

ADMINISTRATIVE TERRITORIAL STRUCTURES IN EU COUNTRIES AND THEIR SPECIFICS

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Abstract: *The article is focused on administrative territorial structures in European Union countries and their specifics. Each state must respect its internal, territorial and other conditions and in connection to that, create its own system of organization of these relations. Attention is given to the structure of public administration in EU countries, administrative territorial division, differences and identical characteristics, local specifics and structure and differences according to NUTS regions in EU.*

Keywords: *Public Administration, EU, Administrative Territorial Structures, Local Administration, Local Government, Specifics of Organization, Territorial Units, NUTS regions.*

1. Introduction

All member countries do not have unified organization of the public administration that is coming out of historic development, cultural or social conditions. No fundamental legal document in the European Union prescribes a model of a public administration and administrative territorial division. The areas, where European Union has no right to make decisions, are fully a responsibility of member countries. Member states decide themselves about their internal organization, system of public administration, organization of their security forces, justice, health system or wages. The current EU structure is formed by 27 states characterized by certain common but also significantly different features not only in the system of public administration.

Considerable disparities can be found among individual member states concerning political-administrative relations at all administrative levels. This is manifested particularly in different structure of administrative territorial units, their quantity, size or different designations. Significant area of European administrative reforms is also the institute of state service that shows, in individual European countries, a number of differences given by historic development, traditions and political and social conditions. This belongs to the sovereignty of individual states and is not regulated by the EU legislation, i.e. *acquis communautaire*.

2. Local Administration in European Union

The local administration is reaction to different needs, interests and targets in individual areas and localities that can be theoretically and practically separated from needs, interests and targets of all society. But the target of the local administration is completely specific and is focused on satisfaction of needs of a group of people with a relation to a certain locality. Practically, several limiting elements of the local administration can be found here – it is restriction in a form of target, restriction given by a territory, restriction based on a will and wanting of people living in given territory, restriction in form of so-called personal element and restriction given by a legal code. [3]

2.1 Types of Local Administration in EU Countries

In practice, three fundamental forms of local administration organization can be differentiated in EU. This is the **Anglo-Saxon system**, where the local administration is understood exclusively as self-government, because the self-government and state administration is not differentiated (it is typical for UK and Ireland). **French system**, where on the local level separated bodies of self-government and state administration exist next to each other (elected communal and regional councils on one hand and prefects on the other hand). This type of organization is a typical for France. Another type is **mixed system (Central European)**, both the self-government and state administration is executed jointly at the local level, it means by the same authorities (usually we talk about separated and delegated power). This type of the local administration is e.g. in the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria. [8]

In member states of the European Union, we can differentiate 4 organizational types of the local administration can that are characteristic for states of the original fifteen EU countries.

1 Nordic European system (Sweden, Denmark and Finland) – in this system, local administrations have a large degree of independency that is also connected with income from local taxes. Nordic European system is coming out of historic traditions – rural owners of land have always played an important role in these countries.

2 British system (United Kingdom and Ireland) – fundamental administration units are rather larger in this system. However they lack independent financial base and therefore they are also more depending on the central administration. Transfer of power to the local level is smaller than in the Nordic system.

3 Central European system (Germany and Austria) – federal organization divides power into three degrees. Local administrations are rather smaller, their size and power differs from each other in individual federal states (e.g. the mayor office in Southern Germany has more power than in north federal states). Based on historic traditions, local administrations have a great independency but always in a certain exactly given scope.

4 “Napoleonic system” (France, Spain, Italy and Netherlands) – this system is characterized by a relatively great degree of control by the central state authorities. Local administrations are more or less controlled by the mayor who is appointed by central authorities. Fundamental administration units can be quite small, but on the other hand, rather large local administrations can be also found (particularly in Italy and France). There can often exist up to four administration levels, where the middle level (departments, provinces or regions) have important coordination role (France) and in some cases also constantly increasing degree of power (Spain). [4]

2.2 Forms of Self-governments and Leading Positions in Local Self-governments in Europe

Political and administrative organization of local self-governments in different countries has certain common fundamental features:

- 1) Communal political bodies are naturally representative it means that they were elected in democratic elections.
- 2) In majority of communal political bodies, there is determining political leader, who is respected independently on the fact whether the title mayor is used or not. This person can be elected directly by citizens or by members of community board or council or can be installed by

the central government. The person can also have larger or smaller political power.

