are represented within the regional government).

The **regional governor** (*Landeshauptmann*) is elected by the regional parliament. He/she is in charge of the external representation of the region and chairs regional government sessions.



# BELGIUM

Belgium is a federal state composed of municipalities (*gemeenten in Dutch /communes in French*), provinces (*provincies/provinces*), regions (*gewesten/regions*) and communities (*gemeenschappen/communautés*.)

**CEMR in Belgium – Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities** ([www.uvcv-vbvg.be](http://www.uvcv-vbvg.be)), **Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region** ([www.avcb-vsgb.be](http://www.avcb-vsgb.be)), **Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities**([www.vvsg.be](http://www.vvsg.be)), **Union of cities and municipalities of Wallonia** ([www.uvcw.be](http://www.uvcw.be))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	589	589	581
Intermediate	10	10	10
Regional	3	3	3

## Local governments

### 581 municipalities

The **municipal council** (*conseil communal in French and gemeenteraad in Dutch*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a six-year term (next local elections in 2024). It is the municipality's legislative body and it decides on local policy.

The **college of mayor and alderman** (*collège des bourgmestres et échevins/college van burgemeester en schepenen*) is composed of the mayor, his/her aldermen and the president of the public centre for social welfare (see below). The mayor and aldermen are elected by and from within the municipal council and also sit in the council. The college is the municipality's executive body. It implements the decisions taken by the municipal council and is in charge of the day-to-day management of the municipality.

The **mayor** (*bourgmestre/burgemeester*) chairs the college of mayor and aldermen. He or she can be nominated by the municipal council to chair it. In Flanders and in Brussels, he/she is appointed by the regional government after a nomination by the municipal council for a six-year mandate. In Wallonia, the mayor is directly elected by the population (by "earmarking": the best score on the list with the largest municipal majority), after which he/she is also appointed by the regional government. The mayor is in charge of the municipal administration and heads the municipal police.

**Note:** Each municipality has a public centre for social welfare (*CPAS in French/ OCMW in Dutch*), which has an autonomous status and which provides social integration income and the right to social assistance, as well as being in charge of social services (elderly services and care, etc.).

## Competences

- Public order
- Registry office
- Spatial and urban planning
- Housing
- Water and sanitation
- Environment
- Waste management
- Road management and mobility
- Culture, sports and youth
- Social policy
- Local economy
- Employment
- Education
- Local finance and taxation



Capital: Brussels



Geographical size:  
30,528 km²



Population:  
11,566,041



(2.6%EU)  
Vote: Compulsory



State  
Structure: Federal state



EU Member State  
since: 1957



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 21



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 12



Currency: Euro



## BELGIUM

### Intermediary governments

#### 10 provinces

The **provincial council** (*conseil provincial/ provincieraad*) is the deliberative body of the province. It is composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a six-year term, via the proportional representation system (next provincial elections in 2024).

The **provincial authority** (*députation provinciale* in French, except in Wallonia where it is called *collège provincial*, and *deputatie* in Dutch) is the province's governmental body and holds legislative, executive and judicial powers. It is also responsible for managing the province's daily administration.

The **governor of the province** (*gouverneur de la province/provinciegouverneur*) is the federal government's commissioner (public order, civil security, emergency planning) as well as the regional and community commissioner. He/she is a civil servant nominated by the regional government. The governor participates in provincial authority and council sessions during which he/she has the right to speak.

**Note:** Brussels-Capital is not a province, but a region. It does however have special competences normally allocated to provinces.

#### Competences

- Cultural infrastructures
- Social infrastructures and policies
- Environment
- Economy
- Transport
- Housing

### Regional governments

#### 3 regions (Brussels-Capital, Flanders and Wallonia)

There is no hierarchy between the federal, regional and community governments: they each have their own specific competences allocated to them by the Belgian constitution. The regions' competences are linked to the land (housing, agriculture, spatial planning, etc.), the communities' competences are more linked to the individual (education, health, culture, etc.), and the competences of the federal government are those not explicitly attributed to regions or communities by the Constitution.

The **regional parliament** (*Parlement régional ou Parlement wallon et Parlement bruxellois/ Vlaams Parlement*) is the region's legislative body. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for five years (next regional elections in 2024). The parliament holds legislative powers, votes on the regional budget and monitors the regional government's actions.

The **regional government** (*Gouvernement régional ou Gouvernement wallon/bruxellois/ Vlaamse regering*) is the executive body and is composed of regional ministers elected by the regional parliament for a five-year mandate. It is in charge of the implementation and sanctioning of orders or laws voted by the regional parliament. The regional government also has legislative power (right of initiative).

The **minister-president** (*Ministre-Président du Gouvernement régional ou Ministre-Président du Gouvernement wallon/bruxellois/Minister-president van de Vlaamse regering*) is appointed among members of the regional government for a period of five years. He/she is responsible for the coordination of policies led by the regional government, over which he/she presides.

#### Competences

- Spatial and urban planning
- Housing
- Agriculture
- Employment
- Environment
- International relations
- External trade
- Scientific research
- Energy
- Transport
- Local authorities



## BELGIUM

### Community governments

#### 3 communities (Flemish-, French- and German-speaking)

The **community parliament** (*Parlement de la Communauté française et Parlement de la Communauté germanophone/Vlaams Parlement*) is the legislative body of the community. It is composed of members elected by universal suffrage for five years (next elections in 2024). The community parliament has legislative powers, monitors the government of the community and votes the budget.

The **government of the community** (*Gouvernement de la Communauté française/germanophone/Vlaamse regering*) is the executive body composed of ministers appointed by the parliament for five years. It also has legislative powers (right of initiative).

The **minister-president** (*Ministre-Président de la Communauté française/germanophone /Minister-president van de Vlaamse regering*) is appointed for a five-year term among members of the government of the community over which he/she presides. He/she is responsible for the coordination of community policies led by the government of the community.

#### Note:

The Flemish community and the Flanders region have merged. Flanders has thus one parliament (*Vlaams parlement*) and one government (*Vlaamse regering*), presided over by the minister-president, all of which are competent for both community and regional matters.

For Brussels Region, the Community competences are exercised in Brussels by, on the one hand, the French and Flemish Communities and, on the other hand, by the three Community Commissions (GGC/COCOM, COCOF and VGC). The Common Community Commission (GCC/ COCOM) regulates and manages matters common to the two communities in the Brussels-Capital Region and has recently been assigned a large number of competences for matters such as health and assistance to citizens, following the sixth State reform.

Depending on the Community, it's the COCOF (*Commission communautaire francophone* for the French speaking Community) and the VGC (*Vlaamse gemeenschapscommissie* for the Dutch speaking Community) which are competent for the community governments. COCOF and VGC can form and fund institutions or take initiatives within the scope of community responsibilities.

### Competences

- Education
- Culture
- Social affairs
- Tourism
- Sports
- International relations
- Health
- Assistance to citizens



# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a federal state divided into two entities, the Republic of Srpska (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Brcko District, which has been ascribed a special district status that falls outside of the jurisdiction of the Republic of Srpska. The Republic of Srpska is composed of municipalities (*opština*) while the Federation BiH consists of municipalities (*općina*) and cantons (*kantoni*).

CEMR in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina ([www.sogfbih.ba](http://www.sogfbih.ba)) and The Association of municipalities and Towns of Republic of Srpska ([www.alvrs.com](http://www.alvrs.com))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	137	145	145
Regional	10	10	10

## Local governments

**55 municipalities and 9 cities in the Republic of Srpska, 74 municipalities and 6 cities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Brcko District**

Municipalities and cities (*gradovi*) are also referred to as local self-government units and constitute both executive and legislative authorities.

The **municipal assembly** (*skupština opštine/općinsko vijeće*) is the local authority's decision and policy-making body. It is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. The municipal assembly notably adopts the municipal budget and can appoint or dismiss members of the municipality or city's permanent and non-permanent working bodies.

The **mayor** (*načelnik opština/općina* in municipalities and *gradonačelnik* in cities) is the executive head of the local authority. He/she is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. The mayor can put forward draft legislative proposals to the municipal assembly. He/she also implements local policy, has responsibility for the execution of the municipal budget and enforces national laws and regulations to be implemented at the local governments.

**Note:** There are exceptions with regard to this with respect to certain mayoral elections. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Mayor of Mostar and the Mayor of Sarajevo are not directly elected. Instead, they are elected by the cities' assemblies. Since February 2020, in the Republic of Srpska, the mayor of the city of East Sarajevo has been elected by the citizens in direct general elections for a period of four years.

## Competences

Cities and municipalities are the key providers of essential public and social services.

- Economic development
- Spatial and urban planning
- Social care
- Civil protection
- Environment
- Heating
- Local roads
- Sewage and solid waste disposal
- Water
- Culture and tourism
- Housing
- Pre-school
- Sports
- School building maintenance
- School bus transportation
- Ambulance services
- Healthcare supplies

Cities and municipalities are encouraged through existing local government laws to establish companies, institutions and other organisations in order to help manage, finance and improve local infrastructures and services.

**Capital:** Sarajevo

**Geographical size:** 51,197km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 3,492,018

**Vote:** Non-compulsory

**State Structure:** Federal state

**Currency:** Convertible Mark (BAM)

## Regional governments

**10 cantons (*kanton/županija*)**

Cantons, which have their own regional government, are federal units within the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

All cantons are ethnically mixed and thus have special laws so as to ensure equality amongst all citizens.

The **premier** (*premijer*) is the head of the canton. He/she is assisted in his/her duties by a number of cantonal ministries, agencies and services.



# BULGARIA

Bulgaria is a unitary state with one tier of local self-governance: the municipality (*obshtina*).

CEMR in Bulgaria - National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria ([www.namrb.org](http://www.namrb.org))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	264	265	265
Intermediate			
Regional			

## Local governments 265 municipalities (*obshtina*)

The **municipality** is Bulgaria's only administrative and territorial tier of local governance. It is an independent legal entity which owns property and has responsibility for its own budget. The population lives in 5,600 settlements (*naseleno myasto*), organised in 265 municipalities. The average number of settlements per municipality is 20.

The **municipal council** (*obchtinski savet*) is the municipality's legislative body and decides on local policy. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. The municipal council elects a chairperson from among its members (between 11 and 61 councillors). The chairperson convenes the council meetings and guides the preparation of these meetings. The chairperson also coordinates the work of standing committees, assists councillors with their activities and represents the Council before third parties.

The **mayor** (*kmet*) is the municipality's executive head. The **mayor of the municipality** is elected by direct universal suffrage based on a majority system for a four-year term. His/her role is to implement and manage the policies of the municipal council, to represent the municipality and to manage the municipal staff.

The law provides for three types of administrative and territorial units within the municipalities:

Wards (*gradski rayon*) are territorial units in the three largest cities (population above 300,000). The ward mayors are elected by direct universal suffrage. The wards have their own administration.

The settlements, which are not cities, with a population of above 100, are called *mayoralties* (*kmetstvo*) and have elected mayors.

The municipal mayor appoints mayor's representatives in settlements with a population below 100 (*kmetiski namestnik*).

**Note:** the term of all elected officials (mayors and councillors) is four years.

## Competences

Management of municipal property, municipal companies and enterprises, municipal budget and borrowing, and the municipal administration

- Public safety\*
- Education\*
- Social and welfare services\*
- Cultural activities\*
- Public works
- Parks and recreation
- Sports and leisure
- Water supply and sewage
- Tourism
- Household refuse collection
- Spatial planning
- Public transportation
- Maintenance and conservation of cultural, historical and architectural monuments\*
- Environmental protection\*

\* The service provision of these activities is shared between the municipalities and the national government.



Capital: Sofia



Geographical size:  
110,370 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
6,916,548 (1.5% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State  
Structure: Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2007



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 17



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 12



Currency:  
Bulgarian lev (BGN)



# CROATIA

Croatia is a unitary state composed of municipalities, towns and cities (*grad*), and counties (*županija*).

CEMR in Croatia – Croatian County Association ([www.hrvzz.hr](http://www.hrvzz.hr))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	556	555	556
Regional	21	21	21

## Local governments

428 municipalities, 128 towns and cities

### Municipalities

Municipalities in Croatia are units of local self-government with less than 10,000 inhabitants.

The **municipal council** (*općinsko vijeće*) is the municipality's representative body. Members of the municipal council are elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years.

The **municipal mayor** (*načelnik*) is the municipality's executive body. He/she notably directs the activities of the administrative bodies and ensures that existing legislation is enforced.

## Competences of municipalities and towns

- Localities and housing
- Regional and town planning
- Child care
- Social welfare
- Primary health care
- Education
- Culture
- Sports
- Consumer protection
- Fire prevention
- Civil protection
- Regional traffic

## Towns and cities

Towns are units of local self-government with more than 10,000 inhabitants and cities are units of local self-government with more than 35,000 inhabitants. In exceptional cases, when there are some special reasons (historic, economic, and geographic), a place may be defined as being a town /city even though it has fewer than 10,000 inhabitants.

The **town/city assembly** (*gradska skupština*) is the town/city representative body. Members of the town/city assembly are elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years.

The **mayor** (*gradonačelnik*) is the town/city's executive body. He/she notably directs the activities of the administrative bodies that ensure that existing legislation and laws are enforced.

## Competence of cities

(on top of those also held by municipalities)

- Maintenance of public roads
- Building and renting permits

**Note:** The City of Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, has the status of both a city and a county, which means its competencies are those of both local and regional authorities.



Capital: Zagreb



Geographical size:  
56,594 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
4,036,355  
(0.9% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2013



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 12



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 9



Currency: Croatian  
Kuna (HRK)



## CROATIA

### Regional governments

#### 21 counties (*županija*)

There are a total of 21 counties, including the city of Zagreb, which doubles as a county and as a city.

**Counties** are the primary territorial subdivision of Croatia. These regional self-governing units have a large degree of autonomy. Croatia is currently undergoing a process of decentralisation of power from the national state to the regional tier. Thus, many administrative tasks are gradually being devolved to the counties.

The **county assembly** (*županijska skupština*) is the county's representative body. The assembly is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. The county assembly elects the county's executive leadership and decides on the yearly budget.

The **county prefect** (*župan*) is the county's executive head. He/she represents the county in external affairs and presides over its executive government.

### Competences

- Education
- Health services
- Regional and urban planning
- Economic development
- Traffic and traffic infrastructure
- Maintenance of public roads



# CYPRUS

Cyprus is a unitary state composed of communities (*koinotites*) and municipalities (*dimoi*).

CEMR in Cyprus - Union of Cyprus Municipalities ([www.ucm.org.cy](http://www.ucm.org.cy))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	380	380	527

## Local governments

**488 communities (*koinotites*) and 39 municipalities (*dimoi*) (9 municipalities and 139 displaced communities, representing 37% of Cyprus' territory, are operating under Turkish occupation).**

There are two different types of local authorities in Cyprus: communities in rural areas and municipalities in urban and tourism areas.

### Communities

The **community council** (*koinotiko sumvoulío*) is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. It acts as a legislative board and comprises a president and a vice-president.

The **president** (*proedros*) of the community is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of five years and chairs the community council.

### Municipalities

The **municipal council** (*dimotiko sumvoulío*) is the municipality's deliberative assembly and is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year period. Its responsibilities include providing assistance and advising the mayor with respect to the execution of his/her duties. The municipal council also sets up different committees within the municipality, including the management committee responsible for preparing the budget and other ad-hoc committees that provide technical, cultural, environmental and personnel assistance.

The **mayor** (*dimarchos*) is the municipality's executive head and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. He/she represents the municipality in legal proceedings before any state authority. The mayor also supervises the municipal administration and chairs the municipal council.

**Note:** A community may become a municipality by local referendum provided that it has a population of more than 5,000 or that it has sufficient economic resources to function as a municipality.

There has been an ongoing consultation with the central government to reform local self-government. Three bills of law have already been sent to the House of Parliament. The bills provide for the compulsory clustering of services between municipalities and/or communities in order to jointly promote various competences, policies, projects and services, in view of ultimately merging these clusters into new entities.

## Competences

- Urban planning
- Protection of the environment
- Water supply
- Land development
- Household refuse



Capital: Nicosia



Geographical size:  
9,251 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
896,005 (0.2% EU)



Vote: Compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2004



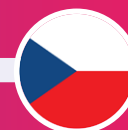
Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 6



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 6



Currency: Euro



# CZECHIA

The Czech Republic is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*obec*) and regions (*kraje*).

CEMR in the Czech Republic - Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic ([www.smocr.cz](http://www.smocr.cz))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	6,250	6,258	6,258
Regional	14	14	14

## Local governments

6,258 municipalities (*obec*)

The **municipal council** (*zastupitelstvo obce*) is the municipality's deliberative assembly and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. It appoints the members of the municipal committee.

The **municipal board** (*rada obce*) is the executive body of the municipality and is made up of members elected by and from within the municipal council for a four-year term. The mayor and vice-mayors are also members of the committee, which can form specific commissions, such as a financial commission, cultural commission and commission for minorities.

The **mayor** (*starosta* for smaller municipalities or towns and *primátor* for larger towns or cities) is elected by and from within the municipal council for a four-year mandate. He/she stands at the head of the municipal committee and administration, and represents the municipality. In municipalities with fewer than fifteen municipal council members, the executive authority is ensured by the mayor.

**Note:** The City of Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, and other large cities (so-called statutory cities) are divided into metropolitan districts, each made up of its own elected local council. The city's local council is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. Council members elect the mayor of the city as well as the members of its executive body, the municipal committee.

## Competences

- Municipal budget and municipal property management
- Issuing municipal decrees
- Local development
- Agriculture and forest management owned by the municipality
- Municipal police
- Water supply and sewage
- Household refuse
- Primary education – elementary schools, kindergartens
- Housing
- Social services
- Spatial planning
- Cooperation with other municipalities and regions
- Public transport

## Regional governments

14 regions (*kraje*)

The **regional assembly** (*zastupitelstvo kraje*) is the region's deliberative body and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. It controls the regional budget and the subsidies granted to municipalities. It can also submit draft legislation to the national chamber of deputies.

The **regional board** (*rada kraje*) is the executive body of the region and is made up of the president, vice-presidents and other members elected by and from within the regional assembly for four years. It is assisted by a regional authority (*krajský úrad*), which is headed by a director and divided into several departments in charge of specific fields, such as social affairs, transport, spatial planning and environment.

The **president** (*hejtman*) is elected by and from within the regional assembly for a period of four years. He/she represents the region at the local, national and international tiers.

**Note:** The City of Prague is both a municipality and region with only one assembly and one board.

## Competences

- Secondary education
- Road network
- Social services
- Environment
- Transport
- Regional development
- Health



Capital: Prague



Geographical size:  
78,868 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
10,701,777 (2.4 %EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure: Unitary state



EU Member State since: 2004



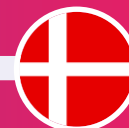
Seats in the European Parliament: 21



Seats in the European Committee of the Regions: 12



Currency: Czech koruna (CZK)



# DENMARK

Denmark is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*kommuner*) and regions (*regioner*).

CEMR in Denmark: KL – Local Government Denmark ([www.kl.dk](http://www.kl.dk)) and Danish regions ([www.regioner.dk](http://www.regioner.dk))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	98	98	98
Regional	5	5	5

## Local governments

### 98 municipalities (*kommuner*)

The **municipal council** (*kommunalbestyrelsen/byrådet*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for four years using a system of proportional representation. It is responsible for the municipal budget, the functioning of local institutions and the adoption of local policies.

The **executive committees** (*kommunale udvalg*) are in charge of local administration. The municipal council appoints the members of the executive committees for a period of four years. Standing committees assist the municipal council in preparing its decisions. One of the council's duties includes setting up a financial committee but it also has the discretion to set up special committees pertaining to education, employment, or health and social affairs.

The municipal council also elects the **mayor** (*borgmesteren*) for four years. He/she heads the municipality's administration as well as the municipal council.

