

# *“No Countries for Municipalities?” – Old and New Faces of Centralisation in the Time of Crisis*

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Public service provision and administration have been transformed by digitalisation and the application of information and communication technologies (ICT). The article will focus mainly on the impact of these changes on regulatory issues. New approaches have been developed: “soft power” issues, like regulation and standards of public service provision, and central financial tools have become new elements of centralisation reforms, and the concentration of local public services and local administration has become a new issue, especially in Northern and Western

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Europe. Similarly, the “platformisation” of local services can be interpreted as a new form of centralisation. A “Northern” and “Southern/Eastern” approach to centralisation can be distinguished, and these are analysed in the article.

*Keywords:* centralisation, decentralisation, digitalisation, fiscal decentralisation, regional development, public service provision, concentration

## 1. Introduction and Methods<sup>1</sup>

In developed democratic states, the administration and management of local public affairs is inconceivable without local self-governance. Local and regional governments and the services provided by them have a significant impact on the structure of the public administration of a given country. The primary aim of this article is to identify the framework of the evolution of modern local government systems. The article will primarily focus on the changes in the situation of centralisation and decentralisation over the past decades. Transformations, challenges and turbulent times could be observed during the last two decades: the municipal system has been changed by crises and permanent reforms, which can also be observed in the analysis of the share of the local government system in the GDPs of EU Member States. It should be emphasised that the last four years could be interpreted as extremely turbulent ones, as the municipal systems were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and by the Russo–Ukrainian War. The “double crisis” strengthened the tendencies (Blahodarnyi et. al., 2022, pp. 131–132) which could be observed during the last decade.

The main aim of this article is to analyse the different approaches and faces of centralisation. The traditional regulation of local public services and municipalities has been based on the vertical division of tasks and

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powers, and on the vertical coordination. However, the emerging role of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporate social responsibility, and the privatisation of public services transformed the environment of the traditional background (Horváth & Bartha, 2018). Similarly, the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) resulted in a significant change in administrative activities, which transformation impacted the centralisation of administrative tasks (Hoffman & Bencsik, 2023). This transformation is important, because the main elements of the alteration of the system are quite latent, but these modifications can be interpreted as a "silent revolution" of the local and regional public service provision.

This article is based on mixed methods, primarily on the methods of jurisprudence and administrative science, and also on the analysis of the given national regulations on public service provision of the local and regional (subnational) bodies. The analysis is based on the regulations of EU Member States, several other European countries, and the liberal democracies in America, Asia and Oceania. The analysed legal norms are partially mentioned in the article. The legal analysis is based on the examination of the dogmatic, theoretical and practical issues of the norms and decisions based on these rules (Samuels, 2014). The legal analysis focuses on the examination of the regulation on administrative organisations. The organisational law approach is also evident in the fact that the analysis does not approach the organisation of public human services from the perspective of fundamental rights, it focuses on the issues of centralisation and decentralisation. The article not only examines regulatory questions, but also analyses policies. The policy analysis is based partially on the policy rules of the aforementioned countries and partially on the literature about them. Legal regulations are norms which should be implemented and enforced, therefore there is a necessary difference between "law in books" and "law in actions" (Llewellyn, 1962). It is not enough to analyse the policy documents and regulation, because the practice of public service provision can be different. Therefore, the analysis of government spending on the public services is a crucial part of this examination (Shafritz, Russel & Borick, 2016; Koprić & Wollmann, 2018). The data are mainly based on official statistical data and for the comparative analysis, one database has been chosen, the database of Eurostat COFOG to avoid the bias of slightly different statistical methodologies – for example the differences between OECD and Eurostat data (Filges et al, 2015). This method is followed by other authors as well, because centralisation and

decentralisation can be interpreted as legal concepts, but they can also be interpreted through a broader approach (Brezovnik et al., 2021).

## 2. The Impact of the Transformation of Welfare Systems on Municipal Systems

The last decades have also had a significant impact on welfare systems, which has meant a major transformation not only in the paradigms of public service provision but also in the actual service provision practice. Public service provision models, approaches and practices have also had a significant impact on the main issues in the provision of municipal public services (Kostrubiec, 2021; Friedländer & Kersting, 2022).

