

# *Decentralization as an Aspect of Governance Reform in Serbia*

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The importance of decentralization as a reform process in Serbia is analysed, the current state of affairs is established and possible suggestions for reforms in the future are elaborated. The paper briefly deals with decentralization as a component of modern reform processes, with the degree of (de)centralization in Serbia, and with the understanding and knowledge of this process in Serbian public. It continues by analysing the perspectives and opportunities for decentralization, including the institutions responsible for these matters along with their activities and recent results, as well as with the views and opinions of important political figures. Finally, a short overview of potential decentralization models is presented followed by several recommendations for the optimal solution, based on an empirical research.

*Key words:* decentralization – Serbia, governance, regionalization, local self-government, autonomous provinces, regions, municipalities

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## 1. Introduction

At the very beginning, the importance of the decentralization as a reform process in contemporary state is indicated. The paper emphasizes the significance of good governance and administration for the implementation of basic values and principles. In that sense, decentralization is considered as an important reform aspect that can contribute to good governance and overcome the crisis of welfare state.

In the second part, it is emphasised that the Republic of Serbia is characterized by poor governance, low levels of democracy and high levels of corruption. Considering that decentralization is a process with beneficial impact on these problems, the conclusion is that Serbia should be more decentralized. However, there are the questions of whether Serbia really is highly centralized and whether it is possible and how to measure the level of (de)centralization. Then, a solid tool for measurement of the (de)centralization level is presented. Using this instrument it is easy to prove that Serbia is one of the most centralized countries in Europe.

The paper further explains that there is no political will to decentralize. Some smaller political parties advocate decentralization, others are against it, but the largest party in the former government (the Democratic Party) paid only lip service to decentralisation, without practically dealing with the issue. This is confirmed by poor results of government bodies responsible for decentralization such as the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and the National Council for Decentralization.

In the next part of the paper, possible models of decentralization are discussed. Two options are offered: strengthening the existing, basic level of local self-government or true regionalization. The results of SWOT analysis are shown, and a recent research offering a possible model of regional decentralization based on Slovakian experience is presented.

## 2. The Importance of Decentralization in Modern Reform Processes

Although the rule of law, free market and sustainable development are all global ideas, differences among countries are still evident with regard to their implementation. Thus, it is possible to identify more or less successful countries in terms of governance. In both western European and

Commonwealth countries, i.e. in the countries perceived as successful, a governance crisis emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly during the 1970s. This crisis meant that the budgets were shrinking while public requests were increasing, leading to poor governance and to citizens' distrust of governments.

The crisis of welfare state and the increasing distrust of state institutions lead to reforms and re-thinking about state. The newly accepted wisdom is that institutions are key development variables. Recently, a large number of studies have emerged, their empirical documentation confirming the view (Robinson, Acemoglu, 2000; Easterly, 2001; van de Walle, 2001). The literature on institutions and their development is also vast (Klitgaard, 1995; Grindle, 1997 and 2000; Tandler, 1997; World Bank, 1997, 2000 and 2002).

The goal of governance reform is to make the system as functional as possible, a system capable of turning general ideas and values into reality directly linked to the purpose of the state. In terms of operational categories, the goal of state reforms in the past 20-30 years was to promote the principles of good governance.<sup>1</sup> Second compatible goal should be to increase the country's strength i.e. to create the capacity for effective functioning and implementing decisions. It is necessary to differentiate between the state's scope of public affairs and its strength and ability to plan and conduct policies, applying laws clearly and unambiguously, meaning its institutional capacity. Therefore, the state with many responsibilities is not a strong state; the strong state is the one that has the opportunity to use its responsibilities in practice. For example, the USA, according to the scope of influence is a »smaller« state than Sweden or Russia, but it is strong when it comes to the execution of authority and legitimate use of force. It is logical that the criterion for strength should be the ability to perform the tasks rather than the scope of influence of the responsibilities per se. The essence of a state is the use of force (when necessary), or »the ultimate option to send someone in a uniform and with a gun to make the people succumb to the laws of the state«. (Fukuyama, 2007: 16). That is why during strategizing about reforms it is important to ask what the

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<sup>1</sup> Good governance is an important concept for international organizations such as the UN, the World Bank and the EU. The UN defines good governance with eight principles (participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability). The EU also has a document that defines good governance (EG).

reasonable scope of responsibilities for a state or centralized authority is, and what should be assigned to other subjects.