**Note:** A new municipal structure was introduced in January 2007. The new structure reduced the number of municipalities and increased their overall size. Under this model, to be considered a municipality, it is required to have a minimum of 20,000 inhabitants. However, municipalities with a population of less than 20,000 are able to meet this condition and be accepted as long as they establish a legally binding cooperation with a larger municipality.

## Competences

- Primary education, including special education for adults
- Childcare
- Care for the elderly
- Social services: full regulatory, supply and financing responsibility
- Social psychiatry
- Health care preventive treatment, care and rehabilitation, home care and treatment of alcohol and drug abuse
- Integration of refugees and immigrants
- Environmental protection and waste and water management and preparation of local plans
- Unemployment services
- Assistance to the unemployed
- Economic development
- Culture and sports
- Local business service and local tourism
- Local roads
- Business development



**Capital:**  
Copenhagen



**Geographical size:**  
42,933 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:**  
5,850,189 (1.3%)



**Vote:** Non-compulsory



**State Structure:**  
Unitary state



**EU Member State**  
since: 1973



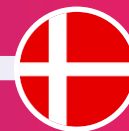
**Seats in the European Parliament:** 14



**Seats in the European Committee of the Regions:** 9



**Currency:** Danish krone (DKK)



## DENMARK

### Regional governments

#### 5 regions (*regioner*)

The **regional council** (*regionsrådet*) is the region's deliberative body and is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years via a system of proportional representation. It can set up special committees, such as hospital committees, regional development committees and sustainability committees, as well as secretariats to assist them. The regional council also appoints its own chair.

The **executive committees** (*udvalg*) are composed of members elected for a four-year term by and from among the regional council members. They oversee the administration of the region and assist the regional council in preparing and implementing its decisions.

The **chair of the regional council** (*regionsrådsformanden*) heads the council and the region's administration. He/she is elected from among the regional council's members and is assisted by deputies also elected by the council.

**Note:** Danish regions and the Island of Bornholm have also spearheaded a regional growth forum, comprising representatives from the regions, municipalities, local trade and industry, knowledge institutions and the labour market. Their mission is to foster optimal conditions for trade and industry in view of generating growth and development.

In January 2007, a new regional structure was adopted, under which the then-existing fourteen counties were replaced with the five regions in place today. Together, the Danish regions now have between 0.6 and 1.6 million inhabitants.

The regions cannot levy taxes directly but are financed through contributions from the state and the municipalities. The regions' economies are divided into three separate parts: health and social services, special education and regional development.

### Competences

- Health care
- Hospital provision
- Health insurance
- Mental health treatment
- Social services and special education
- Regional development
- Tourism
- Nature and environment
- Employment
- Culture
- Transport
- Soil pollution

**Greenland and the Faroe Islands** have autonomous status. They both have their own government and legislative assembly. The Faroese Municipal Organisation (*Kommunufelagið*) ([www.kf.fo](http://www.kf.fo)) enjoys observer status with CEMR.

# ESTONIA

Estonia is a unitary state composed of rural municipalities (*vald*) and cities (*linn*).

CEMR in Estonia - Association of Estonian Cities and Rural Municipalities ([www.elvl.ee](http://www.elvl.ee))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	226	213	79

## Local governments

64 rural municipalities (*vald*) and 15 cities (*linn*)

The **municipal council** (*volikogu*) is the municipality's legislative body and is composed of members, whose number varies according to the demographic size of the local authority, elected by direct universal suffrage for four years. The municipal council appoints and may dismiss the council chair as well as the mayor. It is assisted in its work by sector-based commissions.

The **local government** (*valitsus*) is the municipality's executive body. It is made up of the mayor and of members appointed by the mayor, following the council's approval. Members of the local government cannot sit on the municipal council.

The **mayor** (*vallavanem* in rural municipalities and *linnapea* in cities) is appointed by the municipal council for a four-year term. He/she is the representative of the local government but cannot be the municipal council chair.

## Competences

- Municipal budget
- Education
- Social welfare
- Health services
- Culture, leisure and sports
- Social housing
- Urban and rural planning
- Tourism
- Public transport
- Water supply, sewage, public lighting and central heating
- Environment
- Waste collection and disposal
- Road and cemetery maintenance
- Local taxes



Capital: Tallinn



Geographical size: 45,227 km<sup>2</sup>



Population: 1,330,068 (0.3 % EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure: Unitary state



EU Member State since: 2004



Seats in the European Parliament: 7



Seats in the European Committee of the Regions: 7



Currency: Euro



# FINLAND

Finland is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*kunta*) and regions (*maakunnan liitto*).

CEMR in Finland - Association of Finnish Local and Regional Municipalities ([www.kuntaliitto.fi](http://www.kuntaliitto.fi) - [www.kommunforbundet.fi](http://www.kommunforbundet.fi) - [localfinland.fi](http://localfinland.fi))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	336	313	309
Regional	19	19	19

## Local governments 309 municipalities (*kunta*)

The **municipal council** (*kunnanvaltuusto*) is composed of members elected via a proportional representation system for a period of four years. This deliberative body appoints the executive board and elects the mayor.

The **executive board** (*kunnanhallitus*) is made up of members appointed by the municipal council. It is responsible for running the municipal administration and managing its finances. The executive board is assisted in its work by sector-specific committees.

The **mayor** (*kunnanjohtaja*) is elected by the municipal council for a fixed or indefinite term of office, as decided upon by the municipal council. He/she is at the head of the municipality's administration and prepares the decisions to be adopted by the executive board. The mayor can be appointed from amongst the members of the council. As of April 2021, six cities (municipalities) have done so.

## Competences

- Health care (primary, secondary, and dental services)
- Social services (child day care, services for the aged and the disabled)
- Education (pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational training, adult education and libraries)
- Culture and leisure
- Sports
- Territorial planning
- Building and maintenance of technical infrastructure and environment (roads, energy, water and sewage, waste, harbours and public transport)
- Business and employment
- Independent taxation rights and finances

## Regional governments 18 Regional Councils (*maakunnanliitto*) and the Autonomous province of the Åland Island

The **regional council** is the region's statutory joint municipal authority; every local authority must be a member of a regional council.

Each Regional Council is governed by a **regional assembly** (*maakuntavaltuusto*) and a **regional board** (*maakuntahallitus*) assisted by the council's office run by the director of the council. The total number of staff of all offices is about 650 persons, and the budgets about 50 million euros, or slightly less than 10 euros/resident.

## Competences

- Regional development
- Regional land use planning
- International affairs of the regions
- Promoting region's interest
- Responsibility for the EU's structural Fund Programmes and its implementation
- Protection and promotion of culture and regional traditions
- Promote mental and economic well-being

## Autonomous province the Åland Island

The Åland Islands is an autonomous province. The **autonomous government** (*Landskapsstyrelse*) is the province's executive body, presided over by a **president** (*lantråd*). This provincial authority also has a **legislative assembly** (*lagting*), whose members are elected by direct universal suffrage.

## Competences

- Education
- Culture
- Police
- Health care
- Social affairs
- Employment



Capital: Helsinki



Geographical size:  
338,440 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
5,533,793 (1.2% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State  
Structure: Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 1995



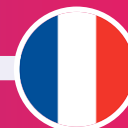
Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 14



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 9



Currency: Euro



# FRANCE

France is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*communes*), departments (*départements*) and regions (*régions*).

CEMR in France – French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions ([www.afccre.org](http://www.afccre.org))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	36,700	36,658	34,965
Intermediate	101	99	100
Regional	27	19	18

## Local governments 34,965 municipalities

The **municipal council** (*Conseil municipal*) is composed of councillors elected on a closed list model, by direct universal suffrage for a six-year term. In municipalities with 1,000 inhabitants and over, elections are based on a closed proportional list and two rounds of voting model, with a majority bonus granted to the list that comes first. This deliberative assembly is headed by the mayor.

The **mayor** and his/her deputies represent the municipality's executive branch. The mayor and the deputy mayors are elected by and from within the municipal council for a six-year mandate. The mayor and by delegation the deputy mayors are in charge of the municipal administration.

## Traditional competences

- Registry office functions
- Organisation of elections on behalf of the State
- Protecting local public order
- Maintenance of municipal roads
- Land development and planning

## Core decentralised competences

- Urban planning
- Education: kindergartens and elementary schools' buildings construction and maintenance
- Social action
- Environment: water supply and sanitation, waste management
- Local roads
- Transport
- Culture
- Sports



Capital: Paris



Geography:  
633,187 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
67,439,599  
(15 % EU)



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State  
Structure: Unitary  
state



EU Member State  
since: 1957



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 79



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 24



Currency: Euro

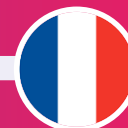
**Note:** The municipality is since 2015 the only tier of local government which benefits from a general competences clause: they can intervene over and above their competencies in all fields of local interest.

Since 2014, all municipalities are part of an intercommunal structure. The total number of intercommunal structure is 1253 (1st January 2021). These structures have competences allocated to them by the municipalities on a voluntary basis, or directly imposed by law.

There are different types of intercommunal structures:

- The metropolitan authorities (*Métropoles*) have a minimum population of 400,000 inhabitants, and/or a capital city of a region and an employment area of more than 400 000 inhabitants: 21
- The urban authorities (*Communautés urbaines*) have a minimum population of 250,000 inhabitants: 14
- The conurbation authorities (*Communautés d'agglomération*) have a minimum population of 50,000 inhabitants with a urban centre of more than 15.000 inhabitants: 223
- The rural authorities (*Communautés de communes*) have a minimum population of 15,000 inhabitants: 995

The City of Paris is both a department and a municipality. Lyon Metropole has also a specific status as it has the competences of the department on its territory.



## FRANCE

### Intermediate governments

**96 departments on the continent and 5 overseas departments**

The **county council** (*Conseil départemental*) is the department's deliberative body. It is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a six-year term. The council elects its president among its members and is composed of specialised committees. The county councils are subdelegate managing authorities of the European social funds (ESF). Since a reform in 2014, the delegates are elected as a gender balanced duo so that each council is composed of the same number of men and women.

The **president** of the council is the department's executive authority. He/she is assisted by a permanent committee composed of vice-presidents and members of the different political parties.

#### Competences

- Social and health action: childhood, people with disabilities, senior inhabitants, social care
- Education: junior secondary schools building and maintenance
- Culture and tourism
- Safety: fire departments and emergency services, risk-prevention

### Regional governments

**18 regions including 5 overseas regions (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, La Réunion, Mayotte)**

The **regional council** (*Conseil régional*) is the deliberative body of the region. It is composed of regional councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a six-year term. The regional council elects its president from among its members. Since 2014, regional councils are the managing authorities of the major part of the European structural funds, instead of the State.

The **permanent committee** is the region's deliberative body, which assists the council in the execution of some of its competences. The vice-presidents are members of the permanent commission and the opposition is represented by proportionality.

The **president and the vice-presidents** are elected from among the members of the regional council for a six-year period. They are the region's executive body and are at the head of the regional administration. The president's functions are similar to those of the president of the county council.

#### Competences

- Economic development
- Territorial development and planning
- Transport
- Education: senior secondary schools
- Vocational education and adult permanent education
- planning and environment
- Culture
- Tourism

### Territories with specific status

- Corsica **has a specific status and represents a self-governing authority with specific institutions.**
- The European community of Alsace (*la collectivité européenne d'Alsace*) replaced the departments of Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin. Created by a law of August 2, 2019, this community falls under the legal category of departments but it has specific competences. This is particularly the case in the area of cross-border cooperation.
- Overseas communities:
- Overseas departments and regions (DOM and ROM) are European outermost regions.

Since December 2015, there are two additional Overseas Territories, which combine the competences of overseas departments and overseas local authorities.

New Caledonia, Saint Barthélemy, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Wallis-et-Futuna, Polynésie française, and the Territory of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF) are Overseas Countries and Territories (*Pays et Territoires d'Outre Mer, PTOM*)



# GEORGIA

Georgia is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*munits'ipaliteti*) and self-governing cities (*tvitmmartveli qalagebi*). The country itself is a unitary parliamentary republic, with its government held accountable under a unicameral parliamentary system.

CEMR in Georgia - National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia ([www.nala.ge](http://www.nala.ge))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	69	72	64
Regional			3

## Local governments

**59 municipalities (*munits'ipaliteti*) and 5 self-governing cities (*tvitmmartveli qalagebi*)**

The **municipal/city assembly** (*sakrebulo*) is the local authority's legislative deliberative body and is composed of members elected from single mandate constituencies using a party list system for a four-year term. This assembly oversees the activities of the municipal/city board and elects its chief executive officer. It also reviews and approves the local budget and local socio-economic development plans and can introduce taxes and fees as well as any other legally prescribed measures. The assembly can also set up committees such as the legal affairs committee, the social affairs committee and the finance and budget committee.

The **chair of the municipal or city assembly** (*sakrebulo tvmjdomare*), is elected by and from within the municipal or city assembly for a period of four years. The chair organises the work of the municipal or city assembly and approves council decisions.

**The municipal/city executive branch is represented by a mayor**, elected by direct universal suffrage with a 50% minimum threshold. The executive branch also comprises the heads of several structural and territorial units present in each local authority and implements decisions taken by the municipal or city council. The mayor is the supreme official head of the city/municipality.

## Competences

- Municipal property
- Municipal service provision
- Land, water and forest resource management
- Municipal budget
- Local taxes
- Waste management
- Spatial planning
- Pre-school education
- Public transport
- Socio-economic development
- Infrastructure development
- Sport development
- Youth development
- Improvement services

**Note:** The capital city of Tbilisi exercises additional competences delegated by central government agencies, including military recruitment, emergency response and state of emergency, environment and legalisation of property. Tbilisi fulfils also broader functions as well, such as the organisation of local business support programmes and social protection. The capital has its own municipal cabinet, headed by the mayor, which also comprises the vice-mayor, two deputies and the heads of the sectoral departments, *inter alia*, transport, social affairs and architecture. Each department has its own head and staff.

The city of Tbilisi is divided into ten administrative districts. Each district has its own executive branch headed by a chief executive officer appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city assembly.

The remaining local government units in Georgia have limited delegated powers, which extend mainly to military procurement and sanitation. The tasks are delegated by specific ministries through legal decisions or agreement between the relevant ministry and a given municipality.



Capital: Tbilisi



Geographical size:  
69,700 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
3,716,858



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Lari (GEL)



## GEORGIA

### Regional governments:

#### 3 autonomous territories

The Autonomous Region of Adjara is governed by an autonomous government nominated by a supreme council. The Adjara A.R. has full competence in areas such as finance and economy, healthcare, agriculture and education. There are also nine deconcentrated administrative regions: they are managed by state trustees appointed by the prime minister.

Two autonomous Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia are located within the country's internationally recognised borders. Under Georgian law, they are territories occupied by the Russian Federation.



# GERMANY

Germany is a federal state composed of the federal and the regional governments. Municipalities (*Gemeinden*), cities (*Städte*) and counties (*Landkreise/Kreise*) are a constitutional part of the regions (*Länder*).

CEMR in Germany – Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions ([www.rgre.de](http://www.rgre.de)), Association of German Cities Germany ([www.staedtetag.de](http://www.staedtetag.de)), German County Association ([www.landkreistag.de](http://www.landkreistag.de)), German Association of Towns and Municipalities ([www.dstgb.de](http://www.dstgb.de))

	2012	2016	2021
 Number of Sub-national government			
Local	11,481	11,313	10,799
Intermediate (counties)	295	295	294
Regional	16	16	16

## Local governments

10,799 municipalities (*Gemeinden*) of which 2055 are cities (*Städte*) and counties (intermediary governments): 294 counties (*Landkreise/Kreise*)

There are two types of local structures in Germany, depending on the region's municipal code (*Gemeindeordnung*): the magistrate system (*Magistratsverfassung*) and the council system (*Süddeutsche Ratsverfassung*).

The **council system** exists in all German regions except for Hessen. According to the council system, the local council is elected by direct universal suffrage for five years. The **mayor** (*Bürgermeister*) is also elected by direct universal suffrage for a mandate that can vary from four to nine years, which also applies to Hessen. The mayor chairs the local council and heads the municipal administration.

The **local council** (*Gemeinderat*) is the municipality's central body. It is elected by direct universal suffrage for a mandate that can vary from four to six years. The local council is the legislative organ and makes most of the decisions, whilst at the same time having a monitoring and controlling function vis-à-vis the mayor and local administration.

The **magistrate system** only exists in one region (Hessen). In this system, the executive branch is composed of the **mayor and his/her deputies** (*Magistrate*). These are civil servants appointed by the local council for a mandate that generally lasts four years. The magistrate represents the municipality, is in charge of the daily local administration and implements local council decisions.

## Competences

- Urban planning
- Municipal taxation
- Public security and order
- Municipal roads
- Public transport
- Water supply and waste water management
- Flood control and management
- Fire fighting
- Social aid and youth
- Child care
- Housing
- Building and maintenance of schools
- Cemeteries

**Note:** The aforementioned competences are examples of the mandatory competences of local authorities in Germany. There also exists a number of optional competences, notably in the fields of energy, economic development, infrastructure, culture, sports, migration and integration.



Capital: Berlin



Geographical size:  
357,376 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
83,155,031  
(18.6 % EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure:  
Federal state



EU Member State  
since: 1957



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 96



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 24



Currency: Euro



## GERMANY

### County governments

The **county assembly** (*Kreistag*) is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a mandate that can vary from five to six years, depending on the region. It is the county's legislative body.

The **county president** (*Landrat*) is elected either by the county assembly (Baden-Württemberg/ Schleswig-Holstein) or by direct universal suffrage. He/she is a civil servant elected for a period that varies from five to eight years and chairs the county assembly.

The **county office** (*Landratsamt*) is the county's executive body and is composed of civil servants recruited by the county or by the region.

**Note:** County-free cities (*kreisfreie Städte*) are cities that simultaneously perform the tasks of municipalities belonging to a county as well as the tasks of the counties. County-free cities are generally those cities in the respective Länder that have the most inhabitants.

The aforementioned competences are examples of the mandatory competences of county authorities. There also exists a number of optional competences, notably in the fields of culture, economy, tourism, as well as building and managing libraries.

### Competences

- Construction and maintenance of intermediary roads
- Social services and youth
- Care for elderly
- Maintenance of schools
- Child care facilities
- Collection and disposal of household waste
- Rescue service
- Food safety
- Protection of nature and environment
- Foreign affairs (twinning and cross border partnerships)
- Disaster management
- Public transport
- Maintenance of cultural facilities, e.g. museums, music schools
- Health care: The health authorities are located in the counties. The traditional tasks of the public health service at the county office include epidemic surveillance, youth dental care, school examinations, social counselling and the issuing of medical certificates. New additions are environmental medicine, health promotion and prevention, epidemiology and health reporting.

### Regional governments

#### 16 regions (*Länder*)

The **parliament** (*Landtag*) is the region's legislative body. It consists of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year mandate. It elects the minister-president of the region.

The **government** (*Landesregierung*) is the executive body of the region. It is elected by the parliament for a four-year mandate. It elects the minister-president.

The **minister-president** (*Ministerpräsident*) chairs the government. He/she has the exclusive power to designate and dismiss the ministers of the region.

This differs for the three city-states Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg, where the House of Representatives (*Abgeordnetenhaus*) or Citizens' Assembly (*Bürgerschaft*) is the legislative, the Senate of the City (*Senat*) is the executive and the Mayor (*Bürgermeister*) is the governing chair.

### Competences

- Legislation
- Public administration
- Police
- Homeland security
- Taxation
- Justice
- Culture
- University education
- Education
- Environment
- Legal supervision of local self-government

**Note:** Regional competences are shared with the central government in the fields of justice, social policy, civil law, criminal law and labour law.



# GREECE

Greece is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*dimos*) and self-governing regions (*periphéria*).