3) At least one manager of the local administration is at the majority of town halls. Very generally said, the fundamental function of this position is to control, coordinate and supervise administrative organizations; advice to politics and apply criteria of rationality, efficiency and legality in use of public finances. [6]

These three characteristics reflect fundamental principles regarding organization of local self-governments. The community board must be focused on governance or other part of executive power, as a political official it must take a role of political leadership promoting interests of the government and such a leader must have professional support. Except these characteristics, four “ideal models” (forms) of local self-government organizations can be made: model of dominant mayor, model of collective leadership, committee leadership, representative management model. [6]

Models of the local self-government organization in EU countries can be divided as follows:

- The model of dominant mayor distinctly emphasizes principles of the political leadership, personalized in a person of the mayor, above principles of the professional leadership (e.g. Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Cyprus, Hungary).
- The model of the collective leadership, where a collective body makes decisions (e.g. executive board); here the body undertakes majority of executive powers (e.g. Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Czech Republic).
- The model of the committee leadership (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Latvia). The common factor, in local administrations of these countries, is an occurrence of a committee executive body that executes functions of strategic management and coordination.
- Representative management model (e.g. Finland, Ireland). In the framework of this model, all executive functions are in hands of the professional manager, the local self-government manager who is appointed by the council.
- Other models (e.g. United Kingdom, Malta). [3]

3. Structure of the Public Administration in EU Countries

Administrative territorial structures in EU countries are characteristic by several levels. Since 2007 the European Union has consisted of 27 states, three of them with a federal structure (Germany, Austria and Belgium). All together the EU member states have now around 92,500 administrative units, this number changes each year in dependence on territorial reformations in individual states, central administration or federal structure. Administrative territorial division in EU countries includes one, two or three levels depending on specifics of each country. From the present twenty-seven states – 8 states have one-level structure of the territorial self-government, 12 states have two levels and 7 states have three levels of territorial self-government. The structure of EU states is documented in table 1, 2 and 3. [10]

Tab. 1: Eight Countries with One Level of Sub-national Government

Country	Municipal level
Bulgaria	264 municipalities
Cyprus	524 (378) local governments: 33 (24) municipalities, 491 (354) rural communities ¹
Estonia	227 municipalities (194) rural municipalities & 33 cities)
Finland	416 municipalities
Lithuania	60 municipalities (48 districts, 6 towns, 6 municipalities)
Luxembourg	116 municipalities including 12 cities
Malta	68 local council
Slovenia	210 municipalities including 11 urban municipalities

1. Data in parenthesis does not include the northern part of Cyprus.

Source: [10]

12 states with two levels of the territorial self-government can be differentiated in the European Union; but they significantly differ by structure, size as well as administrative levels (Table 2).

Tab. 2: Countries with Two Levels of Sub-national Government

Country	Municipal level	Second level
Austria	2357 municipalities (15 statutory cities, 197 towns, 755 markets & 1390 villages)	9 Federated States
Czech Republic	6249 municipalities (23 statutory cities, 496 towns & 5 733 municipalities)	14 regions
Denmark	98 municipalities	5 regions
Greece	1034 local governments (914 municipalities & 120 communities)	50 regions
Hungary	3175 municipalities (23 towns with county statute, 265 towns, 2863 villages, Budapest & 23 city districts)	19 counties
Ireland	114 local councils (29 counties, 5 cities, 75 towns & 5 boroughs)	8 regional authorities
Latvia	527 municipalities (7 republican cities, 53 towns, 35 amalgamated municipalities & 432 rural municipalities)	26 districts
Netherlands	443 municipalities	12 provinces
Portugal ²	308 municipalities	2 autonomous regions

Romania	3173 local authorities (2854 rural municipalities, 319 urban municipalities including 211 towns & 108 municipalities)	42 counties (41 counties & Bucharest)
Slovakia	2891 municipalities including 138 cities ³	8 regions
Sweden	290 municipalities	20 (18 county & 2 regions)

2. Portugal also has infra- municipal level composed of 4259 parishes. 3. Excluding districts. *Source: [10]*

7 states with three levels of the territorial self-government can be specified in the European Union; these are characterized in the table 3.