However, some of the key questions of governance reform include the traditional state responsibilities the state is no longer capable of performing (because of globalization and scientific and technological revolution), and the future of those responsibilities? There are several options. One is that the state transfers some of the tasks to the private sector, or to withdraw from regulating. In the case of supra-national integrations (such as the EU), some of public affairs are transferred to international organizations. Finally, it is possible to assign some tasks to the lower levels of government (regions, cities, municipalities), and in that sense decentralization is one of the reform possible aspects. Decentralization should be viewed in this broader context – a reform that is supposed to ensure a functional state and society. Only in this context can the decentralization be understood properly. The success of this type of reform process could be evaluated solely in this context.

### 3. Decentralization in Serbia

Serbia is a country characterized by poor governance, like many other countries in the region. This is easy to prove. The amount of public spending and regional disparity are some of the indicators that show the poor governing quality. On a more general level, it is possible to say that poor governance, low levels of democracy, and high-level corruption characterize Serbia. Decentralization can alleviate these problems. When this is perceived by the public, it will mean that a consensus has been reached on the necessity of decentralization.

There is another practical question – is Serbia a centralized country?<sup>2</sup> How does one measure decentralization and which criteria determine if a coun-

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<sup>2</sup> In the today's system of local self-government in Serbia, there are 150 municipalities, 23 cities, and the City of Belgrade. The city statutes regulate the division of cities into municipalities within a city, so the total number of municipalities including those within the cities is larger, and according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and their data from 2008, that number is 194. The average population per municipality is 45,000 (without Kosovo). Without Belgrade as the most populous area, the number is around 40,000. This shows that municipalities in Serbia are among the biggest in Europe. Apart from municipalities and autonomous provinces (that are a separate level of authority), there are also administrative districts (29). Administrative districts are deconcentrated state administrative units

try is more or less (de)centralized? This simple question is of great importance since there are people in Serbia who think that the country has already been sufficiently decentralized. There are a number of attempts in scientific literature to measure decentralization.<sup>3</sup>

The degree of decentralization ought to be calculated, but there are many difficulties due to manifold organizational patterns and different dimensions of decentralization. However, if the analysis focuses on European states, diversification is not so prominent, which then renders possible generalizations whose disadvantages should not exceed their advantages. One question remains – what is the basis for measuring the degree of decentralization in European countries? Systematic approach based on the definition and types of decentralization can provide us with an answer.

An important component of decentralization is determining what responsibilities and public affairs are transferred, to what extent, and to whom. Therefore, the essence of decentralization is two-fold: 1) formal transfer – handing over the affairs and decision-making competences, and 2) transfer – providing enough funds for the decentralized affairs to be implemented efficiently.

The structure of governance in a country is consists of

1. Levels of authority and the status of the first level below the central authority;
2. Their financial autonomy (the budget structure – the share of the original revenue);
3. The scope of affairs (decision-making at their disposal).