CEMR in Greece - Central Union of Municipalities of Greece  
([www.kedke.gr](http://www.kedke.gr))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	325	325	332
Regional	13	13	13

## Local governments 332 municipalities (*dimos*)

The **municipal council** (*dimotiko simvoulío*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. This deliberative assembly, headed by the mayor, is the decision-making body of the municipality. The municipal council is composed of a number of committees including the financial committee, the quality of life committee and the board of immigrant integration.

The **executive committee** (*ektelestiki epitropi dimou*) is the municipality's executive body. It is composed of the mayor and deputy mayors and monitors the implementation of municipal policy, as adopted by the municipal council.

The **mayor** (*dimarchos*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of five years. He/she defends local interests, oversees all local development actions and represents the municipality. The mayor also presides over the executive committee and coordinates the implementation of its decisions.

**Note:** Insular and mountainous municipalities have a wider set of competences, which include development, environment, quality of life, health and welfare. They can also set up special committees for the promotion of tourism.

Metropolitan areas too have their own extra set of competences, such as transport, communication, environment, quality of life, urban planning, urban regeneration as well as civil protection and security.

## Competences

- Building permits and urban planning applications
- Social welfare
- Issuing of professional licenses
- Agriculture, livestock and fisheries
- Transport infrastructure
- Health care
- Education

## Competences

- Regional development planning
- "Green" development

## Regional governments 13 self-governing regions (*periphéria*)

The **regional council** (*peripheriako simvoulío*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of five years. This deliberative assembly, presided over by the head of the region, is the regional authority's decision-making body. The regional council is composed of a number of committees, including the financial and the regional committees for consultation.

The **executive committee** (*ektelestiki epitropi periferias*) is the region's executive body and is composed of the head of the region and the deputy head. It is responsible for monitoring the implementation of regional policy.

The **head of the region** (*perifereiarchis*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. He/she directs the implementation of regional development plans, issues all non-regulatory acts, and implements the decisions made by the regional council, the executive committee and the financial committee. The head of the region convenes and presides over the regional council and the executive committee and represents the region.



Capital: Athens



Geographical size:  
132,049 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
10,718,565  
(2.4% EU)



Vote: Compulsory



State  
Structure: Unitary  
state



EU Member State  
since: 1981



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 21



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 12



Currency: Euro



# HUNGARY

Hungary is a country composed of municipalities (*települések*), towns (*városok*), towns with county rank (*megyei jogú városok*), capital town districts (*fővárosi kerületek*), the city of Budapest and counties (*megyék*).

**CEMR in Hungary** – coordinator Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ) ([www.toosz.hu](http://www.toosz.hu)). Two membership in CEMR TÖOSZ, Association of Hungarian Local Governments and Representatives (MÖSZ) and five other national associations of local governments Hungarian Association of Villages (MFSZ), Association of Small Cities (KSZ), National Association of Communes and Small Municipalities (KÖSZ), Association of Cities with County Rank (MJVSZ), and National Association of County Local Governments (MÖÖSZ).

## Local governments

**3,155 including the City of Budapest and 3,154 municipalities (*települések*) divided into 322 towns (*városok*), 23 towns with county rank (*megyei jogú városok*), and 23 capital town districts (*fővárosi kerületek*).**

The **body of representatives** (*képviselő-testület*) is the municipality's legislative body. It is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for five years, responsible for the management and control of the municipality. Its decisions are presented in the form of resolutions and decrees.

The **mayor's office** (*Polgármesteri hivatal*) is the municipality's executive body and the mayor presides over the body of representatives. He/she is a member of the body of representatives and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. The body of representatives is obliged to elect deputy mayors from within its ranks or may also elect external persons to this post, on the basis of a secret ballot.

The **notary** (*jegyző*) is appointed by the mayor, usually for an undetermined period of time. He/she is at the head of the local administration and is the head of the mayor's office. He/she prepares and assists the work of the body of representatives and of the mayor, and executes their decisions.

**Note:** The capital city of Budapest is composed of 23 districts. It is managed by autonomous local entities, which have the status of a municipality. The capital General Assembly is composed of the mayors of the 23 districts and the Lord Mayor who is also elected by direct universal suffrage.

A municipality can become a city at the initiative of its body of representatives, depending on its level of development and its impact at the regional government.

Towns with more than 50,000 inhabitants can gain the rank of a county. However, this process is quite rare in Hungary, as the last town to have gained county rank was Érd in 2006. There are 23 towns with county status in Hungary.



	2012	2016	2021
Local	3,178	3,201	3,155
Regional	19	19	19

## Competences

- Municipal development, spatial development, municipal management (public cemeteries, public lightening, chimney sweeping etc.),
- Kindergarten services,
- Social, childcare and child-welfare services and provisions,
- Health care basic service and services aimed at the creation of a healthy life-style, environmental-health (e.g. public sanitation, disinfection),
- Cultural service (library, public education, support of art and theatre, etc.),
- Local environmental and nature protection, water-management, water damage prevention, provision of drinking water, water-sewage disposal, treatment, purification (water-channel service),
- Housing and space management,
- National defense, civil defense, rescue services (disaster management),
- Cooperation in the provision of the public-safety of the municipality,
- Local public-employment,
- Tasks connected to local tax, economic management and tourism,
- Tasks related to sport and youth,
- Themes connected to minorities and ethnicities,
- Waste-management,
- District heating services,
- Provision of sales opportunities, weekend sales for the selling of products - of small and primary producers

The local authorities may undertake local public tasks that are not prescribed to the exclusive power of other bodies by the law. The undertaking of voluntary tasks may not endanger the undertaking of obligatory tasks.



Capital: Budapest



Geographical size:  
93,011 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
9,730,772  
(2.2% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2004



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 12



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 12



Currency:  
Hungarian Forint  
HUF



## HUNGARY

### Intermediary governments

#### 19 counties (*megyék*)

The **county council** (*megyei közgyűlés*) is the county's deliberative body. It is composed of members elected from party lists for a five-year term. The county self-government is a territorial self-government, which fulfils tasks defined by law in the area of territorial development, rural development, spatial management and coordination. The elected body of the county self-government is the county council.

The **county chair** (*közgyűlés elnöke*) is elected for a five-year mandate by and from within the county council. The county's executive branch is the county local government office and the chair represents the county council.



# ICELAND

Iceland is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*sveitarfélag*).

CEMR in Iceland – The Icelandic Association of Local Authorities  
([www.samband.is](http://www.samband.is))



Number of Sub-national  
government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	76	74	69
Regional			

## Local governments

### 69 municipalities (*sveitarfélög in pluralis*)

The **municipal council** (called differently depending on the size of the municipality: *sveitarstjórn*, *bæjarstjórn* or *borgarstjórn* for Reykjavík City) is composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage, for a four-year term. These councillors are responsible for the management of the municipality and appoint permanent committees to assist the council in its work. These committees work on specific issues wholly or partly related to local life and make recommendations to the council.

The **executive committee** (called differently depending on the size of the municipality: *byggðarráð*, *bæjarráð* or *borgarráð* for Reykjavík City) is the municipality's executive body and is composed of municipal council members designated by the council. It is in charge of the financial and administrative management of the municipality.

The **President of the Council** (called *oddviti* or *forseti* depending on the size of the municipality) is elected by municipal council majority. He/she presides over the council. Following elections, the municipal council may decide to appoint one of its members as mayor or may designate a non-political person to take on this role.

## Competences

- Social services and child welfare
- Services for persons with disabilities
- Preschools and primary schools
- Culture, sports and leisure activities
- Public utilities (heating, sewage, water and electricity)
- Spatial and urban planning
- Building inspection
- Public parks and open areas
- Monitoring of public and environmental health
- Fire services
- Public transport
- Waste management and collection
- Harbours

**Note** Municipalities have the possibility of taking on additional tasks concerning their inhabitants provided that they have the budget to support these and that the tasks in question are not assigned to other government administrations by law.



Capital: Reykjavík



Geographical size:  
102,775 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
368,792



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Iceland  
Krona (ISK)



# ISRAEL

Israel is a unitary state composed of regional councils (*moatsa ezorit*) local councils (*moatsa mekomit*) and municipalities (*iria*).

CEMR in Israel – Union of Local Authorities in Israel  
([www.masham.org.il](http://www.masham.org.il))



	2016	2021
Local	260	257
Regional	6	6

## Local governments

**54 regional councils (*moatsa ezorit*) and 2 industrial local councils, 124 local councils (*moatsa mekomit*), 77 municipalities (*iria*).**

The law distinguishes between three types of local authorities: regional councils, which represent the rural areas of Israel, local councils with 20,000 inhabitants or less, and municipalities in urban centres with 20,000 inhabitants or more.

The **local council** (*moatsa mekomit*) and **city council** (*moetset hair*) are the local authority's deliberative body. Their members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. As the elections are proportional, the different parties form a coalition to manage the council. The number of councillors, as determined by the ministry of the interior, varies depending on the size of the population.

The **city council** (*moetset hair*) is the deliberative and executive body. As a mandatory responsibility, the city council has to approve the city's yearly budget and the motions presented by the city councillors or inhabitants regarding the use of the financial plan. It also makes crucial decisions concerning the city's management and legislates local municipal laws.

The **mayor** (*rosh hair*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. He/she represents the local authority vis-à-vis the Ministry of the Interior and other governmental bodies. The mayor is in charge of the local administration and of executing the city's annual working plan. He/she is assisted by a number of deputies of his/her choosing, nominated according to the Constitution of the coalition leading the local public authority.

**Note:** Municipalities and local councils are assembled within the Union of Local Authorities in Israel, established in 1938, while regional councils are represented by the Association of Regional Councils.

## Competences:

- Local development
- Health
- Managing local services (water, sewage, garbage disposal, road paving )
- Public gardens and parks
- Water supply and waste water management
- Sanitation
- Household refuse
- Education
- Social services
- Levy local taxes
- Establishment of facilities for sports, education, culture and health
- Manage finances
- Culture
- Sports
- Safety and emergency services
- Public transport
- Maintenance of roads, public areas and cemeteries
- Health
- Environment



**Capital:** Jerusalem



**Geographical size:**  
22,145 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:**  
8,828,665



**Vote:** Non-compulsory



**State structure:**  
Unitary state



**Currency:** New Sheqel (NIS)

## Regional governments 6 administrative regions

Although the 1957 government decision divided Israel into six regions, it did not develop a coherent regional governance governments. Instead of an independent and resourceful regional coordinating unit, each government ministry either utilised the regional division to establish its own local branch or abolished it altogether.



# ITALY

Italy is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*Comuni*), provinces (*Province*), metropolitan cities (*Città metropolitane*) and regions (*Regioni*).

CEMR in Italy - Italian Section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AICCRE) ([www.aiccre.it](http://www.aiccre.it))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	8,094	8,006	7,904
Intermediate	110	110	107
Regional	20	20	20

## Local governments

**7,904 municipalities (*Comuni*)**

The **Council** (*Consiglio comunale*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for five-year period. It is the main decision-making body of the municipality, is responsible for planning and controls governance matters. The city council in particular adopts the budget of the town.

The **City Board** (*Giunta comunale*) is the executive body of the municipality. It implements decisions taken by the Council. Its members are called Deputy Mayors (*Assessori*) and are appointed by the mayor.

The **Mayor** (*Sindaco*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a of five- year period. He/she delegates some of his/her powers to the Deputy Mayor, who is appointed by the mayor. The mayor also heads up the local civil service.

## Competences

- Social welfare
- Education
- Culture and recreation
- Urban planning
- Transport
- Economic development
- Environment, including waste management
- Local police

**Note:** Each municipality responds to a province or a metropolitan city, but they may also directly relate to its region or the central government if necessary. The Municipality may acquire city status if the president of the Republic provides them with this status.



Capital: Rome



Geographical size:  
302,068 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
59,257,566  
(13.3%EU)



Vote: non-  
compulsory



State Structure:  
unitary state



EU member state  
since: 1957



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 76



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 24



Currency: Euro



## ITALY

### Intermediary governments

**107 provinces (*province*), of which 14 metropolitan cities (*Città metropolitane*)**

Italy is composed of two intermediate tiers, i.e. the provinces (*Province*) and the metropolitan cities (*Città metropolitane*).

#### The 107 provinces

The members of the **provincial council** (*Consiglio provinciale*) are elected by, and from among themselves, i.e. from the mayors and councillors of the municipalities of the province concerned, for a period of two years. The council decides upon the policies of the province and approves the budget.

The **assembly of mayors** is composed of mayors of municipalities within the province. It has advisory and control powers as well as the power of initiative.

The **president** (*Presidente*) is elected by the mayors and councillors of the municipalities of the province, for a period of four years, and who will be drawn from one of the municipalities' mayors coming the province concerned. He/ she represents the province, is the Chairperson of the Board and of the assembly of mayors. His/ her functions are to supervise the operation of the services and offices.

#### The 14 metropolitan cities

The members of the **metropolitan council** (*Consiglio metropolitano*) are elected by, and from among themselves, i.e. from the mayors and councillors of the municipalities of the metropolitan city. They are elected for a period of five years. The statute of the institution may provide for the direct election of the metropolitan council. It performs a planning and control function.

The **metropolitan conference** (*Conferenza metropolitana*) is composed of the metropolitan mayor, who convenes and chairs it, and of the mayors of the municipality within the metropolitan city. It has the power of initiative and consultative powers.

The **metropolitan mayor** (*Sindaco metropolitano*) is the mayor of the provincial capital. The status of the institution may provide for his/her direct election. He/she represents the metropolitan city and supervises the operation of services and offices.

### Competences

- Strategic metropolitan development
- Integrated development and management of services
- Competences (transferred from provinces):
- Territorial planning
- Strategic urban planning and transportation
- Coordination of economic, social, and innovative development
- Coordination of digital information systems

### Regional governments

**20 regions (*regione*)**

The **regional council** (*Consiglio regionale*) is the legislative body of the region. It can present projects of law to the national parliament and can dismiss the president of the regional council. It is elected for a period of five years.

The **regional executive committee** (*Giunta regionale*) is the executive body of the region. It consists of a President and Aldermens (*Assessori regionali*) appointed by the president for a period of five years.

The **president** (*Presidente*) is elected by direct universal suffrage if the statute does not otherwise provide for a period of five years. He/she chairs the board and appoints or dismisses the members of the regional board. The president represents the region, determines the regional policy and executes the laws and regional regulation. He/ she is responsible for executing the administrative functions delegated by the state to the regions, according to government guidelines.

### Competences

- International and EU relations
- Foreign trade
- Protection and security at work
- Education, except autonomy in scholastic education and vocational training
- Professional learning
- Scientific and technologic research
- Health
- Food Security
- Sports
- Civil protection
- Urban planning
- Large-scale transport and navigation networks
- Communications
- Energy
- Complementary social welfare
- Public finances and taxation
- Development of cultural and environmental resources



# KOSOVO\*

The Republic of Kosovo is a decentralised unitary government composed of municipalities.

CEMR in Kosovo-Association of Kosovo Municipalities  
(<https://komunat-ks.net/?lang=en>)



	2016	2021
Local	38	38

## Local governments

38 municipalities (*Komunë in Albanian and Opština in Serbian*)

The **municipal assembly** (Kuvendi i Komunës in Albanian and Skupstina Opštine in Serbian) is the highest representative and decision-making body of the municipality consisting of all its elected members. The members of the municipal assembly are directly elected for a four-year term. The number of members of the Municipal Assembly varies from 15 to 51 depending on the size of the municipality.

The **mayor** (Kryetar/Gradonačelnik) is the highest executive body of the municipality and is elected through direct elections. The mayor of the municipality shall be elected for the same term of office as the members of the municipal assembly. The elected office of the Mayor is not subject to term limits.

## Competences

There are three types of municipal competences:

- Own competences
- Delegated competences and
- Enhanced competences

### Own competences

- Local economic development
- Urban and rural planning
- Land use and development
- Implementation of building regulations and building control standards
- Local environmental protection
- Provision and maintenance of public services and utilities, including: water supply, sewers and drains, sewage treatment, waste management, local roads, local transport, and local heating scheme
- Local emergency response
- Provision of public pre-primary, primary and secondary education
- Promotion and protection of human rights
- Provision of family and other social welfare services
- Public housing
- Public health

## Delegated competences

- Cadastral records
- Civil registries
- Voter registration
- Business registration and licensing
- Distribution of social assistance payments (excluding pensions)
- Forestry protection on the municipal territory within the authority delegated by the central authority, including the granting of licenses for the felling of trees on the basis of rules adopted by the Government.

Central authorities in Kosovo may delegate other competences to municipalities, as appropriate, in accordance with the law.

### Enhanced Municipal Competences

- Certain municipalities mentioned below shall have their own competences enhanced in the areas of health, education and cultural affairs and shall have a

- participatory right in selecting local station police commanders as set forth in the subsequent articles
- Central authorities of the Republic of Kosovo shall monitor the exercise of enhanced competences
- The municipalities of Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica North, Graçanicë/ Gračanica, Shtërpçë / Štrpce shall have the competence for the provision of secondary health care
- The municipality of Mitrovicë e Veriut/ Mitrovica North shall have the competence for the provision of higher education
- All municipalities in which the Kosovar Serb Community is in the majority shall have authority to exercise responsibility for cultural affairs
- Municipalities may cooperate with any other municipality in cultural affairs
- Municipalities in which the Kosovar Serb community is in a majority shall exercise enhanced participatory rights in the selection of the local station police commanders in accordance with the relevant laws



Capital: Pristina



Geographical size:  
10,887km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
1,782,115



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary



Currency: Euro



## KOSOVO

### Villages, Settlements and Urban Quarters

Municipalities may create settlements (*fshat /selo*) that ensure services offered are closer to all citizens of the municipality. There are 1467 settlements. The villages (*fshat*) are registered as cadastral zones. Each municipality regulates the division of its suburbs.

Each municipality may make arrangements with villages, settlements and urban quarters within its territory to ensure that services are offered closer to all citizens of the municipality.

With the approval of the municipality, villages, settlements and urban quarters, singly or in combination, may carry out activities that are within the responsibilities and powers of the municipality.

The Statute and local municipal regulations shall stipulate the form of cooperation between the municipality and villages, settlements and urban quarters and the scope of the work and organisation of villages, settlements and urban quarters.

*\*All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence*

# LATVIA

Latvia is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*novads*) and cities (*valstspilsēta*).

CEMR in Latvia - Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments ([www.lps.lv](http://www.lps.lv))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	119	119	42
Regional		5	5

The creation of new regional governments has been postponed and the elements of regional governments are fulfilled by 5 planning regions.

## Local governments

**35 municipalities (*novads*) and 7 state cities (*valstspilsēta*)**

The **council** (*dome*) is the local authority's legislative body. Its members are councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. The council elects the chairperson of the council and members of the standing committees from among its councillors. The existence of both the Finance committee and Social, Education and Culture committees are mandatory. However, local authorities are free to set up other standing committees, all of them are composed of politicians and local experts. Standing committees prepare draft decisions for the council.

The **chairperson of the council** (*priekšsēdētājs*) is elected by and from within the council for a four-year term. He/she chairs the council and the Finance committee.

**Note:** Six state cities together with surrounding municipality will work out joint spatial development planning documents

## Competences

The competences of local authorities can either be autonomous (determined by law or voluntary) or delegated by the state or central government. The competences listed below are autonomous, determined by law:

- Water and heating supply
- Waste management
- Public services and infrastructure
- Public management of forests and water
- Primary and secondary education
- Culture
- Public health
- Social services
- Child welfare
- Social housing
- Licencing for commercial activities
- Public order and civil protection
- Urban development
- Collection of statistical information
- Public transport
- On-going training for teachers



Capital: Riga



Geographical size:  
64,573 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
1,893,223 (0.4%  
EU)



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2004



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 8



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 7



Currency: Euro

## Regional governments

**5 planning regions**

The **regional development council** (*Plānošanas reģiona attīstības padome*) is elected by representatives of all local governments, whose administrative territories compose the territory of the respective planning region. Its members are local councillors, who are involved directly.