Tab.3: Countries with Three Levels of Sub-national Government

Country	Municipal level	Second level	State or regions level
Belgium	589 municipalities	10 provinces	6 (3 communities and 3 regions)
France ⁴	36 683 municipalities	100 departements	26 regions
Germany	12 312 municipalities (12196 municipalities & 116 districts- free cities)	323 rural districts	16 Federated States
Italy	8101 municipalities	103 provinces	20 regions
Poland	2478 municipalities (307 urban municipalities including 65 with county statute, 1587 rural municipalities & 584 mixed municipalities)	314 counties	16 regions
Spain	8111 municipalities	50 provinces	17 autonomous communities
United Kingdom ⁵	434 local governments (127 unitary authorities, 36 metropolitan authorities 238 district councils & 33 London boroughs)	34 county councils & the Greater London Authority	3 devolved nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

4. Including overseas departements and regions.

Source: [10]

5. The United Kingdom also has an infra municipal level composed of more than 11,200 parishes.

Based on this, unitary states with three-level territorial administration (France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom), two-level territorial administration (Austria,

Ireland, Denmark, Netherlands, Greece, Portugal, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Sweden, Romania), but also with one-level territorial administration (Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, Bulgaria) can be found.

The absence of a “regional level” in federal countries (in Austria – 9 federal states, in Belgium – 3 regions and 3 communities and in Germany 16 federal states) is substituted by the existence of federal states. These states have one-level territorial self-government under the level of federative units. Higher levels of territorial self-governments, the most often called as the “regions”, exist in eight countries of the European Union. These segments represent the third level of territorial degree in Spain, France, Italy, Poland and the second level of the territorial self-government in the Czech Republic, United Kingdom and in Slovakia. [9]

A characteristic feature of the public administration in the European Union is a degree of applied centralization respectively decentralization in individual states. Although the majority of European Union states applies a middle degree of decentralization, even here some states with strong degree of decentralization can be found (Sweden, Denmark, Finland) or states, where the administration is under influence of strong centralized control (United Kingdom, Ireland), as well as so-called regionalized states (Spain, Italy), where the position of regions is so high that it is approaching the level of position of units in federal states (concurrently these states are also included in the group of unitary states). [7]

3.1 Specifics of Territorial Division in EU

The specifics, of the local organization in EU, are various territorial unit names or different number and size of these units. Structure of territorial self-government within European countries significantly differs due to their constitutional arrangement, historic development, size as well as number of inhabitants. Terms such as communities, villages, towns and municipalities can be found at the lowest level the most often; the name diversity is characteristic for the second and third level. There are e.g. districts, regions, cantons, provinces, counties etc. [7]

Other differences can be also found in financing of local administrations in individual member states of the European Union, which is not governed by unified model. Often it is explained by a different degree of local administration responsibility for personnel services in the scope of education, public health and social security.

Big unitary states such as France and Poland have self-government on the local, district and regional level. Denmark, Netherlands and Sweden have regional local level of the self-government. The United Kingdom has mixed model with two levels in some territories and one level in others (mainly but not always, the bigger cities). In the majority of countries some local uniqueness exists, when local self-governments cumulate a status of territorial self-government as well as the second level.