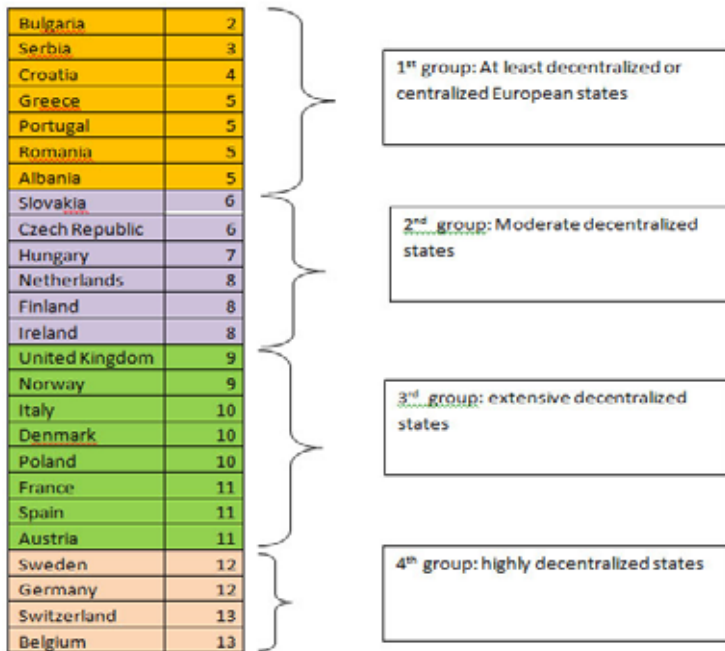
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or branches of central bodies, and in their size and essence different from self-governing communities. Administrative districts do not have their budgets or elected representatives.

<sup>3</sup> It is a common opinion in the literature that there is no unique or generally accepted method for measuring decentralization since there are many different institutional arrangements and different understandings of the concept: »there is no simple one dimensional, quantifiable index of degree of decentralization in a given country« (Sharma, 2006). Measuring decentralization is mostly based on establishing fiscal autonomy, i.e. spending and income ratio, or on the analysis of regulatory and financial mechanisms (for example, the structure of transfer, amounts, etc.). Schakel notes that this approach may be wrong because by analysing only the level of income and budget, one cannot measure the degree of decentralization, since the freedom to make decisions is not taken into account. In other words, local and regional governments can have a large budget and get large transfers from the state, but only to carry out the work that the state has already planned without a possibility to influence the decision on how to spend the money (Schakel, 2008). Lijphart in his book *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms & Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* also dealt with measuring decentralization and the degree of federalism.

Using this method (with some simplification and generalization) it is possible to make a list of European countries according to the degree of decentralization shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A list of European countries according to the degree of decentralization<sup>4</sup>



Therefore, despite the general view that Serbia is too centralized, this ought to be proved by research and measurements. An analysis of the state finances should give a somewhat clearer picture. Serbian State Budget for 2009 was 699 billion RSD, and the amount planned for trans-

<sup>4</sup> The method was elaborated in detail in Stančetić, 2010, and was developed when the three criteria mentioned were divided into several categories that were given numeric values. For example, for each level of authority a country receives 1 point. Germany gets 3 points in this case (municipalities, districts, federal units), Croatia 2 (municipalities and counties), and when it comes to the status of the first level of government below the central one, Germany gets a maximum of 4 points (since it is a federal unit), and Croatia 1, since the county is undoubtedly a higher level of local self-government with no trace of federal practice or that of an autonomous province. Countries in the middle are assigned values 2 and 3 (for example, 3 points for Spanish and Italian regions). Similar method is used when establishing the budget with the basic level of government.

fer to the lower levels of government was 73.6 billion RSD, 40.7 billion of which was set aside for municipalities and towns only. Around 10 per cent of the total budget is transferred to the lower levels of government, and the municipalities and towns are allowed only 6 per cent of that amount.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the basic municipal revenues are small: 23 per cent on average (Local Administration, 2009).

Financial arrangements are one way to prove that Serbia is centralised, which makes debates about the necessity of decentralisation quite justified. However, there is still no political will to decentralise the country, even though this subject is frequently discussed. Before decentralisation is accepted as a policy, the main actors must become aware of its significance and of the developmental and democratic potentials of a modern decentralized state. After that has been achieved, there ought to exist the political willingness to follow through with the plan in realistic terms.