The regional development council elects the **chair and executive director** (head of the administration of the planning region). The administration of the planning region is responsible to the regional development council. Planning regions have their own property, legislative and administrative rights and responsibilities.

## Competences

Planning regions have autonomous competences determined by law (development planning and spatial planning, including legislative elements; organisation of public transport, in cooperation with central government) and delegated competences (mainly coordination of the replacement of deinstitutionalization of social care and coordination of the regional scale public investment policy).

# LITHUANIA

Lithuania is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*savivaldybė*).

CEMR in Lithuania: Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania  
([www.lsa.lt](http://www.lsa.lt))



Number of Sub-national  
government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	60	60	60

## Local governments

### 60 municipalities (*savivaldybė*)

The **local council** (*savivaldybės taryba*) is the municipality's legislative and decision-making body and is made up of members elected by direct universal suffrage for four years. It adopts the budget, enacts local legislation, and has the power to establish smaller territorial units (*seniūnija*). The local council also sets up the number of deputy-mayors and appoints them.

The **director of administration** (*administracijos direktorius*) is in charge of all executive tasks. He/she is nominated by the local council. The director is directly and personally responsible for the implementation of national (except where the council decision is required) and local legislation in the municipality. He/she can be dismissed by a local council decision at the proposal of the mayor and must resign when the new council meets for the first time.

The **mayor** (*meras*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for four years. He/she is the head of the municipality - municipal councillor and chairs local council meetings. Mayor's powers terminate when the new council meets for the first time.

**Note:** By local council decision, each municipality can be administratively divided into smaller territorial units called *seniūnija*. *Seniūnija* is a branch of the municipality administration acting in a certain territory of the municipality. It is generally responsible for the provision of daily local services to citizens in a given municipal area. Each territorial unit is headed by a civil servant (*seniūnas*) appointed by the director of administration of the municipality concerned.

An advisory council composed of citizens can be established within these smaller territorial units, so as to provide their respective local administrations with advice on how to provide better municipal services or on how to draft and implement local policies

## Competences

- Municipal budget, local charges
- Pre-school, primary and basic education
- Civil protection
- Culture
- Environment
- Sanitation
- Housing
- Transport, local roads
- Labour market measures and promotion of entrepreneurship
- Primary health care
- Public services and municipal property management
- Spatial planning
- Local development, participation in drafting regional development programmes
- Sports
- Tourism and promotion of entrepreneurship
- Social care
- Information society



Capital Vilnius



Geographical size:  
65,286 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
2,795,680  
(0.6%EU)



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2004



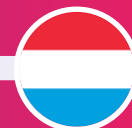
Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 11



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 9



Currency: Euro



# LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg is a unitary state composed of municipalities.

CEMR in Luxembourg - Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities ([www.syvicol.lu](http://www.syvicol.lu))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	106	105	102

## Local governments 102 municipalities

The **municipal council** (*conseil communal*) is the municipality's legislative body and is made up of councillors elected for a period of six years using a proportional or relative majority voting system, depending on the demographic size of the municipality. The council represents the municipality and is presided over by the mayor. It is in charge of all matters of municipal interest.

The **college of the mayor and aldermen** (*collège des bourgmestre et échevins*) is the municipality's executive and daily administrative body. It is composed of the mayor and the aldermen, whose number varies according to the demographic size of the municipality; the mayor and alderman are chosen from within the municipal council and sit on the council.

The **mayor** (*bourgmestre*) is proposed by a majority of members from within the municipal council for a six-year mandate. He/she chairs the college of the mayor and aldermen and the municipal council.

## Competences

- Local land development
- Social assistance
- Culture and sports
- Preschool and primary education (organisation and infrastructure)
- Environment
- Water management and sanitation
- Waste management
- Cemeteries
- Regulatory and police powers
- Fire and rescue services (governance board and Funding)
- Road maintenance and traffic management
- Civil registry and population records



**Capital:**  
Luxembourg



**Geographical size:**  
2,586 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:**  
634,730 (0.1% EU)



**Vote:** Compulsory



**Political system:** Unitary state



**EU Member State**  
since: 1957



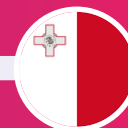
**Seats in the European Parliament:** 6



**Seats in the European Committee of the Regions:** 6



**Currency:** Euro



# MALTA

Malta is a unitary state composed of 68 local councils (*kunsill lokali*) and 6 regional councils (*Kumitat Reġjonali*).

CEMR in Malta - Local Councils' Association ([www.lca.org.mt](http://www.lca.org.mt))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	68	68	68
Regional			5

## Local governments

### 68 local councils (*kunsill lokali*)

The **local council** (*kunsill lokali*) is the local authority's deliberative body. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage via a system of proportional representation for a period of five years. The number of councillors varies according to the demographic size of the local authority.

The **mayor** (*sindku*) is the political representative of the local council. He/she is the local council member with the highest number of votes from the political party that wins an overall majority in a local election. The mayor holds a five-year mandate and chairs local council meetings.

The **executive secretary** (*segretarju eżekuttiv*) is designated by the local council for a three year mandate. He/she is the executive, administrative and financial head of the council.

## Regional governments

### 5 regional councils (*kumitat reġjonali*)

Previously known as "regional committees", the regional councils were established in 2021, following the Local Government Reform Process and the publication of Act No. XIV of 2019. Their legal basis was strengthened and their role, including a new set of defined functions, has also grown in importance.

The **regional council** (*kumitat reġjonali*) is the regional authority's deliberative body. Its members are the mayors (or representatives of the mayors) of the local councils from that region. They hold a five-year mandate.

The **regional president** (*reġjonali*) is elected by direct universal suffrage using a system of proportional representation for a period of five years.

The **executive secretary** (*segretarju eżekuttiv*) is the regional council's head of finances and administration.

## Competences

- Maintenance of road infrastructure and buildings
- Waste management
- Maintenance of public recreational centres
- Support for citizens and their rights (transport, communications, taxation)
- Child care centres, kindergartens and other educational services\*
- Health and rehabilitation centres\*
- Culture and sport
- Urban environment
- Local library services

\* In conjunction with any competent authority



Capital: Valletta



Geographical size:  
315 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
516,100 (0.1% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2004



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 6



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 5



Currency: Euro



# REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The Republic of Moldova is a unitary state composed of two tiers of local government: the first tier is made up of municipal self-governing units. One unit can contain one or several authorities: villages (*sate*), communes (*comune*), cities (*orașe*) and municipalities (*municipii*). The second tier is made up of small regions (*raioane*), the Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Administrative Unit and the municipalities of Chisinau and Balti. There is also the territory of Transnistria – an autonomous territorial unit, the status of which status remains to be defined.

CEMR in Moldova- Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova  
([www.calm.md](http://www.calm.md))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	898	8987	8983
Regional	32	32	32

## Local governments

**898 municipal self-governing units (villages/sate, communes/comune, towns/orase and municipalities/municipiums)**

The **local council** (*consiliu local*) is the deliberative body of the local authorities. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years, either through the use of political party lists or as independent candidates. Budget setting, local policies, property and territorial planning are its main competences.

The executive body is represented by the **mayor** (*primar*), who is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years, and by the **mayor's office** (*primarie*).

## Competences

- Urban and spatial planning
- Waste management
- Water management and sewage systems
- Local roads management
- Local public transport
- Cemeteries
- Local property management
- Educational centre management
- Local gas and heating distribution
- Culture, sport and recreation
- Economic development
- Social housing
- Fire services

## Regional governments (raions)

**32 small regions (raioane), the Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Administrative Unit and the municipalities of Chisinau and Balti**

Districts are a territorial-administrative unit of the second tier, consisting of a larger number of villages and towns and perform the role of a regional authority.

The **regional council** (*Counsiliul raional*) is a representative body of local government, elected through direct universal using party lists and independent candidates. The regional council elects a president of the region.

The **president** (*presedinte*) of the region is elected by the regional council for four years. He/she is the head of the regional executive branch. The executive body at the regional tier is the office of the regional president (*Aparatul Presedintelui raionului*).

The executive body is responsible for the administration of regional affairs and the implementation of the regional council's decisions.

## Competences

- Management of property
- Regional public transport
- Spatial planning
- Economic development support
- Local gas and heat distribution
- Education building maintenance
- Cultural, tourism and sport management
- Social assistance



**Capital:** Chisinau



**Geographical size:**  
33,843.5 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:**  
3,547,539



**Vote:** Non-compulsory



**State structure:**  
Unitary state



**Currency:**  
Moldovan Leu (MDL)



## REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

### The Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Administrative Unit (*Gagauz-Yeri*)

The Gagauzia is an autonomous territorial unit established under a special statute. As a special territorial unit, it has its own assembly, the **Gagauzian people's assembly** (in Gagauz: *HalkTopluşu*; in Romanian: *Adunarea Populara*), which can exercise lawmaking powers within its own jurisdiction, as well as a **governor** (Gagauz: *Başkan*; Romanian: *Guvernatorul Gagauziei*), who is the executive head. He/She is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. Executive power in the *Gagauz-Yeri* is exercised by an **executive committee** (*Bakannik Komiteti/Comitetul Executiv*). Its members are appointed by the governor or by a **simple majority** vote in the assembly at its first session. The executive committee ensures the application of the laws of the Republic of Moldova and those of the Gagauzian assembly.

#### Competences

- Science
- Culture
- Education
- Housing management
- Urban planning
- Health services
- Physical culture and sports
- Local budget, financial and taxation activities
- Economy and ecology
- Labour relations and social security
- Own police force
- International and foreign policy

### The municipality of Chisinau (*municipiul Chisinau*) and the municipality of Balti (*municipiul Balti*)

The municipalities of Chisinau and Balti hold competences at both local tier and regional tier.

#### Competences

- Social and economic development
- Maintenance of public roads
- Construction of hospitals, schools, roads
- Health care
- Maintenance of sanitation and social institutions
- Assistance to young families
- Social protection for the unemployed
- Public order
- Environmental protection
- Youth activities and sports
- Secondary education and professional education



# MONTENEGRO

Montenegro is a unitary state composed of the Capital City (*Glavni grad*), Old Royal Capital (*Prijestonica*) and municipalities (*opština*).

CEMR in Montenegro - Union of Municipalities of Montenegro  
([www.uom.co.me](http://www.uom.co.me))



Number of Sub-national  
government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	21	23	25

## Local governments

25 local self-government units including the Capital City, the Old Royal Capital and 23 municipalities (*opština*)

The **municipal assembly** (*Skupština opštine*) is the municipality's legislative body. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for four years. Each assembly is made up of 30 councillors plus an additional councillor for every 5,000 voters. The municipal assembly adopts regulations and the budget, and also establishes the level of local taxes. It can establish internal commissions and boards and is chaired by a speaker elected from among the councillors.

The **mayor** (*Predsjednik opštine* in municipalities and *gradonačelnik* in cities) is elected by the municipal assembly for a four-year mandate. He/she is the municipality's executive body. The mayor proposes regulations to be adopted by the assembly and is responsible for their implementation. He/she also supervises the work of the municipal administration and can appoint or dismiss deputy mayors.

**Note:** Within the capital city of Podgorica there is a district (*Golubovci*) which enjoys the status of a municipality

## Competences

- Local development
- Construction land development and management
- Performance and development of communal affairs
- Environmental protection
- Social welfare
- Public transport
- Culture and sports



Capital: Podgorica



Geographical size:  
13,430km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
620,739



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Euro



# THE NETHERLANDS

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy. The state of the Netherlands is a decentralized unitary state composed of municipalities (*gemeenten*) and provinces (*provincies*) and water boards (*waterschappen*).

CEMR in the Netherlands - Association of Netherlands Municipalities ([www.vng.nl](http://www.vng.nl)) and Association of Dutch Provinces ([www.ipa.nl](http://www.ipa.nl))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	418	390	352
Intermediate	12	12	12

## Local governments

### 352 municipalities (*gemeenten*)

The **local council** (*gemeenteraad*) is the municipality's deliberative body. Its members are councillors elected for a period of four years via the proportional representation system. The local council is in charge of the college of mayor and aldermen, makes all main municipal decisions and has the power to pass by-laws. It is chaired by the mayor, who cannot take part in any of the council votes.

The **college of mayor and aldermen** (*burgemeester en wethouders*) is the municipality's executive body. The college prepares and implements local council decisions and is responsible for executing national policies at the local tier (*medebewind*). Aldermen, whose number varies depending on the municipality, are elected by the council for a four-year mandate.

The **mayor** (*burgemeester*) chairs the local council and the college of mayor and aldermen. He/she is formally appointed for a six-year mandate by the national government at the proposal of the local council. The mayor has the power to vote within the college of mayor and aldermen and his/her vote can be decisive.

## Competences

- Urban planning\*
- (Social) Housing\*
- Civil engineering\*
- Environmental policies
- Waste collection
- Transport: local roads, city transport and public transport\*
- Public health and youth care: prevention and education\*
- Public safety and order
- Disaster management \*
- Primary and secondary education: school buildings\*
- Employment
- Local and regional economy
- Childcare
- Social services and welfare\*
- Culture and sports
- Leisure, Recreation and Tourism
- Local media and broadcasting

\*shared with the national or provincial government

## Regional governments

### 12 provinces (*provincies*)

The **provincial states** (*Provinciale Staten*) are the provinces' legislative body. Their members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year mandate. The provincial states have the power to pass by-laws and are chaired by the king's commissioner, who cannot take part in any provincial state votes. The provincial states also elect the Senate.

The **provincial executive board** (*gedeputeerde staten*) is the province's executive body. It prepares and implements decisions taken by the provincial states and is responsible for executing national policies at the provincial tier. The provincial executive board is composed of the king's commissioner and members of the executive board (*gedeputeerden*), whose number varies depending on the province.

The **king's commissioner** (*commissaris van de koning*) chairs the provincial executive board and is appointed for a six-year term by the national government at the proposal of the provincial states.

## Competences

(mostly shared with the national government)

- Spatial planning
- Environment
- Culture
- Leisure and tourism
- Public transport, provincial road maintenance and traffic
- Energy
- Regional media and broadcasting



**Capital:**  
Amsterdam



**Geographical size:**  
41,540 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:**  
17,475,415  
(3.9% EU)



**Vote :** Non-compulsory



**State Structure:**  
Unitary state



**EU Member State**  
since: 1957



**Seats in the European Parliament:** 29



**Seats in the European Committee of the Regions:** 12



**Currency:** Euro



# THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The Republic of North Macedonia is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*opstina*).

CEMR in the Republic of North Macedonia - Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of North Macedonia ([www.zels.org.mk](http://www.zels.org.mk))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	85	81	81

## Local governments

80 municipalities (*opstina*) and the city of Skopje

The **local council** (*sovet na opstinata*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. The number of municipal councillors is determined by law and depends on the demographic size of the municipality.

The **mayor** (*gradonacalnik*) is the municipality's executive body and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year mandate. He/she executes decisions made by the municipal council and submits draft municipal acts to the local council. The mayor represents the municipality, acts on its behalf and is responsible for the organisation, performance and quality of services of its administration. He/she cannot be a local councillor at the same time as mayor.

**Note:** The country's capital, the City of Skopje, is a special unit of local self-government made up of ten independent municipalities. The capital's independent municipalities have individual competences, some of which are shared with Skopje, and which set them apart from the country's remaining 74 municipalities. Examples of these shared competences include property tax, road maintenance, urban planning and building permits.

## Competences

- Urban and spatial planning
- Environment
- Local economic development
- Water supply and treatment
- Road maintenance
- Culture
- Sports and leisure
- Tourism
- Social services
- Health care
- Child care
- Elementary and secondary education
- Fire services
- Disaster protection and assistance



Capital: Skopje



Geographical size:  
25,437 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
2,068,808



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Denar (MKD)



# NORWAY

Norway is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*kommune*) and counties (*fylkeskommune*).

CEMR in Norway - Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (<http://www.ks.no/>)



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	430	428	356
Regional	19	19	11

## Local governments

### 356 municipalities (*kommune*)

The **local council** (*kommunestyret*) is the municipality's deliberative body and is made up of councillors elected for four years from party lists via a system of proportional representation. The local council is the highest decision-making body of the municipality and is in charge of local budgetary, financial and planning issues.

The **executive committee** (*formannskap*) is composed of members coming from the different political parties, based on the results obtained in the last local election. The committee prepares decisions concerning the local budget, as well as annual accounts and local taxes for the local council. The executive committee may also be assigned decision-making authority in all cases unless otherwise provided by law.

The **mayor** (*ordfører*) is elected for a period of four years by and from within the local council. He/she heads the council, chairs its meetings and represents the municipality.

**Note:** The two largest cities, Oslo and Bergen have a parliamentary system, whereby the local council elects a city government supported by a majority of councillors. The city government heads the local administration, makes recommendations to the city council, and is responsible for carrying out its decisions.

The capital city of Oslo is divided into fifteen *boroughs*, each of which has a *borough* council, whose members are elected by direct universal suffrage.

## Competences

- Child welfare
- Primary and secondary education
- Health care
- Social services
- Culture and leisure
- Technical infrastructure
- Local planning

## Regional governments

### 11 counties (*fylkeskommune*)

The **county council** (*fylkestinget*) is composed of councillors elected by proportional representation for a period of four years. It is the county's legislative body and is in charge of budgetary, financial and planning issues.

The **executive committee** (*fylkesutvalget*) is made up of members designated by and from within the county council and meets at least once a month. Much like the municipality's executive committee, it prepares decisions on the county's budget. The executive committee may also be assigned decision-making authority in all cases unless otherwise provided by law.

The **county mayor** (*fylkesordfører*) is elected by the county council among the members of the executive committee for a four-year mandate. He/she heads both the county council and the executive committee and represents the county.

**Note:** The City of Oslo has the status of a municipality and of a county, and thus enjoys both the local and regional competences listed above.

Three of the counties, in addition to Oslo, have a parliamentary system, whereby the county council elects a county government supported by the majority of the councillors.

Both municipalities and counties can themselves choose to implement a parliamentary system. The proposal simply has to be put forward in one election period, although it does not require a majority vote, and can be implemented after the next election.



Capital city: Oslo



Geographical size: 365,123 km<sup>2</sup>



Population: 5,391,369



Vote: non-compulsory



State structure: unitary state



Currency: Norwegian Krone (NOK)

## Competences

- Secondary education
- Regional development
- Transport and environment
- Trade and industrial policy
- Culture
- Dental health

# POLAND

Poland is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*gminy*), counties (*powiaty*) and regions (*voivodship-województwo*).

CEMR in Poland - Association of Polish Cities ([www.zmp.poznan.pl](http://www.zmp.poznan.pl)) and Association of Polish Counties ([www.zpp.pl](http://www.zpp.pl))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	2,479	2,479	2,477
Intermediate	379	380	380
Regional	16	16	16

## Local governments 2,477 municipalities (*gminy*)

The **municipal council** (*rada gminy*) is composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. In addition to its legislative powers, the council votes the municipal budget and determines local taxes. The council is sub-divided into commissions responsible for the preparation of decisions taken by the municipal council. Members of the commissions are elected by and from among the municipal councillors.

The **mayor** (*wójt* in rural municipalities, *burmistrz* in urban ones and *prezydent miasta* in cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants and in some cities with smaller number of inhabitants – due to historical reasons) is the local authority's single executive head. He/she is elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term and officially represents the municipality.

The **head of the municipal administration** (*sekretarz gminy*) is employed by the mayor. He/she can act on the mayor's behalf, particularly when it comes to the organisation of the city hall's work and to the management of human resources.

**Note:** In Poland, 66 urban municipalities have a special status whereby they are responsible for competences usually exercised by counties. The capital city of Warsaw, which is divided into 18 districts, also has this special status and thus exercises the competences of both a municipality and a county.