In France, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, United Kingdom and Slovakia, the capital cities (and sometimes also some other bigger cities) have a specific status that often gives them institutional organization different from the other municipalities. Similarly, in federative countries, some cities have a status of a federative state as well as a city – in Belgium (Brussels), in Austria (Vienna) and in Germany (Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg). [9]

Roles of municipalities and regions are joined in big cities in Germany and Poland. For example, Vienna is the municipality and simultaneously also the state. Copenhagen and Paris are municipalities as well as regions. Big differences are in number of inhabitants and size of territory on the fundamental local level, particularly municipalities. Territorial organization in

the European Union shows a number of common features, especially generally small size of territorial self-governments at the fundamental level (municipalities) and strengthening of higher-level territorial self-government competences. [1]

Absolute autonomy for the local administration cannot be considered, because then it would represent independent nation or state. Mutual relations between local and higher levels of administrative bodies have significantly changed in recent years. The governance on the local level is a collection of formal and informal rules, structures and processes by which local participants collectively solve their problems and social needs. In all countries, functions of the local administration delegated to it, as a representative of the central administration, and functions belonging into its own autonomous competency are differentiated. [5]

3.2 Territorial Division in EU according to NUTS

Different number and size of territorial units, into which individual national economies are divided, have created a primary precondition of forming so-called statistic (artificial) regions of the European Union. The target of this system, of territorial statistical units NUTS, was to secure a comparativeness of territorial units within the whole union. The NUTS system works with five-level hierarchic classification. Except three levels of NUTS that refer to the regional level, two lower levels of territorial statistical division also exist, but those are not determining for allocation of finances from EU funds. These are so-called local administrative units (LAU). [2]

NUTS divide individual member states into regions on the level NUTS 1. Then each state divides its regions on the level NUTS 2 and these subsequently into regions on the level NUTS 3. In the majority of member states, the administrative structure is generally based on two from these three main regional levels. This existing intrastate administrative structure can be, for example on the level NUTS 1 and NUTS 3 (federal states and districts in Germany) or on the level NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 (regions and departements in France or autonomias and provinces in Spain). Depending on levels, that already exist, another level can be created on one from three levels of NUTS. With respect to that, e.g. France has functional administrative units on the level 2 and 3, another level is introduced on the level NUTS 1. This is also the case in Italy, Greece and Spain. [2]

The European Union as a confederation of 27 member states is presently divided into approximately 1,303 regions (NUTS III) that form 268 areas (NUTS II) respectively 97 territories (NUTS I). Each year there are some territorial changes. The situation in 2007 was documented by the table 4. [2]

Table 4. Overview of Levels of NUTS Regions in EU Countries

Country	Level NUTS 1	Level NUTS 2	Level NUTS 3
Belgium	3	11	44
Czech Republic	1	8	14
Denmark	1	1	11
Germany	16	41	429
Greece	4	13	51
Spain	7	19	59
France	9	26	100
Ireland	1	2	8
Italy	5	21	107
Estonia	1	1	5
Cyprus	1	1	1
Luxembourg	1	1	1
Lithuania	1	1	10
Latvia	1	1	6
Hungary	3	7	20
Malta	1	1	2
Netherlands	4	12	40
Austria	3	9	35
Poland	6	16	66
Portugal	3	7	30
Slovenia	1	1	12
Slovakia	1	4	8
Finland	2	5	20
Sweden	3	8	21
United Kingdom	12	37	133
Bulgaria	2	6	28
Romania	4	8	42
EU 27	97	268	1303

Source: [2]

4. Conclusion

The problem of the public administration and European administrative structures is not in competence of EU but individual states. Several possible views and standpoints how the European administrative structures can be characterized, systematized or differentiated exist. For example it is geographical standpoint, states can be divided according to type of state establishment, type of local organization or institute of a state service.

Duty of individual states is respecting and observing certain common administrative and legal principles, so-called four pillars of European administrative space that is particularly – a reliability and predictability, openness and transparency, responsibility, effectiveness and efficiency. [11]

The goal of the article was met, because considerable disparities exist among individual member states of EU concerning political-administrative relations at all administrative levels. Except for differences in type of state establishment and in character of territorial-administrative division of individual EU member states, differences in territorial administration, levels of territorial self-government as well as in central state administration, its structure, content or competences also exist. The common feature of the state administration in EU countries is the existence of central institution on the level of government (or its body) that covers matters of public respectively state administration. But differences occur in number and composition of ministries, in number of ministers in relation to number of ministries, in character and number of various governmental advisory bodies, in existence of other central bodies of the state administration. Similar features and specifics can be also found in the system of state service. Differences in legislation, categories of employees at all administrative levels including functional employment sectors exist among individual states.

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