The subjects of decentralization and regionalization are a common topic in the media. Judging from the newspaper articles and television, and from the word frequency count, regionalization was one of the hottest subjects in 2009.<sup>6</sup> The word decentralization is even more frequent and is used by all the relevant political actors. Moreover, a number of meetings and scientific conferences on decentralization and regionalization were held in Serbia between 2008 and 2010. The demands for decentralization also come 'from the bottom', that is from local politicians and officials. Finally, public research shows that citizens also have an affirmative stand on decentralization (Opinion, 2008). Further, different organizations that encourage decentralization have been established. For example, in 2009, the Government formed the National Council for Decentralization, whose expert members have a task to find the best possible model of decentralization in Serbia.

The political parties' programmes are in favour of decentralization. The Democratic Party's Programme<sup>7</sup> says that the Party supports decentralization of power, in both functional and territorial sense. It also stresses

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<sup>5</sup> Calculations are based on the data from the Budget Act of the Republic of Serbia of 2009.

<sup>6</sup> In spring 2008, the issue of regionalization became an increasingly common topic in the media, and during 2009, especially since May, it became one of the dominant topics. Politicians from the relevant parties started talking about it. There were newspaper articles and TV coverage. Daily newspapers Blic, Politika, Danas, and Vreme, weekly magazines, and many others, published a lot on this subject.

<sup>7</sup> The ruling and biggest party in the Serbian Government in the period 2008–2012.

that if the governing bodies are closer to citizens, a higher degree of control can be exerted upon their functioning and there are increased chances that the decisions are in tune with people's needs. An increase in the scope of municipal affairs is mentioned in the Programme as well as the need for true autonomy of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which ought to function as a modern organized state. The Programme does not have a clear stand on regionalization; the term regionalization is not even mentioned, so it is difficult to conclude whether the Democratic Party opts for or against regionalization.

Another major political party in Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party,<sup>8</sup> has put a balanced regional development and decentralization of Serbia as the final entry on its list of ten activity principles. It emphasizes this point as a condition of Serbia's progress. However, it is clearly stated that decentralization does not entail granting any kind of territorial autonomy, but only a broader scope and responsibilities given to the local self-governments.<sup>9</sup> This shows that this party is against regionalization of Serbia.

Smaller parties have different positions with regard to regionalization, judging from their programmes. However, there is a general agreement about decentralization in terms of granting the municipalities and towns a wider scope of public responsibilities. The Socialist Party of Serbia is against regionalization, which they perceive as creating autonomous provinces on the entire territory of Serbia. However, it supports forming a second (upper) tier of local self-government. The Serbian Radical Party is against any type of regionalization, and they maintain that the existing autonomies should be cancelled and the governance centralized. Contrary to this, recently formed United Regions of Serbia, led by the G17+, stress a need for functional decentralization and regionalization of Serbia. Finally, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is supportive of the possibility to introduce more autonomous provinces.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, there seems to be a consensus on decentralization in the sense of increasing the scope of affairs and responsibilities of the basic local units. The issue of regionalization is more complex, however. In Serbia, regionalization is conceptualised as either a) the division of the country

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<sup>8</sup> Serbian Progressive Party was the largest opposition party in Serbia in the previous parliamentary period.

<sup>9</sup> Ten Activity Principles, <http://www.srpskanaprednastranka.org/sr/o-srpskoj-naprednoj-stranci.html>

<sup>10</sup> Liberal Democratic Party: Different Serbia.



into several autonomous provinces that are a form of strong devolution, or b) the establishment of regions that have a narrower autonomy. The majority of political actors are opposed to introducing autonomous provinces (except LDP). When it comes to the introduction of regions there is room for compromise.

Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that it is common for the political programmes and declarations to say one thing, and political practice to voice quite another. The party leaders are often more concerned with who supports a certain idea than with the actual effect it could bring. A well-argued public debate is absent. Many promises concerning this topic are made while a party is campaigning, but when it comes to power everything is forgotten. Some politicians publicly support the idea of decentralization and/or regionalization, but fail to understand the concept, perceiving it as weakening of the state, disintegration of society, or even as dissolution of the country.