## Competences

- Public transport and communal roads
- Social services
- Sanitation
- Housing
- Environment
- Culture, sport and tourism
- Pre-school and primary education
- Telecommunications
- Health
- Markets
- Public order and civil protection
- Decentralised cooperation



Capital: Warsaw



Geographical size: 312679 km<sup>2</sup>



Population: 37,840,001 (8.4% EU)



Vote: Non-mandatory



State Structure: Unitary state



EU Member State since: 2004



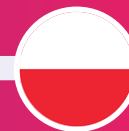
Seats in the European Parliament: 52



Seats in the European Committee of the Regions: 21



Currency: Polish Złoty (PLN)



## POLAND

### Intermediary governments

**314 counties (*powiaty*) and 66 municipalities with special status (towns fulfilling county duties)**

The **county council** (*rada powiatu*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. This deliberative assembly appoints members of the executive committee including the head of the county.

The **head of the county** (*starosta*) is elected for a five-year term by the county council.

The **executive board** (*zarząd powiatu*) is made up by the head of the county and deputies elected upon request head of the county by the county council. This body is in charge of implementing council decisions.

### Competences

- Secondary education
- Health
- Social policy including County Centres for Family Assistance (PCPR)
- Public transport and public roads building and maintenance
- Culture, sport and tourism
- Environment
- Water management
- Public order and civil protection
- Agriculture, forestry and inland fisheries
- Employment
- Telecommunications activities

### Regional governments

**16 regions (*voivodship-województwo*)**

The **regional council** (*sejmik województwa*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. This deliberative assembly elects the marshal.

The **regional executive board** (*zarząd województwa*) is composed of members and the marshal, elected by the regional council. The board implements decisions made by the regional council.

The **marshal** (*marszałek*) is elected by the regional council.

### Competences

- Economic development
- Higher education
- Environment
- Employment
- Social policy
- Regional road management
- Health
- Culture, sport and tourism
- Public order and civil protection
- Telecommunications activities



# PORTUGAL

Portugal is a unitary state composed of parishes (*freguesias*), municipalities (*municípios*) and autonomous regions.

CEMR in Portugal - National Association of Portuguese Municipalities  
([www.anmp.pt](http://www.anmp.pt))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	4,567	3,400	3,400
Regional	2	2	2

## Local governments

3,092 parishes (*freguesias*) and 308 municipalities (*municípios*)

### Parishes

The **parish assembly** (*assembleia de freguesia*) is the deliberative body of the parish and is composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year period via a system of proportional representation.

The **executive committee** (*junta de freguesia*) is the parish's executive body and members are elected for a period of four years by and from among the parish assembly's members. The executive committee is responsible for preparing and implementing parish assembly decisions.

The **president** (*presidente da junta de freguesia*) is elected for a four-year mandate based on he/she being the head of the list that receives the most votes. The president chairs the executive committee.

## Competences

- Rural and urban infrastructure
- Education
- Culture, leisure and sport
- Primary health care
- Social action
- Civil protection
- Environment
- Development
- Urban and rural planning
- Community protection
- Investments



Capital: Lisbon



Geographical size:  
92,226 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
10,298,252 (2.3%  
EU)



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 1986



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 21



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 12



Currency: Euro



## PORTUGAL

### Municipalities

The **municipal assembly** (*assembleia municipal*) is made up of the presidents of the municipality's parishes and of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. It is the municipality's deliberative body and monitors the activities of the executive council.

The **executive council** (*câmara municipal*) is the municipality's executive branch and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year period. Its members can also take part in the municipal assembly; however, they cannot vote. The executive council organises and implements municipal services, such as municipal planning and public works.

The **mayor** (*presidente da câmara municipal*) is elected for a four-year mandate and as the electoral candidate at the head of the list that receives the most votes during the election of the executive council. He/she presides over the work of the executive council.

### Competences

- Rural and urban infrastructure
- Energy
- Transport and communications
- Education
- Heritage, culture and science
- Leisure and sport
- Health
- Social action
- Housing
- Civil protection
- Environment and basic sanitation
- Consumer protection
- Promoting development
- Spatial planning and urbanism
- Municipal police
- External cooperation

### Regional governments 2 autonomous regions (Azores and Madeira)

The **legislative assembly** (*assembleia legislativa*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage.

The **president** (*presidente do governo regional*) presides over the regional government for a period of four years.

**Note:** Other Portuguese local self-government units exist alongside the municipalities and parishes, including authorities such as inter-municipal communities, associations of municipalities and metropolitan areas.

A primary aim of these authorities is to coordinate the municipal investments of inter-municipal interests. Other areas of competence include strategic, economic, social and territorial management.



# ROMANIA

Romania is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*comune*), towns (*orase*), cities (*municipii*) and counties (*judete*).

CEMR in Romania – Association of Romanian Communes ([www.acor.ro](http://www.acor.ro)),  
National Union of County Councils of Romania ([www.uncjr.ro](http://www.uncjr.ro)), Romanian  
Municipalities Association ([www.amr.ro](http://www.amr.ro))



Number of Sub-national  
government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	3,181	3,181	3,181
Regional	41	41	41

## Local governments

2,861 rural municipalities (*comune*), 217 towns (*orase*) and 103 cities (*municipii*)

The **local council** (*consiliul local*) is the local authority's deliberative assembly. It is composed of councillors elected by voting for candidates via a party list system for a four-year term. The number of councillors is determined by order of the prefect based on the demographic size of the local authority. The local council's work revolves around economic, social and environmental development, public and private property and the management of public services.

The **mayor** (*primarul*) represents the local authority's executive body and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. He/she is responsible for the local budget and public services. The mayor also represents the local authority vis-à-vis other authorities, represents the national government within the municipality, town or city, and cooperates with the decentralised departments of national government ministries and specialised units present within its jurisdiction.

## Competences

- Housing
- Local police
- Urban planning
- Waste management
- Public health
- Transport infrastructure and urban transport planning
- Water supply and sewage system
- District heating
- Pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational and technical education
- Local heritage administration
- Administration of parks and open green public areas



Capital: Bucharest



Geographical size:  
238,391 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
19,186,201 (4.3  
% EU)



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State Structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2007



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 33



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 15



Currency:  
Romanian Leu  
(RON)

## Regional governments

41 counties (*judete*)

The **county council** (*consiliul judetean*) is composed of members elected by using a party list system for a four-year term. It monitors the implementation of provisions outlined in public administration legislation. The council is also responsible for the distribution of public funds, the county's economic, social and environmental development and the management of county property and certain public services.

The **president** (*presedinte*) heads the county council and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. He/she is in charge of the legal representation of the council vis-à-vis third parties. The president can delegate responsibilities to the two vice-presidents, who are appointed by the members of the county council.

**Note:** There are 42 prefects in total: one for each county and one for the capital city of Bucharest. There is no hierarchy between local councils and county councils.

## Competences

- Regional development
- Economic, environmental and social development
- Management of public services
- Urban planning and landscaping
- Water supply
- Sewerage
- Public transport
- Public health
- Transport infrastructure
- Social assistance
- Education
- Cooperation between local and national authorities



# SERBIA

Serbia is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*opština*), cities (*grad*), the city of Belgrade and autonomous provinces (*autonomne pokrajine*).

CEMR in Serbia - Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia ([www.skgo.org](http://www.skgo.org))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	174	174	174
Regional	2	2	2

## Local governments

174\* municipalities (*opština*) and cities (*grad*), including the city of Belgrade

The **municipality** is the basic territorial unit established by the Law on Local Self-Government, from which it derives its right to independently exercise and perform all powers and duties falling within its competences. Municipalities must meet a minimum threshold of 10,000 inhabitants. Exceptionally, a municipality with a smaller population can be established for economic, geographical or historical reasons. **The city** is a territorial unit determined by law, which represents the economic, administrative, geographical and cultural centre of a broader area and has more than 100,000 inhabitants. In exceptional cases, a city with fewer inhabitants can be established.

The City of Belgrade, as the country's capital and administrative centre, qualifies as a special territorial unit. The status, competencies, and bodies of the City of Belgrade are regulated by a special administrative law.

The **municipal** or **city assembly** (*skupština opštine* or *skupština grada*) is composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. The assembly enacts municipal or city statutes, rules of procedure, development programmes, the municipal budget, urban planning and other municipal regulations. It also appoints and dismisses the mayor, the deputy mayor, the members of the municipal or city council and the president of the assembly.

The municipal or city council (*opštinsko* or *gradsko veće*) is the executive body, composed of members elected by the municipal or city assembly by secret ballot for a period of four years. It monitors the work of the municipal administration and is chaired by the mayor. The Council has a legally defined role to propose draft decisions (including draft budget proposal) to the assembly, to take decisions on appeal relating to administrative procedures and to assist the mayor in his/her work.

## Competences

- Public transport (including waterway line transport) and taxi services
- Urban planning and residential buildings (shared competence with central authorities, with local governments in charge of investment and the maintenance of buildings)
- Preschool education, Primary education and primary healthcare (pharmacies), sport
- Social services and protection
- Municipal services (waste, energy efficiency, water, public lighting, transport, markets, parks, green public spaces, public parking, cemeteries, spatial planning)
- Environment
- Local and non-categorised roads and streets
- Local economic development and tourism
- Municipal police
- Voluntary fire protection and natural disasters
- Agricultural land, pastoral land and cooperatives and rural development
- Legal assistance to citizens
- Local public property and construction land
- Protection and development of culture
- Assistance to people with disabilities and vulnerable groups, child protection
- Human and minority rights



Capital: Belgrade



Geographical size: 88,499 km<sup>2</sup>



Population: 6,871,547



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure: Unitary state



Currency: Serbian Dinar (RSD)



## SERBIA

The **mayor** (*predsednik opštine* in municipalities or *gradonačelnik* in cities) is the executive head of the city or municipality and is elected by the assembly for a period of four years. The mayor represents the city or municipality, chairs the city or municipal council, implements city or municipal assembly decisions, and dictates the work of the local administration. He/she proposes the deputy-mayor as well as the members of the city or municipal council to the assembly.

The capital city of Belgrade and 28 other local authorities hold the status of city. The City of Belgrade, with its capital city status, has 23 additional competences including water, fire protection, and road construction.

\*This is the number of local units according to the Law on Territorial Organisation of the Republic of Serbia (including Kosovo\*), *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 129/07, 18/2016, 47/2018 and 9/2020

### Regional governments

#### 2 autonomous provinces (*Autonomna Pokrajina Vojvodina* and *Autonomna Pokrajina Kosovo\**)

The **assembly of the autonomous province** of Vojvodina (*skupština autonomne pokrajine*) is composed of deputies elected by direct universal suffrage and is chaired by the president, who represents the assembly at the national tier and abroad. It also appoints one or more vice-presidents. This deliberative body implements programmes relating to economic, regional and social development and adopts the provincial budget.

The **provincial government of Vojvodina** (*pokrajinska vlada*) is the province's executive body. It is composed of a president, vice-presidents and members, and is accountable to the autonomous province's assembly.

The autonomous province of Vojvodina generates its own revenue and thus provides its municipalities with the financial resources customarily allocated by a national government.

**Note:** Kosovo\* is an autonomous province within the Republic of Serbia and, in line with the [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244](#), adopted on 10 June 1999, it is under the interim civilian and military administration of the UN. Serbia's state policy has resolved that the Republic of Serbia will never recognise the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo\* and asserts that the future status of the southern Serbian province can only be defined within the framework of adequate principles and norms of the United Nations and other international organisations, and with respect for the constitutional order of the Republic of Serbia. Given this specific situation, further data on the Autonomous Province of Kosovo\* cannot be provided.

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

### Competences

- Spatial planning, regional development and construction of facilities
- Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries, veterinary services
- Environment
- Water
- Tourism, hotels and restaurants, spas and health resorts
- Industry and handcraft
- Road, water and railway transport maintenance
- Social welfare
- Health care
- Education
- Employment
- Science and technology
- Economy and privatisation
- Mining and energy
- Culture
- Human and minority rights, support for religious communities



# SLOVAKIA

Slovakia is unitary state composed of municipalities (*obec*) and self-governing regions (*samosprávny kraj*).

CEMR in Slovakia - Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia ([www.zmos.sk](http://www.zmos.sk))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	2,930	2,930	2,930
Regional	8	8	8

## Local governments

2,751 municipalities (*obec*), 140 cities (*mesto*) and 39 city districts (*mestská časť*)

The **local council** (*obecné zastupiteľstvo* in municipalities, *mestské zastupiteľstvo* in cities and *miestne zastupiteľstvo* in city districts) is the local authority's deliberative body. It is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years.

The **local board** (*obecná rada* in municipalities, *mestská rada* in cities and *miestna rada* in city districts) is the mayor's consultative body and the local council's executive body. Its formation is optional and its members are elected by and from within the local council. The municipal board has the power of initiative, control and executes the tasks according to local council decisions.

The **mayor** (*starosta* in municipalities and city districts and *primátor* in cities) constitute the community's highest executive body and statutory representative. He/she is elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year mandate and chairs both the local council and the local board.

**Note:** Municipalities can gain city status upon request and as long as they meet the criteria specified within municipal law.

Bratislava and Košice have two tiers of self-government: the magistrate (*magistrát*), which represents the city as a whole, and city districts. These city districts are responsible for issues of local significance such as urban planning, local road maintenance, budget, local ordinances, park maintenance and public safety.

## Competences

Transferred competences (transferred performance of the state administration):

- Pre-school and primary school
- Building regulations
- Local Road
- Housing – State housing development fund
- Office registration
- Residence report and population register
- Elections and referendum
- Environment – surface and groundwater, air protection, nature and landscape protection, flood protection
- Social services

## Original competences

- Pre-school and primary school
- Territorial planning
- Geodesy, cartography and real estate cadastre
- Social services and assistance
- Financial management
- Administration of local taxes and fees and administration of municipal property
- Road maintenance
- Public transport
- Public lightning
- Environment - Water supply, Sewage and municipal waste,
- Culture and sports
- Health
- Funeral
- Security
- Fire protection
- Local development

**Note:** Municipalities may perform certain duties in the name of the state - transferred performance of the state administration, mainly regarding office registrations, construction permits and some aspects relative to education, though the state remains responsible for the quality and funding of such duties.



Capital: Bratislava



Geographical size: 49 035 km<sup>2</sup>



Population: 5,459,781 (1.2 % EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State Structure: Unitary state



EU Member State since: 2004



Seats in the European Parliament: 14



Seats in the Council of the Regions: 9



Currency: Euro



## SLOVAKIA

### Regional governments

#### 8 self-governing regions (*samosprávny kraj*)

The **regional council** (*zastupiteľstvo samosprávneho kraja*) is the region's legislative and decision-making body and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term.

The **president** (*predseda*) is elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year mandate. He/she is the self-governing region's representative and statutory body, and chairs regional council meetings.

The **commissions** (*komisie*) may be established by the regional council and act as its consultative body with the power of initiative and control. Commission members are elected by and from within the regional council.

### Competences

- Regional road network
- Land development
- Regional development
- Secondary education
- Hospitals
- Social services
- Culture
- Participation in civil defence
- Licences for pharmacies and private physicians

**Note:** Self-governing regions may perform certain duties in the name of the state, mainly regarding education, healthcare and transport.



# SLOVENIA

Slovenia is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*občine*) and urban municipalities (*mestne občine*).

CEMR in Slovenia - Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia ([www.skupnostobcin.si](http://www.skupnostobcin.si)), Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia ([www.zmos.si](http://www.zmos.si))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	211	212	212

## Local governments 212 municipalities (*občin*)

The **municipal council** (*občinski svet*) is the municipality's deliberative body and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four year-term. Deputy-mayors are appointed by the mayor from among council members. The council is responsible for making the municipality's main decisions, such as adopting local regulations, land and development plans and the municipal budget as well as deciding on the acquisition or selling of municipal property.

The **mayor** (*župan*) constitutes the municipality's executive body and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a mandate of four years. He/she represents the municipality and is at the head of the local administration.

**Note:** Slovenian municipalities are divided into local, village or neighbourhood communities, (*krajevne, vaške or četrtne skupnosti*), where each has a council whose members are elected by direct universal suffrage. These councils have the power to propose decisions relating to the local community to the municipal council and other powers in accordance with local regulations.

The capital city of Slovenia, Ljubljana, and ten other municipalities have the status of urban municipality (*mestna občina*). A municipality can acquire the status of urban municipality if it has a minimum of 20,000 inhabitants and 15,000 jobs. Urban municipalities have more competences than the other municipalities, including responsibility for urban development, urban transport, housing, education, environment, public services, culture, sports and recreation.

## Competences

- Public safety and protection
- Housing
- Land development
- Urban planning
- Trade and industry
- Environment
- Local roads network
- Transport
- Pre-school and primary education
- Social security
- Water treatment and waste collection



Capital: Ljubljana



Geographical size:  
20 273 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
2,108,977  
(0.5% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 2004



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 8



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 7



Currency: Euro



# SPAIN

Spain is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*municipios*), county councils (*diputaciones*), Canary Island county councils (*cabildos*), Balearic Island county councils (*consejos insulares*), autonomous cities (*ciudades autónomas*) and autonomous communities (*comunidades autónomas*).

CEMR in Spain - Spanish Federation of Municipalities and provinces  
([www.femp.es](http://www.femp.es))



	2012	2016	2021
Local	8,169	8,176	8,183
Regional	19	19	19

## Local governments

**8,131 municipalities (municipios) and 52 county council (diputaciones, consejos and cabildos)**

The **local council** (*pleno*) is the local authority's deliberative body and is composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. This assembly approves the local budget, urban planning, by-laws and municipal rules.

The **government council** (*junta de gobierno*) is the local authority's executive body. It is made up of local councillors appointed by the mayor to assist him in his work and to exercise a number of executive functions.

The **mayor** (*alcalde*) or president (*presidente*) is the head of the executive body. He/she is appointed by and from within the local council and is assisted by a number of councillors which he/she nominates and can dismiss. The mayor also chairs the local council.

**Note:** The 52 county councils are composed of 38 county councils and of the 3 provincial councils of the Basque Country, the 7 county councils of the Canary Island, and the 4 county councils of the Balearic Island.

## Competences

*In every local authority*

- Water supply
- Street lighting
- Urban traffic
- Food security
- Road maintenance
- Sewage and waste management

*In local authorities of over 5, 000 inhabitants (in addition to the aforementioned)*

- Public libraries
- Green areas
- Local police

*In local authorities of over 20, 000 inhabitants (in addition to the aforementioned)*

- Social services
- Fire prevention
- Sporting facilities

*In local authorities of over 50, 000 inhabitants (in addition to the aforementioned)*

- Public transport
- Protection of the environment



Capital: Madrid



Geographical size: 505,944 km<sup>2</sup>



Population: 47,394,223 (10.6% EU)



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure: Unitary state



EU Member State since: 1986



Seats in the European Parliament: 59



Seats in the European Committee of the Regions: 21



Currency: Euro



## SPAIN

### Regional governments

**17 autonomous communities (*comunidades autónomas*) and 2 autonomous cities (*ciudades autónomas*)**

The **regional assembly** (*asamblea regional*) is the autonomous community's deliberative body. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. It exercises devolved legislative power.

The **regional government council** (*consejo de gobierno*) is the autonomous community's executive body and is headed by the president who appoints its members. It regulates and initiates legislation.

The **president** is elected by the regional assembly for a four-year mandate. The president manages and coordinates the work of the regional government council and represents the autonomous community vis-à-vis the national government.

**Note:** The autonomous communities can create their own police force.

The two autonomous cities (Ceuta and Melilla) are special administrative units, halfway between a municipality and an autonomous community. Unlike the independent communities, they do not have their own legislative assembly but do have deliberative powers.

### Competences

- Territorial development
- Civil engineering
- Economy
- Agriculture
- Culture
- Social policies
- Environmental management
- Development of economic activities
- Health
- Education



# SWEDEN

Sweden is a unitary state composed of municipalities (*kommuner*), county councils (*landsting*) and regions (*regioner*).

CEMR in Sweden - Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions ([www.skl.se](http://www.skl.se))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	290	290	290
Regional	20	20	20

## Local governments

### 290 municipalities (*kommuner*)

The **municipal assembly** (*kommunfullmäktige*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term. This assembly is the municipality's decision-making body but can delegate important decision-making powers to the municipal executive committee and to the specialised committees. It also levies taxes and adopts the municipal budget.

The **municipal executive committee** (*kommunstyrelsen*) is made up of members appointed for a period of four years by the municipal assembly based on the share of seats obtained by each party within the municipal assembly. The municipal executive committee heads and coordinates the municipal administration, supervises the activities of the specialised committees, drafts the municipal budget as well as prepares and implements municipal council decisions.

It is presided over by a **chair** (*kommunstyrelsens ordförande*), the highest executive representative of the municipality, which can be referred to in other countries as the "mayor". However, in some Swedish municipalities, the "mayor" is the chair of the municipal assembly (*kommunfullmäktiges ordförande*).

## Competences

### Mandatory competences

- Social services
- Childcare and pre-school
- Primary and secondary education
- Care for the elderly
- Support for the physically and intellectually disabled
- Primary healthcare
- Environmental protection
- Urban planning
- Refuse collection and waste disposal
- Rescue and emergency services
- Water supply and sewerage
- Road maintenance

### Optional competences

- Culture
- Housing
- Energy
- Employment
- Industrial and commercial services



Capital:  
Stockholm



Geographical size:  
450,295 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
10,379,295  
(2.3% EU)



Vote: Non-  
compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



EU Member State  
since: 1995



Seats in the  
European  
Parliament: 21



Seats in the  
European  
Committee of the  
Regions: 12



Currency: Swedish  
Krona (SEK)



## SWEDEN

### Regional governments

#### 20 regions (*regioner*)

The **regional council assembly** (*regionfullmäktige*) is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of four years. This assembly is the decision-making body of the county or region, approves the budget and levies taxes. The assembly can delegate important decision-making powers to the executive committee and to the specialised committees.

The **executive committee** (*regionstyrelsen*) is appointed for four years by the county or regional council assembly based on the share of seats obtained by each party within the assembly. This executive body is responsible for the preparation and implementation of county or regional council assembly decisions. It also supervises the activities of the specialised committees, which are chaired by what can be considered in English as the “*president*” of the county council or region.

The **specialised committees** (*nämnder*) are composed of members either appointed or elected by the council assembly depending on its political composition. The committees are responsible for assisting the executive committee in the preparation and implementation of decisions made by the county or regional council assembly.

**Note:** Since the 1st January 2019 all regions have the same responsibility regarding regional development.

Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea, has the status of a municipality but also has competences normally attributed to regions.

### Competences

#### *Mandatory competences*

- Healthcare
- Dental care
- Public transport (via a regional public transport authority)
- Regional development

#### *Optional competences*

- Culture
- Tourism
- Education



# TURKEY

Turkey is a unitary state composed of villages (*köy*), municipalities (*belediye*) and special provincial administrations (*il özel idaresi*).

CEMR in Turkey - Union of Municipalities of Turkey ([www.tbb.gov.tr](http://www.tbb.gov.tr))



Number of Sub-national government

	2012	2016	2021
Local	37,336	19,695	19,641

## Local governments

18,201 villages (*köy*), 1,389 municipalities (*belediye*), and 51 special provincial administrations (*il özel idaresi*)

### Villages

Villages are the traditional local administration in rural areas and usually have a population size of 150 to 5,000 inhabitants.

The **village council** (*köy derneği*) is one of the decision-making bodies of the village and is composed of citizens of 18 years or older.

The **village executive committee** (*ihtiyar heyeti*) is the main executive body of the village.

The **headman** (*muhtar*) is elected by the villagers for a period of five years. He/she represents the village and carries out the services provided to its inhabitants.

### Municipalities

The **municipal council** (*belediye meclisi*) is the local authority's main decision-making body. It is composed of members, whose number varies from nine to 55, depending on the demographic size of the municipality, elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of five years.

The **municipal executive committee** (*belediye encümeni*) is both the executive and decision-making body of the municipality. A proportion of its members are bureaucrats appointed by the mayor from among the local administration's heads of unit, while the rest are elected from within the municipal council for a one-year term. Local authorities with a population of less than 100,000 have five executive committee members while those with more than 100,000 inhabitants have seven members.

The **mayor** (*belediye başkanı*) is the executive body of the municipality. He/she is elected by direct universal suffrage for five years. The mayor heads the municipal administration and represents the local authority.

## Competences

- Urban planning
- Water supply and sewage
- Transport
- Environment and environmental health
- Hygiene
- Municipal police, fire fighting, emergency, rescue and ambulance services
- Urban traffic
- Funerals and cemeteries
- Parks and green spaces
- Housing
- Culture and tourism
- Youth and sports
- Social services and assistance
- Weddings
- Vocational and skills training
- Services for economic and commercial development

**Note:** Municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants must also open shelters for women and children.



Capital: Ankara



Geographical size:  
785,350 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
83,614,362



Vote: Compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Turkish  
Lira (TRY)



## TURKEY

### Special provincial administrations

The **provincial council** (*il genel meclisi*) is the special provincial administration's legislative body and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. It is headed by a president, elected by and from among the members of the council.

The **provincial executive committee** (*il encümeni*) is composed of ten members. Five members are elected each year by the provincial council from among its own members via secret ballot. The other five are appointed for a one year period by the governor, from among the heads of unit of the special provincial administration. The head of the financial services unit is mandatorily one of them.

The **governor** (*vali*) is the head of the special provincial administration. He/she is appointed by the national government and represents the special provincial administration.

### Competences

- Health and social assistance
- Public works
- Culture
- Education
- Agriculture and animal husbandry
- Economic and commercial matters
- Urban planning for villages



# UKRAINE

Ukraine is a unitary state composed of territorial communities (amalgamated communities of villages (*sela*) and towns (*selyshcha*), cities (*mista*), districts (*rayony*) and regions (*oblasti*).

CEMR in Ukraine - Association of Ukrainian Cities ([www.auc.org.ua](http://www.auc.org.ua))  
and Ukrainian Association of District and Regional Councils  
(<http://uaror.org.ua/>)



	2012	2016	2021
Local	11,517	10,885	1775
Intermediate	488	488	136
Regional	24	25	24

## Local governments

**1,775 territorial communities**, among them **Kyiv City**, **627 village councils** (*silska rada*), **431 town councils** (*selyshchna rada*), **381 city councils** (*miska rada*), **31 territorial communities** in the uncontrolled territory within Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and **304 territorial communities** (in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol).

The **municipal council** (*rada*) is the local authority's deliberative assembly and is composed of members elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term. Council members exercise their power through council sessions or standing commissions.

The **executive committee** (*vykonavchyy komitet*) is the executive body, it implements council decisions and is responsible for development programmes, the municipal budget and for the coordination of departments and services within the committee. The mayor puts forward a list of potential executive committee members, which is in turn approved by the municipal council.

**The mayor** (*silsky golova* in villages, *selyshshnyy golova* in towns and *miskyy golova* in cities) constitutes the main executive body of the municipality and is elected by direct universal suffrage for a period of five years. He/she chairs municipal council meetings and represents the municipality vis-à-vis third parties

**Note:** The cities of Kiev and Sevastopol have a special status as their respective system of local self-government coexists with their system of state administration.

## Competences

- Maintenance of technical infrastructure
- Urban development, planning and control
- Transport
- Water, heating and sewage
- Waste management
- Tourism
- Environment
- Promotion of local business and employment
- Development programmes
- Local budget
- Education
- Social welfare
- Health care
- Culture
- Administrative Services



Capital: Kyiv



Geographical size:  
6,035,000 km<sup>2</sup>



Population:  
41,418,717



Vote: Non-compulsory



State structure:  
Unitary state



Currency: Hryvnia (UAH)



## UKRAINE

### Intermediary governments

#### 136 districts (*rayony*)

The **district council** (*rayonna rada*) is the district's decision-making body. Its members are elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. Council members exercise their power through council sessions or standing commissions. The district council represents the common interests of the municipalities in its jurisdiction. It does not have a separate executive committee like municipalities, as its executive functions are performed by a district state administration created by the national government.

The **head of the district council** (*golova rayonnoyi rady*) is elected for five years by and from within the district council. He/she heads the council.

#### Competences

Following the territorial reform in 2020, district councils lost all competences.

### Regional governments

#### 24 regions (*oblasti*), the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and two cities with special status – Kyiv, the capital, and Sevastopol.

The **regional council** (*oblasna rada*) is the region's decision-making body. Its members are councillors elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year mandate. The regional council represents the common interests of its municipalities. It does not have a separate executive committee like municipalities, as its executive functions are performed by a regional state administration set up by the national government.

The **head of the regional council** (*golova oblasnoyi rady*) is elected by and from within the regional council for a period of five years. He/she heads the regional council.

#### Competences

- Regional development programmes
- Health
- Education
- Culture
- Social welfare
- Distribution of state budget funds
- Regional planning
- Transport



# UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is a unitary state with devolved jurisdictions. The UK Parliament is sovereign but Scotland and Northern Ireland have always retained separate legal systems. Ever since the devolution process that started in 1997 with the creation of legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the UK has had an asymmetric system of governance; as for many domestic policy areas the UK government holds exclusive powers only in England.

**CEMR in the United Kingdom - Local Government Association** ([www.local.gov.uk/](http://www.local.gov.uk/)), **Welsh Local Government Association** ([www.wlga.gov.uk/](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/)), **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities** ([www.cosla.gov.uk/](http://www.cosla.gov.uk/)) and **Northern Ireland Local Government Association** ([www.nilga.org/](http://www.nilga.org/))

	2012	2016	2021
 Number of Sub-national government			
Local	433	419	398
Regional	4	4	4

## Local governments

### 398 local authorities

There are four local government jurisdictions in the UK. Each local government system is entirely separate from the rest in terms of powers, functions and elections. In general, councillors are elected for a four-year term, based on either a first-past-the-post voting system or a system of proportional representation.

**England** has 24 county councils, 36 metropolitan district councils, 181 non-metropolitan district councils (local authorities outside of big cities), and 59 unitary authorities (a single tier local authority). There has been a growing tendency towards grouping several local authorities into one larger 'combined authority' (see note below). In London, the United Kingdom's capital, there are 33 boroughs, including the City of London, which is the city's financial district.

**Wales** has 22 single tier unitary authorities (county and county borough councils) which were established in 1996. These authorities deliver a wide range of services, such as education housing, social services, transport and highways, environmental health, planning, economic development, libraries, leisure and tourism.

**Scotland** has 32 single tier unitary authorities. In Scotland, local services are delivered through Community Planning Partnerships, a statutory framework designed to promote collaboration between municipalities and other public and voluntary bodies within a local area. Since devolution, in addition to the transfer of some services to the central government, there has now been integration of national and local services in social care and health.

**Northern Ireland** has 11 district councils, with competencies that are more limited than elsewhere in the UK. Nevertheless, following a major reform in April 2015 that reduced the district councils' numbers from 26 to 11 authorities, their powers were broadened to include planning, community investment and economic development, in addition to regulatory, registration, enforcement, animal welfare, refuse, waste management, building control, leisure, arts and environmental health.

## Competences

Local competences are not uniform throughout the United Kingdom as they have been wholly transferred (devolved) to Scotland, while other arrangements have been applied to Wales and Northern Ireland. English local governments remain directly accountable to the UK government and parliament.

There are two tiers of local government in parts of England (counties and districts) and a single tier in other parts of England and all of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (councils).

*County councils – responsible for services across the whole of the county, including:*

- Education
- Transport
- Planning
- Fire and public safety
- Social care
- Libraries
- Waste management
- Trading standards

*District, borough and city councils – cover a smaller area than county councils, and are usually responsible for services such as:*

- Household waste collection
- Recycling
- Council Tax collections
- Housing
- Planning applications

**Note:** Unitary authorities have the competences of both counties and districts.



**Capital:** London



**Geographical size:** 248,528 km<sup>2</sup>



**Population:** 67,025,542



**Vote:** Non-compulsory



**State structure:** Unitary state



**Currency:** Pound Sterling GBP



## UNITED KINGDOM

### Note

- In addition to the local authorities referred to above, there are over 12,000 other smaller authorities at the local tier (parishes, town councils and community councils in Scotland). These are small elected bodies that look after local interests. Many of them are not regarded as municipal bodies.
- The Greater London Authority, set up in 2000, is considered a regional authority, although, unlike the devolved jurisdictions in the UK, it does not have any legislative powers.
- **Combined authorities** consist of two or more English councils (excluding London). The creation of a combined authority is voluntary, but its formation must be approved by the UK Parliament. The combined authority has the power to exercise any function of its constituent councils that relates to economic development and regeneration, and any of the functions that are available to the transport authorities. The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 introduced directly-elected mayors to combined authorities in England and made it possible for combined authorities to exercise a wider range of powers, including those otherwise delivered nationally. Since 2011, combined authorities have been created in: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North East, North of Tyne, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley, West Midlands, West of England, and West Yorkshire.

### Nations and regions

#### England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

In **England**, the only directly elected regional authority is the Greater London Authority, which has an assembly of 25 elected members, including an executive mayor, elected by direct universal suffrage. Its main competences include public transport, sustainable development planning, fire and emergency planning and metropolitan police. Several areas have also elected mayors.

The **Senedd Cymru** or **Welsh Parliament** (formerly National Assembly for Wales) came into existence in 1999. It has a more limited range of legislative powers than the Scottish Parliament (mainly secondary legislation, giving more detailed effect to UK parliament measures). However, its primary law making powers were enhanced following a referendum held in March 2011, authorising it to legislate without having to consult the UK parliament in devolved areas. Its competences include policy development and implementation in agriculture, culture, economic development, education, environmental health, highways and transport, social services, housing, spatial planning and local government. In May 2020 the National Assembly for Wales was renamed the **Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament** to reflect the broader powers and responsibilities acquired by the institution, i.e. full law making powers within its devolved areas of competencies and the ability to alter some taxes.

Since 1999, the **Scottish Parliament**, as part of a Scottish Government has held full legislative powers over a wide range of matters – effectively, all issues except those reserved to the UK Parliament. Its exclusive competences include education, health, environment, agriculture, justice, social work, planning and local government. A new transfer of mainly tax and borrowing powers to the Scottish Parliament was enacted via the Scotland Act 2012 and following the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, additional powers over income tax and some elements of social security benefits were devolved under the Scotland Act 2016.

The **Northern Ireland Assembly** also came fully into being in 1999. Its main competences include the economy, foreign direct investment, justice, policing, education, health, regional infrastructure and agriculture. New planning and economic powers were devolved to the district councils (see above) in April 2015, with the possibility of further powers being transferred to them at a later date.

**Note:** The **withdrawal from the EU** has wrought changes in the distribution of powers between the UK and the devolved nations: the Withdrawal Act 2018, the Withdrawal Agreement Act 2020, the UK Internal Market Act 2020 have all amended the above mentioned Devolved acts without the consent of the Devolved legislatures which effectively resulted in the UK Government taking unilateral actions that affected some devolved competences.

The Internal Market Act in particular resulted in the UK Government acquiring new powers with respect to devolved areas, and making it difficult for the four jurisdictions to legislate differently from each other.

Amidst this context, the new UK Common Frameworks and the new intergovernmental mechanism provide an opportunity for more joint decision making between the UK and Devolved Administrations.



## Local Autonomy in 2030

From the Annual and International Congress organised by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in Nicosia (Cyprus), on 22 April 2016<sup>1</sup>, to the post-covid situation (2021): where is local self-government on the way to its completion by 2030?

*This article was written by: GUERARD Stéphane*

*Associate Professor, qualified to direct research, in public law*

*Project manager at OLA (Observatory on Local Autonomy)*

*CERAPS (CNRS, UMR 8026), University of Lille, France*

*It does not represent the official views of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).*

Every “modern political class” dreams of a “well performing”<sup>2</sup> administration, in the sense that it is effective and efficient, and if possible, inexpensive to run! Firstly, this means efficiency in terms of the overall architecture of the administrative organisation of the state (whether federal, unitary or regional), deconcentrated and/or decentralised (within the federated states and unitary states). It is also in terms of being an efficient administration, well organised, both externally and internally. This efficiency of administrative organisation today implies a “territorial architecture”<sup>3</sup> that is well understood, both externally and internally, open and close to citizens, as well as being responsive and digitalised. In short, it must be simple, accessible and transparent.

Being efficient also means that this administration functions efficiently. Its competences must be clearly defined across tiers of administration. Its resources (financial, human, legal resources, as well as in terms of material, land and property) must be sufficient for the execution of its competences - and consequently, for the provision of public services satisfying its “user-clients”.

- 1 Guérard (S.), *Une vision locale et régionale de l'Europe 2030*, in Conseil des communes et des régions d'Europe, *Europe 2030. Les territoires prennent la parole. Local leaders speak out*, Editions Autrement, January 2018, 10 p.
- 2 Cucu (A.), *La performance publique dans la politique de recherche de l'Union Européenne entre management et gouvernance. La construction de l'Espace Européen de Recherche par la coordination et le soft law*, Thesis, public law, Université de Lille, 2019.
- 3 Guérard (S.), *Comparaisons européennes des administrations locales : vers une administration locale mieux organisée et plus performante ?*, in *Fragments d'univers, Mélanges en l'honneur du Professeur Jean-Marie Pontier*, PUAM, 2020, p. 253-277.

In addition, today's modern administration must carry out its administrative objectives in "collaboration" with the user-clients, stimulate their involvement in the implementation of these objectives, both upstream and downstream. Public administration must become familiar with "co-production", "association", "co-decision" and "evaluation". It must therefore be economical, and correspond to democratic principle (both in a representative as well as in a participative way), because a "*good administration is the one closest to the user-clients*"!

For a large number of researchers, especially those advocating *New Public Management*, the implementation of an "effective and efficient" administration can only be achieved on the basis of "proximity", i.e. at a local tier, or at least at *infranational* tier of government. Decentralisation is therefore a priority; although researchers do not specify whether a metropolitan or regional level would maintain this proximity to the user-clients. This *leitmotiv*, which has become a "obvious", except in scientific terms, has nevertheless become an crucial objective for major international donors (e.g., World Bank<sup>4</sup>, IMF<sup>5</sup>, but also the European Union<sup>6</sup>) as well as for the UN (through its UN-Habitat programme<sup>7</sup>), and this has been the case for at least the past thirty years. It would appear that the purpose is also to promote "multi-level governance". This position is reinforced by the fact that in Europe,

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- 4 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance/brief/decentralization-and-intergovernmental-relations-global-solutions-groups> .  
See also: Pyndt (H.) and Steffensen (J.), *World Bank Review of Selected Experiences with Donor Support to Decentralisation in East Africa*, LGDK and NCG, 2005 : [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFRICAEXT/Resources/LG\\_Capacity.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFRICAEXT/Resources/LG_Capacity.pdf) .  
However, of all the international donors, it should be noted that the World Bank is currently the only one to be more reserved about decentralisation as the "key to all development problems"; in recent years, it has greatly softened its position on this subject: Litvak (J.), Ahmad (J.) et Bird (R.), *Rethinking decentralization in developing countries*, World Bank Institute, 1998 ([http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTHSD/Resources/topics/Stewardship/Rethinking\\_Decimalization.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTHSD/Resources/topics/Stewardship/Rethinking_Decimalization.pdf)) ; Litvak (J.) and Seddon (J.), *Decentralisation briefing notes*, World Bank Institute, 1999 (<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/873631468739470623/pdf/multi-page.pdf>) .
  - 5 Sow (M.) and Razafimahefa (I. F.), *Fiscal decentralization and the Efficiency of public service delivery*, IMF Working paper, December 2014.
  - 6 Since the end of the 1990s, the European Union has begun to define and develop its own concept of "decentralised cooperation", just as it has gradually associated "promotion of decentralised governance" with "local development and the fight against poverty". This community awareness was created in the wake of the adoption of the European Charter of Local Self-Government within the Council of Europe - opened for signature on 15 October 1985, this charter came into force on 1 September 1988 - and the adoption of the UN Habitat programme (1996). In March 2007, the European Parliament even adopted a Resolution entitled "Local authorities as actors for development". In this context, in 2008 the European Commission launched PLATFORMA (<http://platforma-dev.eu>), a body financed, in part, by the European Union but also by many associations of local authorities and even large and wealthy European local authorities, in conjunction with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions ([www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)). PLATFORMA promotes development actions in conjunction with local and regional authorities to provide concrete solutions to the daily life of local populations by strengthening local governance, decentralisation and the development of basic or essential public services. In 2013, the European Commission reiterated its support for these missions in a very important document (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Empowering local authorities in partner countries for better governance and more effective development results, COM(2013) 280 final, 15 May 2013).
  - 7 Resolution 21/3 on the Guidelines on decentralisation and strengthening of local authorities of 20 April 2007 and Resolution 22/8 on the Guidelines on access to basic services for all of 3 April 2009: <https://new.unhabitat.org>.

populations have a greater level of trust in their “local” and regional authorities than in their central governments.<sup>8</sup>

Let us assess whether advances towards this modern administration, better organised and more efficient, are being made. The work explored below takes account of Europe in its largest sense<sup>9</sup> and its 47 Member States<sup>10</sup>, focusing on developments since 2008 towards achieving better organised and more efficient local government. To do so, CEMR's data collection and reflection work ([www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)) and the scientific exchanges of the OLA network (Observatory on Local Autonomy: **Home - OLA-europe (univ-lille.fr)**) were used. Since 2008, OLA has been trying to make such comparisons in terms of local administrative reforms in 41 of the 47 European countries and some non-European countries.<sup>11</sup>

8 Eurobarometre, *The role and impact of local and regional authorities within the European Union*, Special Eurobarometer 307, February 2009, p. 9.