The institutions in charge of decentralization are the Ministry for State Administration and Local Self-Government and the National Council for Decentralization. The Ministry for State Administration and Local Self-Government can influence only the organization of local authorities and state bodies. The term »state administration« is more emphasised in its title. Bodies of state administration are ministries, administrative bodies within the ministries and special organizations (secretariats and departments). This does not include local self-government units, agencies, public enterprises, and many other public administration bodies. Successful decentralization cannot be carried out without systematic approach and proper division of tasks and responsibilities. The Ministry cannot handle such a task, because decentralization is not the job of a single ministry, but the issue that concerns the Government and all the political parties, including the opposition.

Strategic documents in this area have had little effect. The Strategy for State Administration Reform, adopted by the Government in 2004, stipulated that action plans must be developed. Previous action plan was adopted for the period 2004–2008 and the current one has been adopted for 2009–2012. The Strategy mentions decentralization, depoliticisation, professionalisation, rationalization and modernization with the reforms of legislative framework and public policies as the basic reform principles. The key reform areas are decentralization, fiscal decentralization, organisation of a professional and depoliticized administration and a new organizational framework. Although these principles are undoubtedly a ba-

sis for a modern and effective administration, the terms decentralization and state administration reform are often mixed up. The reform of state administration means the reform of central bodies and their territorial dislocation and deconcentration. Decentralization allows local-self-government units wider responsibilities, meaning that local self-government reform should have been included in the Strategy as a separate chapter. A comprehensive and effective reform ought to include the entire public governance system so that state and local bodies are reformed along with other non-state subjects important for the functioning of both state administration and local self-government. Since all these aspects are covered by the term public administration, the strategy ought to be titled the strategy for public administration. Its purpose should be a comprehensive reform of the entire public sector.

The National Council for Decentralization has a task to make recommendations for decentralization strategy. Although it was established in March 2009, by 2011 it had accomplished few things planned. This is another indicator of how low on the priority list decentralization is for the Government and for other political actors.

The design of a suitable decentralisation model includes taking into account specific human, technical, and administrative aspects characteristic of Serbia. There are also external points such as European integration; the significance of European regional policies; local self-governments, regional and international cooperation; the importance of local economic development, etc.

In order to find the best model, it is necessary to identify all possible models and filter them according to the criteria of political will, acceptability, and internal and external characteristics, eliminating the unsuitable models. When only two suitable models have remained, a public debate could decide which one is to be implemented. It is important to insist on a more complex understanding of the concept that does not include mere technocratic process of transferring responsibilities. Effective functioning of local self-government units should be rendered possible by different measures, for example by improving the employees' educational structure,

Civil society should also be included in the process of decentralisation. A decentralized state cannot exist without strong civil society and well-informed, active citizens. Recently conducted public opinion research has shown that Serbian citizens support decentralization and consider it necessary to improve democracy and the quality of governance in Serbia

(Decentralization, 2011).<sup>11</sup> Citizens' perception is that the level of centralization is high and that decentralization could be the solution for some of the problems.

#### 4. Potential Models and Suggestions for Decentralization in Serbia

How to decentralize Serbia, who should get the responsibilities, what those responsibilities should include, and to what degree should Serbia be decentralized? All these questions remain unanswered. Without elaborating on certain unacceptable models (for example, federalization) and taking into account practical points, two basic options can be identified:

1. Strengthening the existing, basic level of local self-government, or
2. Regional decentralization – regionalization, which includes two possible solutions, depending on the nature of the model and the level of responsibility of the region:
  - a) Region as the upper level of local self-government (weaker regions option),
  - b) Region as an autonomous province (stronger regions option).

Each of these options (as well as their possible combinations) has its advantages and disadvantages. That is why the experts, politicians and the society as a whole have to reach a consensus on the most suitable options, after the advantages and disadvantages have been carefully considered. SWOT analysis may be helpful.

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<sup>11</sup> The purpose of the research performed on 1,000 citizens was to consider the level of their information about decentralization.

<b>S</b> strengths	<b>W</b> weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– will for decentralization;</li> <li>– politicians declaratively support decentralization;</li> <li>– historical experiences;</li> <li>– the work and efforts of experts;</li> <li>– bodies in charge of decentralization;</li> <li>– the current state governing reform, within which decentralization is defined;</li> <li>– existing IT and GIS basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– uncertainties about the concrete model of decentralization;</li> <li>– imprecision in the meaning of some terms (for example, regionalization);</li> <li>– the fear of separatism;</li> <li>– perceiving regionalization as a process that will weaken the country;</li> <li>– the lack of true political will;</li> <li>– the lack of leadership material at the local level;</li> <li>– the lack of technical means and knowledge in the field of contemporary local management and development;</li> <li>– unfavourable demographic image;</li> <li>– poor infrastructure</li> </ul>
<b>O</b> opportunities	<b>T</b> threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– higher degree of democracy;</li> <li>– higher quality of decision-making;</li> <li>– spending the resources in a more rational manner;</li> <li>– ability to represent the interests at both state and international levels more efficiently;</li> <li>– relaxation in the relations with minorities and reduced tensions between the capital city and the periphery;</li> <li>– less room for corruption;</li> <li>– manifold experiences of other countries;</li> <li>– documents and recommendations of the EU and the Council of Europe;</li> <li>– forming of an institutional frame that will ensure that the potential benefits of EU membership are fully used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– propensity for corruption and low political culture;</li> <li>– local antagonisms;</li> <li>– centrifugal tendencies and abuse of authority;</li> <li>– the possibility of an increase in public expenditure;</li> <li>– poor enterprising morale and small amount of creativity;</li> <li>– the practice and habits remain in the <i>spoil</i> system;</li> <li>– outdated view of what the state, local government and public affairs should be</li> </ul>

National Liberal Network, a think-tank organization that was reorganized into the Centre for Good Governance Studies in 2011, did a paper on decentralization and regionalization of Serbia in cooperation with partners from Slovakia (see: Regions). The aim of the paper was to analyse the Slovak model of decentralization and regionalization and to establish which parts of their experience can be adopted in Serbia and what should be avoided. The Slovak model of regionalization was dismantled into several

elements and three possible options for Serbia were defined. The authors identified factors key to the reform's success, and used them to find the most suitable model.

Elements from the Slovak model that can be applied to Serbia include

1. The level (the size and number of regions); if the level is NUTS 3, a larger number of smaller regions is created and vice versa for NUTS 2,
2. The responsibilities and status,
3. The dominant role of the largest cities, emphasizing the size of the city according to its population and economic factors,
4. Regional potentials and development capacities.

The three possibilities are:

- a) to use the current statistical regionalization of Serbia at NUTS 2 level;
- b) to replicate the Slovak model in terms of the number of regions, their size, level, status and responsibility, and the dominant role of the largest cities. In that case, there would be a larger number of smaller self-governing regions (11, without Kosovo) which would operate at NUTS 3 level;
- c) to introduce a model created by replicating the Slovak model in terms of responsibility and status, regional development potential and existing developmental capacities. A model leads to six self-governing regions (without Kosovo) at NUTS 2 level.

The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options have been identified. The basic prerequisites for successful and functional governance and regionalization are satisfactory infrastructure in the region (primarily road and railway systems), a satisfactory number of educational institutions (a regional university centre with a network of high-quality faculties), and the right balance between regional and micro-regional development (greater involvement of Local Administrative Unit, LAU 1 and LAU 2 levels).<sup>12</sup> In short, it has been established that the development potentials are the key factor for successful regional decentralization.