9 Boulet (M.), *Les collectivités territoriales dans le processus d'intégration européenne*, Thesis, Public Law, Besançon, 2010, L'Harmattan, Collection “GRALE”, 2012 ; Colavitti (R.), *Le statut des collectivités infra-étatiques européennes. Entre organe et sujet*, Thesis, Aix-Marseille, 2012, Bruylant, Collection “Droit de l'Union européenne”, 2015 ; Kada (N.), *Les collectivités territoriales dans l'Union européenne. Vers une Europe décentralisée ?*, PUG, 2010 ; Monjal (P.-Y.), *Droit européen des collectivités locales*, LGDJ, Collection “Systèmes », 2010 ; Pauliat (H.) (under the direction of), *L'autonomie des collectivités territoriales en Europe : une source potentielle de conflits ?*, PULIM, 2004 ; Pontier (J.-M.), (under the direction of), *Les Etats intermédiaires en droit administratif*, Presse universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 2008 ; Potvin-Solis (under the direction of), *Les effets du droit de l'Union européenne sur les compétences des collectivités territoriales*, L'Harmattan, Collection “GRALE”, 2013.

See also: Auby (J.-B.), *L'Europe de la décentralisation*, RFD, 1995, n°1, p. 16-25 ; Belloubet-Frier (N.), *Vers un modèle européen d'administration locale ?*, RFAP, 2007, n°121-122, p. 5-18 ; Pontier (J.-M.), *L'Europe des collectivités territoriales*, AJDA, 2003, n°18, p. 913.

10 Five of these are federal (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Russia and Switzerland), two are of the so-called “regional” type (Spain and Italy); the other 40 are unitary states, although the United Kingdom, since the devolution laws passed in 1998, especially with regard to Scotland (not forgetting the negative referendum on self-determination of 18 September 2014, the issue of which could resurface in the event of a “no deal” Brexit with the European Union), has a state status that is difficult to classify.

11 Astrauskas (A.) et Guérard (S.) (under the direction of), *Local Autonomy in the 21st Century. Between Tradition and Modernisation. L'autonomie locale au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Entre tradition et modernisation*, LGDJ Lextenso Editions, Institut universitaire Varenne, Collection “Kultura », June 2016 ; Vandelli (L.) et Guérard (S.) (under the direction of), *The impact of the economic crisis on local governments in Europe. L'impact de la crise économique sur les collectivités locales en Europe*, LGDJ Lextenso Editions, Institut universitaire Varenne, Collection “Kultura”, May 2017 ; Geis (M.-E.), Guérard (S.) et Volmerange (X.) (under the direction of), *A Threat to Autonomy? Control and Supervision of local and regional government activities. Les contrôles de l'action publique locale et régionale : une autonomie menacée ?*, LGDJ Lextenso Editions, Institut universitaire Varenne, Collection “Kultura”, April 2018 ; Malikova (L.), Delaneuville (F.), Giba (M.) et Guérard (S.) (under the direction of), *Metropolisation, Regionalisation and Rural intermunicipal cooperation.. What impact on local, regional and national governments in Europe ? Métropolisation, Régionalisation et intercommunalité rurale. Quel impact sur les autorités locales, régionales et centrales en Europe ?*, LGDJ Lextenso Editions, Institut universitaire Varenne, Collection “Kultura”, December 2018.

See also: Belloubet-Frier (N.), *Vers un modèle européen d'administration locale ?*, RFAP, n°121-122, 2007, p. 5-18 ; Claret (P.), *L'influence de l'intégration européenne sur les institutions territoriales des Etats membres*, in Illessy (I.), *Constitutional Consequences of the EU Membership (Conséquences constitutionnelles de l'adhésion à l'UE)*, University of Pécs, Faculty of Law, 2005, p. 97-112 ; Marcou (G.), *Les collectivités locales dans les Constitutions unitaires en Europe*, Les nouveaux cahiers du Conseil constitutionnel, January 2014, n°42, p. 63-87 ; Marcou (G.), *Les réformes des collectivités territoriales en Europe : problématiques communes et idiosyncrasies*, RFAP, 2012, n°141, p. 183-205 ; Schöndorf-Haubold (B.), *L'émergence d'un droit commun de l'autonomie territoriale en Europe*, RFAP, 2007, n°121-122, p. 203-218.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that professors Kulhman and Bouckaert, and their large and experienced team, have reached similar conclusions to ours, and that are always relevant and interesting, in their COST programme.<sup>12 13</sup>

In the light of the data collected by CEMR, it is therefore appropriate to examine the conditions for the effectiveness of local public administration (I), before looking at the conditions for the efficiency of local public action (II).

## I - In search of effective local public administration

A local public administration must be truly “autonomous”, which means that, in compliance with the Constitution and laws, it must be capable of governing itself and “acting”.<sup>14</sup> This raises the question of the transformation of the role of the state, which must learn to become “modest”, and thereby “focus” on its essential objectives... However, the transformation of the internal organisation of a state in order to promote an efficient decentralised system raises the question above all, of the quality of its territorial architecture. This does not only mean the number of tiers of governance, but also of the number of governments per tier of governance.<sup>15</sup>

Since the 7th century, Japan, with a population of around 126.8 million (2017), has had only two levels of local government: 47 departments of modest size and 1,788 more or less large communes. Similarly, in Algeria, with a population of 41.32 million (2017), the national territory is divided into 48 wilayas<sup>16</sup> (the new name for the “old” French departments) and 1,541 communes. More than a “large territory”,<sup>17</sup> it is above all a coherent, efficient and democratic territory where the need for local self-government is essential. This seems to be the position of the Council of Europe, which prefers the administrative and democratic efficiency of proximity compared to the territorial “gigantism”, as stated in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Furthermore, territorial division, unlike the beliefs of the European Union, cannot be “standardised”,<sup>18</sup> because a territory is sociologically and economically a dynamic entity. This presupposes a “minimal” history, the population’s attachment to the territory in terms

12 COST Action IS1207, “Local Public Sector Reforms: An International Comparison (LocRef)” (28 March 2013-27 March 2017) : <https://www.cost.eu/actions/IS1207/#tabs|Name:overview>.

13 Bouckaert (G.), Kuhlmann (S.) and Schwab (C.) (under the direction of), *L’avenir des administrations locales en Europe*, IGPDE, 2018.

See also: Kuhlmann (S.) and Wollmann (H.), *Introduction to comparative administration. Administrative systems and reforms in Europe*, Edward Elgar, 2014 ; Ladner (A.), Keuffer (N.) and Baldersheim (H.), *Local autonomy index for European countries (1990-2014)*, Release 1.0, European Commission, 2015.

14 This is the essence of autonomy, even for a human being: Cour des Comptes, *Le maintien à domicile des personnes âgées en perte d’autonomie. Une organisation à améliorer, des aides à mieux cibler*, Report, July 2016, p. 1.

15 Baldersheim (H.) et Rose (L. E.) (eds), *Territorial choice of boundaries and borders*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

16 Each wilaya is divided into daïras (548, at present, throughout the Algerian national territory), but it should be noted that while the commune and the wilaya are proper local authorities, with legal personality and expressing the principles (democracy, free administration) of decentralisation enshrined in the current Algerian Constitution and law, the daïras are deconcentrated districts of the state and as such do not have legal personality, since they are ‘simple’ territories for action by the Algerian state.

17 Dahl (R. A.) et Tufte (E. R.), *Size and Democracy*, Stanford University Press, 1973.

18 Pontier (J.-M.), *L’administration territoriale : le crépuscule de l’uniformité ?*, Rev. adm., 2002, p. 628-638.

of identity, as well as a socio-economic cohesion. Thus, some territorial structures seem “odd”, as in the Republic of Moldova,<sup>19</sup> unitary state, or Iraq,<sup>20</sup> federal state, which adopted a “mixed” administrative structure, semi-federal and semi-unitary, tinged with administrative decentralisation. This results from the particularity of two territories which benefit from very strong autonomy. They are, respectively, the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia and Kurdistan.

Today, Europe is a mosaic of approximately 115.000 local authorities – including almost 113.000 municipalities and just under 35.000 in France alone –, provinces and regions<sup>21</sup> in federal or unitary states. Thus, each state consists of municipal and central governments and sometimes of a regional tier, as well as other forms of intermediate tiers. Whilst the municipality stands as the basic unit of the territorial arrangement, this varies in type and form. The municipality is the last – or the first – link between a territory’ architecture and its citizens.

The municipality is part of a more or less dense administrative coverage where the number of tiers varies across states. It exercises more or less competencies in accordance with an autonomy, mostly legislative, that is at the discretion of the central or federal government.

Hence, a significant number of states are undertaking transformations of the municipal level<sup>22</sup> by creating mergers or inter-municipal cooperations.<sup>23</sup> *“It is true that there is a general trend in European countries towards a reorganisation of the fields of local competences and a strengthening of the role of municipalities (...) Devolution processes of regional or state competencies to the municipal level – which occur intensively to a greater or lesser extent in some European countries – come with attempts to redefine and strengthen the role of local authorities through participation and consultation mechanisms in the creation of rules and policies that affect them”.*<sup>24</sup> Other developments have been observed: this is the case of the strengthening of inter-municipalities, and in particular of metropolises, which comes at the expense of municipalities.

19 Orlov (M.), with the collaboration of Gabriela Condurache and Stéphane Guérard, *Le pouvoir local en République de Moldavie*, Report, 2014, 60 p : [http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user\\_upload/ressources/monographie/mono\\_fr/mono\\_moldavie\\_fr\\_2014.pdf&t=1570015291&hash=3d86191a93d141b17336ed8ecbf08647](http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user_upload/ressources/monographie/mono_fr/mono_moldavie_fr_2014.pdf&t=1570015291&hash=3d86191a93d141b17336ed8ecbf08647)

20 The Constitution of 15 October 2005 officially created a federal Iraqi state (art. 1), which for now includes only one federated state on part of its territory (Kurdistan, a federated region by virtue of article 117-1 of this constitution). Previously, since the Constitution of 16 July 1970, and until the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq was a highly centralised unitary state. The rest of the Iraqi territory is therefore not federated and is governed by the principle of administrative decentralisation.

21 CEMR, *National associations of local and regional governments in Europe*, CEMR Report, 12 June 2019, p. 3.

22 Doucy (M.), *Le statut des communes, en France, en questions*, Mémoire de master, droit public, Université de Lille, 2019.

23 Teles (F.), *Local governance and inter-municipal coopération*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

24 Nogueira Lopez (A.), *Dévolution de compétences du niveau régional vers le niveau local : décentralisation, asymétrie et concertation*, RFAP, 2007/1, n° 121-122, p. 161-162.

First and foremost many European countries have undertaken vigorous reforms of their municipal map: from 1950 to 2007<sup>25</sup>, the number of municipalities fell by 41% in Germany<sup>26</sup>, by 63% in the United Kingdom, by 75% in Belgium<sup>27</sup> and up to 93% in Denmark. As a result, in addition to the decrease of the number of municipalities, Great-Britain gathered together its local and regional governments in 545 districts. Their average population comes close to 104.000 inhabitants and they have a surface area of 468 km<sup>2</sup>. Similarly Finland has lost more than 200 municipalities since 1950, their number dropping from 547 to 309 in 2021.

However, raising questions regarding the amalgamation of the municipal level is a growing phenomenon, especially in those countries where the reform led to a weakening – or impoverished ? – municipal basis. As a consequence, from 1952 to 1974, Sweden – with a current population of 10.171.524 inhabitant (June 2018) – has reduced the number of its municipalities from 2.500 to 277, which represents, on average, 33.191 inhabitants per municipality.<sup>28</sup> But since 1980, Sweden has decided to recreate new municipalities in response to the weakening of local democracy and to counter falls in voter turnout. This has brought the total number of municipalities to 290.

Nevertheless, following the further deepening of the economic crisis in Europe, a number of local governments have been subject to reforms: tiers of local governments have been reduced and local authorities have been merged. This has had a major impact on the administrative and democratic processes in some countries that were hard hit by the “economic re-crisis” such as Greece or Portugal. Notwithstanding small municipalities’ disadvantages in terms of human and financial resources, the significant amount of local elected representatives (nearly half a million in France) across the territory remains an essential factor of democracy and surveillance (in terms of fire in rural areas or in the mountains for example). It is even a key element to fight social exclusion and to contribute to public economy – because the voluntary work of half a million local elected representatives as it is the case in France saves many local public positions, but also national ones...

25 In the European Union, several states, and not the least important ones, have succeeded in regrouping their municipalities from 1950 to 2007:

- Germany from 14,338 to 8,414 (a drop of 41%) but now has 12,629, due to reunification
- Austria went from 4,039 to 2,357 (a 42% decrease)
- the United Kingdom from 1,118 to 406 (63% decrease)
- Belgium from 2,359 to 589 (75% decrease)
- Latvia from 524 to 119 (77% decrease)
- Sweden from 2,281 to 290 (87% decrease)
- Denmark from 1387 to 98 (almost 93% decrease)

Only Spain has experienced a non-significant decrease of 12% (from 9,214 to 8,111 municipalities). France itself has lost 5% since 2015 (34,970 on 1 January 2019), thanks to the creation of “new municipalities”.

26 Geis (M.-E.), Madeja (S.) et Thirmeyer (S.), *Local self-government in Germany*, 2011 : [http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user\\_upload/ressources/monographie/mono\\_en/mono\\_allemagne\\_en\\_2011.pdf&t=1570341619&hash=9121755cd20af27dc51f1efd85d9459f](http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user_upload/ressources/monographie/mono_en/mono_allemagne_en_2011.pdf&t=1570341619&hash=9121755cd20af27dc51f1efd85d9459f).

27 Pilet (J.-B.), *L'autonomie locale en Belgique*, 2009 : [http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user\\_upload/ressources/monographie/mono\\_fr/mono\\_belgique\\_fr\\_2009.pdf&t=1570339825&hash=804f97d2ad1bf578615e27416d30a267](http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user_upload/ressources/monographie/mono_fr/mono_belgique_fr_2009.pdf&t=1570339825&hash=804f97d2ad1bf578615e27416d30a267).

28 Darnaud (M.), *La revitalisation de l'échelon communal*, Sénat, Rapport d'information, n°110, 7 November 2018, p. 19.

In addition, none of the European states that have reformed the size and the number of its municipalities, has reached a satisfactory outcome with regards to democracy and management. Moreover, what some countries have gained in savings by merging municipalities, has sometimes been lost, as these mergers have increased the democratic deficit. It has been proved that the smaller the size of a local authority, the higher the electoral participation, and conversely.<sup>29</sup>

And this to such an extent that many European countries, for instance Lithuania,<sup>30</sup> have created devolved administrative structures – for example the very efficient “neighbourhood administrations” of Lithuanian municipalities – within “too large municipalities”, in order to manage “proximity needs” more closely and more efficiently and “recreate contact” with users. In other words, achieving the *optimum* size for municipalities<sup>31</sup> is an almost endless quest between two opposing objectives, namely local democracy and the quality of public action, especially if the desire for economic rigour influences the achievement of this double objective, as it does today.

However, effective administrative devolution within a large local authority may be a solution to be explored or even developed. This may help to avoid the growth of multiple strategic levels of territorial administration, while preserving a daily administration of public services and at least a “grassroots listening” in the absence of “grassroots democracy”. In this regard, the example of the “Scandinavian municipality” deserves to further and more in-depth examination.

Yet if the effectiveness of territorial administration seems to be gradually taking shape in Europe, according to the ongoing reforms, what about its efficiency or even that of its managerial and democratic action?

## **II - Towards a rehabilitation of efficiency in local public administration<sup>32</sup>**

The efficiency of public administration depends above all on the efficiency of its action, i.e., the local competences it implements via the public services it manages. Throughout Europe, the same twofold problem can be found: the need to clarify the competences delegated and/or their scope, but also the methods of financing them. Indeed, the lack of own resources or even of adequate and sufficient state transfers subsidies to exercise such administrative responsibilities is an almost unanimous criticism of all European local authorities. Moreover, this criticism has been fuelled by the drop in transfers received following the 2008 “re-crisis” as well as by the additional financial burdens resulting from the COVID-19 health crisis. CEMR's collection of local financial data fully reflects these observations.

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29 Borghesi (C.), Hernandez (L.), Louf (R.) et Caparros (F.), *Universal size effects for populations in group-outcome decision making*, Physical Review, 2013.

30 Loizidou (L.) and Masler-Törnström (G.), *Local and regional democracy in Lithuania*, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe Publishing, 2012.

31 Vandelli (L.), *La difficile recherche de l'optimum dimensionnel des communes italiennes : entre fusions et coopérations*, RFAP, 2017, n°162, p. 327-338.

32 Guérard (S.), *Défis et obstacles du management public local*, Cahiers scientifiques de l'Institut de sciences administratives de la République de Moldavie, 2012, p. 269-277.

There can be no decentralisation without sufficient means of action, and no reforms to increase decentralisation without a corresponding increase in means.<sup>33</sup>

This is because effective decentralisation and the operational implementation of local self-government require an appropriate level of financial autonomy for local authorities and therefore, a proper level of own-resources. This allows them to prepare a development strategy over at least one term of office (4 to 6 years, on average, in European local authorities) and consequently, to have financial visibility regarding their investments. The primary consequence of being too dependent on the central state for transfers subsidies is naturally that transfers subsidies increase or decrease according to the needs of the central government. This has been the case across Europe in the years following the deepening of the economic crisis of 2008. The most vocal on this point are European local authorities which, in certain countries, no longer hesitate to sue the central government in the event of insufficient allocations.

On 25 March 1852, Napoleon III adopted a decree containing the famous formula: “one can govern from afar, but one can only administer well from close by; consequently, as much as it is important to centralise the governmental action of the state, it is also necessary to decentralise the administrative action”. Indeed, the role of the administrative power close to the territories is to help them develop. Through development, there is naturally the satisfaction of public services provided to user-clients.

As a result, development seems to be the mainspring of “globalisation” and the concept of “decentralisation”, but it is also destined to be the mainspring of a future UN International Charter of Local Self-Government. Within the framework of its UN-Habitat programme, the UN would like to promote such a Charter, following the adoption of the International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Local Development. Indeed, in Western Europe, decentralisation is often presented as a political project rather than an economic and social project.

Moreover, the Council of Europe also advocates this political approach of decentralisation, which is also found in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. This Charter does not talk about development, but rather about respect for democracy, the status of local elected representatives,<sup>34</sup> etc., without imposing effective rules of territorial organisation.

The Charter gives a theoretical reading, in the “legal-political” sense, of decentralisation. It does not therefore offer a key to any ideal “territorial architecture”, if such an architecture exists.<sup>35</sup>

This is also reflected in the 12 principles of good governance enshrined by the Council of Europe.<sup>36</sup> Subsidiarity expresses the idea that the central authority should have a subsidiary

33 Gruber (A.), *La décentralisation et les institutions administratives*, Masson & Armand Colin, 1996, p. 216.

34 Stated and promoted in Article 10 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

35 Guérard (S.), *L'autonomie locale en Europe : mythe ou réalité ? L'image idéale de l'autonomie locale, telle que décrite et promue par le Conseil de l'Europe (Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux), est-elle possible (au sens de réalisable) ?*, in Astrauskas (A.) et Guérard (S.) (sous la direction de), *Local Autonomy in the 21st Century. Between Tradition and Modernisation. L'autonomie locale au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Entre tradition et modernisation*, LGDJ Lextenso éditions, Institut universitaire Varenne, Collection « Kultura », June 2016, p. 379- 400.

36 [https://www.coe.int/fr/web/good-governance/12-principles-and-eloqe#{%2225565951%22:\[\]}\)](https://www.coe.int/fr/web/good-governance/12-principles-and-eloqe#{%2225565951%22:[]}))

function by carrying out only those tasks that cannot be done efficiently at a lower or local level.<sup>37</sup> Yet the principle of subsidiarity<sup>38</sup> - enshrined in the UN Habitat Agenda since 1996 and considered by the UN-Habitat Governing Council since 2003 as the very basis of any decentralisation process - is traditionally associated with federalism. It protects the residual field of competence of the federal state more than the competences, mostly widely understood, of the federated states. In short, subsidiarity is one of the characteristics of federalism, which aims to prevent all decisions concerning society from being taken at a higher level than is necessary.<sup>39</sup>

As Resolution 22/8 adopted within the framework of the UN-Habitat programme<sup>40</sup> recalls so well, decentralisation is the “administrative organisation of proximity” that helps facilitate, at the best possible cost, the development of basic services (water, telecommunications, energy, transport, health, education, security, for example) as closest to the ground.<sup>41</sup> This allows the most effective efforts in fighting against development delays and therefore poverty, both in urban areas,<sup>42</sup> and rural areas. The quality of basic public services ensures above all, according to the UN philosophy - which at the same time promotes decentralisation as the best form of public governance - the quality of life, human dignity and the sustainability of livelihoods.

If countries want the satisfaction of the “user-clients”, they need to pay the price of the development of the local authorities. This means organising the best distribution of the national financial resources between the central government and the infra-state tiers of governance. However, this distribution must be done according to a distribution key that should be fixed in advance, legislatively or even constitutionally.

It is a major deficiency of the European Charter of Local Self-Government that the issue of legal guarantees for the financial autonomy of local authorities has not been sufficiently developed. A share of income and/or property taxes should be automatically allocated to

37 Olsen (H.-B.), *Décentralisation et gouvernance locale, Module 1 : Définitions et concepts*, éd. Département fédéral des affaires étrangères (DFAE), Suisse, 2007, p. 6.

38 Duranthon (A.), *Subsidiarité et collectivités territoriales. Etude sur la subsidiarisation des rapports entre Etat et collectivités territoriales en droit public français*, Thèse, droit public, Toulouse, 2015, Dalloz, Collection « Bibliothèque parlementaire et constitutionnelle », 2017.

See also : Gaudemet (Y.), *Libres propos sur la subsidiarité, spécialement en Europe*, Mélanges P. Amselek, Bruylant, 2005, p. 315-329.

39 Olsen (H.-B.), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

40 Resolution 22/8 on the Guidelines on access to basic services for all of 3 April 2009 <https://new.unhabitat.org>

41 Partenariat français pour la ville et les territoires, *Accès aux services de base pour tous et appui aux processus de décentralisation : expériences, pratiques et recommandations du partenariat français pour la ville et les territoires*, Agence française du développement, 2012 : [http://www.pfvt.fr/index.php?option=com\\_easyfolderlistingpro&view=download&format=raw&data=eNpFUMtqw0AM\\_Bfdi23CkU5JWkLgTQx20L1UdZysuAXq91iKP33ru2YnqQZzQyDCJMYfwRXCFVXl2xhI5g-I5iGbizR23L-Xw\\_FXmUXXbHw35bHM6n\\_Cn7-CpGZZlgeGE7e2WiEOLldPMs7j93jaDUxI3odba21PAIY4RxrGbWLLAxGM8my3VP7j6lBhhl\\_lobTc50rSxNQlplal7S0heErdaiyA8qZ\\_ttNlsqWe1IWPWdt8p1fiqcXCLw4B5bX1aPpjz0xrlsNcKbgjwjfW-4DeprYH\\_XDD\\_q2Vo](http://www.pfvt.fr/index.php?option=com_easyfolderlistingpro&view=download&format=raw&data=eNpFUMtqw0AM_Bfdi23CkU5JWkLgTQx20L1UdZysuAXq91iKP33ru2YnqQZzQyDCJMYfwRXCFVXl2xhI5g-I5iGbizR23L-Xw_FXmUXXbHw35bHM6n_Cn7-CpGZZlgeGE7e2WiEOLldPMs7j93jaDUxI3odba21PAIY4RxrGbWLLAxGM8my3VP7j6lBhhl_lobTc50rSxNQlplal7S0heErdaiyA8qZ_ttNlsqWe1IWPWdt8p1fiqcXCLw4B5bX1aPpjz0xrlsNcKbgjwjfW-4DeprYH_XDD_q2Vo)

42 The UN-Habitat programme has planned to focus on urbanisation in its 2020-2025 strategic plan, since, according to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, by 2030, 67% of the world's population will be living in urban areas, and poverty, humanitarian crises and conflicts are increasingly urban phenomena today. Since 2011, the European average of urban inhabitants is even higher than this future average; this makes the metropolis a geographical reality, which is still not a legal reality...

these authorities, so that they only depend on state subsidies for 25% or, at most, 33% of their financial resources.

How can a state usefully and effectively transfer administrative powers to its local authorities to ensure quality of public service management, without providing those with financial resources proportionate to the related tasks and therefore denying them any financial visibility?

All European local authorities complain about the transfer of competences without adequate resources, especially as they exercise them under their sole remit of responsibility.<sup>43</sup> This complaint goes far beyond the borders of Europe. Admittedly, some local authorities can sometimes find margins for savings, but there are a limited number - and this often concerns only the richest (and even then ...).

Nevertheless, it is not, in absolute terms, normal for the state to avoid its own reform to the detriment of local authorities, and above all to the detriment of the quality of local public services, with consequences such as the reduction and/or, sometimes, the disappearance of such services...

Consequently, this not only affects the possibility for local authorities to reform themselves. It also impacts on their ability to recruit quality personnel, invest in effective actions (and therefore, sometimes, expansive ones), train this personnel, and to gradually build a remuneration / reward policy, aimed at promoting staff promotion, motivation and investment in work.<sup>44</sup> Especially since one should not be naive, it is sometimes very difficult to impose strict ethics on public officials, whose salaries are lowered, for no apparent reason from 25 to 40 % in one year, as it has been done after the economic crisis of 2008 respectively in Romania and Latvia.<sup>45</sup>

How, in such cases, not to hypocritically feed the corruption of public officials? How, in these conditions, can we speak of code of good conduct or public integrity? What did civil servants do to deserve such a "treatment"? The same can be said of states which, like France, have been operating for very or even too many years, under the guise of social negotiations in the public service, which are ultimately not, a salary freeze? In Italy, such measures have been the subject of an annulment by the Constitutional Court (decision n°178-2015 of June 24, 2015<sup>46</sup>), having obliged the Italian state to "unfreeze" the remuneration of its civil servants...

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43 As points 4 and 5 of Article 4 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government recognised

44 Guérard (S.) (dir.), *Training of local public servants and officials in Europe (rapport\_ola\_en.pdf (cnfpt.fr))*. *The training of local public officials and local elected officials in Europe (OLA-CNFPT Report)*, CNFPT editions, September 2021 (version available online on the CNFPT website: [Our studies | Study on the training of regional officials and local elected officials in Europe | The CNFPT](#)), 405 p. : direction and scientific participation.

45 Grudilis (M.), Jaunzeme (K.), Petrvoskis (A.), Stucka (A.) and Ziedonis (R.), *Local self-government in Latvia*, 2011 : [http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user\\_upload/ressources/monographie/mono\\_en/mono\\_lettonie\\_en\\_2011.pdf&t=1570339549&hash=387dc05d71dec64e496762b715421f95](http://www.ola-europe.eu/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/user_upload/ressources/monographie/mono_en/mono_lettonie_en_2011.pdf&t=1570339549&hash=387dc05d71dec64e496762b715421f95) .

46 [file:///C:/Users/Stephane%20Guerard/Documents/Mes%20documents/recherches/DFP%20et%20GRH%20dans%20la%20FP/Rémunération%20et%20Italie/La%20décision%20de%20la%20CC%20italienne%20sur%20le%20gel%20de%20l'indice%20de%20%20salaire%20\(2015\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Stephane%20Guerard/Documents/Mes%20documents/recherches/DFP%20et%20GRH%20dans%20la%20FP/Rémunération%20et%20Italie/La%20décision%20de%20la%20CC%20italienne%20sur%20le%20gel%20de%20l'indice%20de%20%20salaire%20(2015).pdf) .

Whatever the views of some national elected officials, the “legal status” of civil servants protects them more than contracts in terms of controlling public expenditure, because, as the Scandinavian states illustrate, any developed recourse to the contract goes hand in hand with the essential promotion of genuine social negotiation; which then becomes a danger for public employers, who take increasingly fewer decisions alone, and especially not / not any longer without the agreement of the unions representing the public sector...<sup>47</sup>

Impoverishing local authorities is also, indirectly but surely, impacting on the investment policy, both material and human, of local authorities, and ultimately, disadvantaging user-clients, who are, however, the main contributors to a state's revenue.

In terms of material reforms, the decline in state allocations also often slows down, and unfortunately, the (expensive, but so useful) programmes for the digitalisation of procedures, which nevertheless foster administrative transparency as much as participatory democracy<sup>48</sup>. It also ensures a better understanding of the organisation and functioning of local administrations.

By the same token, digitalisation also allows better information on the rights and obligations of citizens as well as better responsiveness of administrative services. It also contributes to the legal simplification of local public action. However, its implementation is often expensive, in terms of qualified staff to recruit, equipment to buy, programming time, adaptation and updating programmes and software, experimentation, staff training or even user-client training...

## Conclusion

The motto of the European Union is simple “United in diversity”. And although the forces of standardisation are at work within the framework of the construction of the European Union, it is absolutely necessary to resist them, in terms of evolution and reforms of the systems of local administration in Europe. Because each of the 47 states, making up Europe, is the product of a history, of an identity, national and local,<sup>49</sup> but also of a legal-political tradition, which is specific to it.

In short, and beyond the diversity of the territorial organisation of European states, two questions arise:

- should priority be given to organisational uniformity, or diversity, to better take into account local specificities?
- Should local authorities be brought together to systematically constitute “larger” ones?

Are the standardisation and amalgamation of local authorities a source of real savings and optimal administrative efficiency? Nothing is less certain, as the economic benefits are sometimes “outweighed” by the democratic and social disadvantages.

47 See also : Condurache (G.), *Les défis juridiques de la fonction publique en Roumanie : entre tradition et modernisation. Etude comparée à partir de l'exemple français*, Thèse, droit public, Lille, 2018.

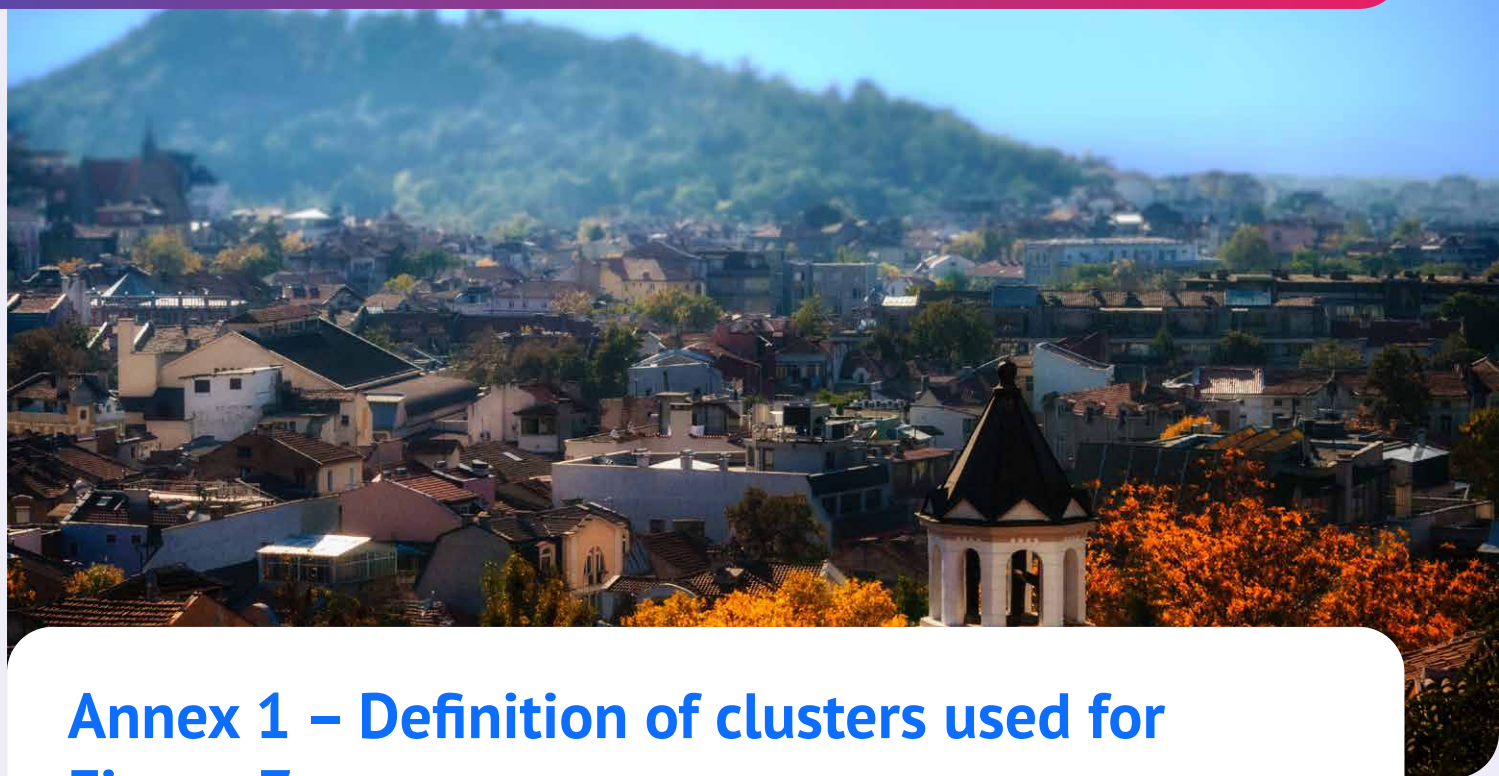
48 Dahl (R. A.), *A democratic dilemma. System effectiveness versus Citizen participation*, Political Science Quarterly, volume 10, 1994, n°1, p. 23-34 ; Dahl (R. A.), *The city in the future of democracy*, American political science review, 1967, p. 953-970.

49 Pontier (J.-M.), *Identité territoriale ?*, AJDA, 2018, n°27, p. 1513.

So here we are, a contemporary debate now affecting local authorities, in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of territorial reforms or even the improvement of local government systems in Europe. Managers know this much better than lawyers: how to find the balance between the material and objective advantages / indicators and the qualitative and subjective advantages / indicators...

While everyone knows how to define decentralisation, much remains to be done to reinvent it in the twenty-first century, with the aim of establishing an effective and efficient, modern public administration.

But all this hangs on the question of the will of the central government to “transform itself functionally” and to accept, politically, to genuinely play, the “card” of the decentralisation of competences. In particular as regards the financing aspects and even, more broadly, as concerns other resources such as human capital.



## Annex 1 – Definition of clusters used for Figure 7

### National GDP of the country

<b>Low-income countries: less than €12,000</b>	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine
<b>Middle income countries: between €12,000 and €24,000</b>	Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain
<b>High income countries between €24,000 and €36,000</b>	Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, United Kingdom
<b>Very high-income countries: More than €36,000</b>	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden

### LRG expenditure as percentage of the national GDP

Typology of cluster	Number of countries in this cluster	Countries
Cluster 1: <b>Between 0 and 9%</b> Low expenditure	20 (22)	Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, <i>Montenegro</i> , Netherlands, <i>North Macedonia</i> , Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey
Cluster 2: <b>Between 9.1 and 18%</b> Low-middle expenditure	11	Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom
Cluster 3: <b>Between 18.1 and 27%</b> High expenditure	5	Belgium, Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden

Typology of cluster	Number of countries in this cluster	Countries
Cluster 4: <b>Between 27.1 and 36%</b> Very high expenditure	1	Denmark

### LRG expenditure for health

Category of country	Number of countries	Countries
Cluster 1: <b>Between 0 and 10%</b> Low expenditure in health	21	Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, United Kingdom
Cluster 2: <b>Between 10.1 and 20%</b> Low to moderate expenditure in health	7	Czech Republic, Kosovo, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Ukraine
Cluster 3: <b>Between 20.1 and 30%</b> High expenditure in health	8	Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Spain, Sweden
Cluster 4: <b>More than 30%</b> Very high expenditure in health	1	Italy

These clusters thus allow us to compare countries according to the three categories

Country	Category of country according to GDP	Category of country concerning LRGs expenditure	Category of country concerning LRGs expenditure in health
Albania	1	1	1
Austria	3	2	3
Belgium	3	3	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	Not available	Not available
Bulgaria	1	1	1
Croatia	1	2	3
Cyprus	2	1	1
Czech Republic	2	2	2
Denmark	4	4	3
Estonia	2	2	3
Finland	4	3	3
France	3	2	1
Georgia	1	1	1
Germany	3	3	1

<b>Country</b>	<b>Category of country according to GDP</b>	<b>Category of country concerning LRGs expenditure</b>	<b>Category of country concerning LRGs expenditure in health</b>
Greece	2	1	1
Hungary	2	1	1
Iceland	4	2	1
Israel	3	1	1
Italy	3	2	4
Kosovo	1	1	2
Latvia	2	2	1
Lithuania	2	1	2
Luxembourg	4	1	1
Malta	2	1	1
Moldova	1	1	1
Montenegro	1	1	Not available
Netherlands	4	1	1
North Macedonia	1	1	Not available
Norway	4	2	3
Poland	2	1	2
Portugal	2	1	1
Romania	1	1	2
Serbia	1	1	1
Slovakia	2	1	1
Slovenia	2	1	2
Spain	2	3	3
Sweden	4	3	3
Turkey	1	1	1
Ukraine	1	2	2
United Kingdom	3	2	1



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**Local & Regional  
Europe**

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)  
1 Square de Meeûs  
B - 1000 Brussels  
[studies@ccre-cemr.org](mailto:studies@ccre-cemr.org)  
[cemr.eu](http://cemr.eu)



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