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<sup>12</sup> LAU 1 corresponds to larger European municipalities, such as those in Serbia, or to counties in countries with smaller municipalities, while LAU 2 corresponds to units smaller than municipalities in Serbia.

The third option has at least three disadvantages. Two out of six regions have problems of poor infrastructure and insufficient education. Four out of six regions already are regional centres: Belgrade (the capital), Novi Sad (the capital of northern autonomous province), Kragujevac (central Serbia) and Niš (southern Serbia). All of these cities are close to highways, have good infrastructure and are university centres. However, western region (Užice), and eastern region (Zaječar), do not meet the necessary conditions. That is why the study has concluded that the third model is the most adequate, but that the process of regionalization ought to be carried out in two stages.

During the first stage, responsibility should be transferred to the four new regions. At the same time, the construction of the Belgrade-Požega-Užice and Paraćin-Zaječar highways is necessary, along with the support to the construction of a network of high-quality faculties (4 to 6) in these two cities (and other larger towns in the respective regions). Further, regional development agencies have to work on regional spatial planning and position business zones along transport corridors. Only after these conditions have been met (in 5 years) can regionalization be carried out in its entirety, and eastern and western regions can then be included into the picture.

Nevertheless, even if all these conditions are met, there is still a threat to strong regional development – the centralization of regions. Thus, it is of utmost importance to anticipate decentralization (in a narrow sense) or active implementation of LAU 1 and LAU 2 levels – of municipalities in Serbia (micro-regional communities) and smaller community units (with the administrative encumbrance of two employees per 1,000 people, LAU 1 and LAU 2 levels combined, while the office at LAU 2 level would have two employees).

## 5. Conclusion

Many questions regarding the model of decentralization and governance reform in Serbia remain open. The support of political elite is only declarative. Politicians talk about decentralization only because the EU insists on the process and it is a global trend, not because they understand the benefits of a decentralized state. However, the society and part of the political elite are aware that the country is too centralized. Experts and the media play an important role in the process. There is also much pressure

coming from local communities and their representatives, and from the EU. Therefore, it is to be expected that decentralisation will finally happen in the years to come.

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## DECENTRALIZATION AS AN ASPECT OF GOVERNANCE REFORM IN SERBIA

### *Summary*

*The importance of decentralization as a reform process in Serbia is analysed, the current state of affairs is established and possible suggestions for reforms in the future are elaborated. The paper briefly deals with decentralization as a component of modern reform processes, with the degree of (de)centralization in Serbia, and with the understanding and knowledge of this process in Serbian public. It continues by analysing the perspectives and opportunities for decentralization, including the institutions responsible for these matters along with their activities and recent results, as well as with the views and opinions of important political actors. Finally, a short overview of potential models of decentralization is presented along with the recommendations for the optimal solution, based on an empirical research.*

*Key words: decentralization – Serbia, governance, regionalization, local self-government, autonomous provinces, regions, municipalities*

## DECENTRALIZACIJA KAO ASPEKT UPRAVLJAČKE REFORME U SRBIJI

### Sažetak

*Analizira se značenje decentralizacije kao reformskog procesa u Srbiji, opisuje postojeće stanje te izlažu moguće preporuke za buduću reformu. Rad se ukratko bavi decentralizacijom kao komponentom modernih reformi, stupnjem (de)centralizacije Srbije, kao i razumijevanjem i znanjem o tom procesu u srpskoj javnosti. Također, analiziraju se perspektive i mogućnosti decentralizacije, institucije nadležne za tu materiju skupa s njihovim aktivnostima i rezultatima, kao i gledišta i mišljenja važnih političkih aktera. Na kraju se daje kratki pregled mogućih modela decentralizacije, kao i preporuke o optimalnoj soluciji temeljene na empirijskom istraživanju.*

*Ključne riječi: decentralizacija – Srbija, regionalizacija, lokalna samouprava, autonomne pokrajine, regije, jedinice lokalne samouprave*