During the post-World War II period, the systems of European democracies could be characterised, albeit to differing degrees, by an expansion in the range of public services provided at the local and regional level. On the one hand, this was linked to the development of welfare states and to the fact that the dominant paradigm of service organisation of the period was the concept of the service state. The extent of this expansion was different from one welfare model to another. In the Nordic countries, the expansion of the welfare state and of educational services was a major challenge for the functioning of the system as a whole, but similar trends were also evident in the continental countries (Loughlin, Hendricks & Lidström, 2011).

The development of local government service systems has also been significantly influenced by the evolution of the welfare-public service system in a given country. In countries following the Nordic welfare model, local communities have traditionally played a more important role in the service provision system. In the countries whose welfare model can be characterised as continental Bismarckian (social security based or conservative), specific arrangements can be observed. On the one hand, in countries which follow the original Bismarckian approach, such as Germany in particular, the social insurance bodies themselves are self-governing, albeit not local-regional but corporate self-governments (*Körperschaften*). In these countries, however, municipalities are primarily responsible for providing several services. The reforms of recent decades, influenced by the new public management model – in Germany it is called "*das neue Steuerungsmodell*" – have made it possible for these public tasks to be carried out to a greater extent by institutions run by operators (governed

by private law) other than public authorities. These private operators are interpreted by the German legal doctrine as private institutions (*Privatinstitution*) (Bauer, 2012). In the field of welfare services, however, even with strong central regulation, the central government has defined the tasks of its responsibility for the provision of benefits in a broad manner, precisely in order to ensure a uniform standard of provision. The role of local and central government has increased again over the last two decades. Re-municipalisation (*Rekommunalisierung*) has also affected the public services previously organised by private institutions and has further strengthened the public elements of service provision. Local government has traditionally played a significant role in the provision of public human services in Anglo-Saxon systems, but non-governmental service providers, such as various business corporations, non-profit organisations and ecclesiastical bodies, collectively known as non-governmental organisations, have also played an important role in the traditional Anglo-Saxon system (Dukelow & Heins, 2019). The Anglo-Saxon systems represent a specific service provision solution. In addition to the legal autonomy of municipal budgeting, there is a strong financial dependence on central government subsidies, which can be interpreted as a kind of "cynical decentralisation" (Copus, Roberts & Wall, 2017, pp. 7–10).

Latin (Southern European) countries could be interpreted as another model. Although in the 1980s and 1990s, thanks to the European integration of the Southern European countries, EU (regional) development aids and the economic development linked to the European integration of these countries, a convergence with the Western and Northern European systems could be observed. However, the convergence process that started at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was interrupted at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, mainly linked to the economic crisis of 2008-2009, which is also partly linked to the process of increasing European integration. Nevertheless, at first sight, it may seem antagonistic that the process of increasing integration has triggered a process of divergence, especially if we consider that this divergence is (also) partly due to the so-called convergence (Maastricht) criteria. The economic crisis of 2008-2009 had a major impact on Southern European countries, whose management of the crisis was made more difficult by the fact that essentially all of them were part of the euro area. On the one hand, this limited their room for economic manoeuvring, since they did not have an independent monetary policy and the common European currency was over-mature compared to their economic strength, and on the other hand, they had to apply the policy requirements of the common monetary system. This significantly

reduced the scope for debt-based crisis management and also reduced capital market confidence in these countries, which made it more difficult to raise capital. As a result, at the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s, debt reduction and debt stock management, as well as the Maastricht criteria, led to a reduction in public spending. As the most significant public expenditure in modern democracies is financing public services, their spending on these services has essentially declined in proportion to GDP or at most stagnated, unlike in most Western and Northern European countries. This was particularly similar at the level of local government, which was significantly affected by the restrictions. In many cases, the central level has sought to shift the challenges of these restrictions onto the self-government system through the so-called "cynical decentralisation" referred to several times, as can be seen in the chapters analysing individual services, where additional tasks were imposed without additional resources being provided or with limited, disproportionate provision (Moury & Afonso, 2019).

In contrast to the trends of the 1980s and 1990s, the gap between the welfare service systems in the centre and semi-periphery of the European continent has opened and the systems have begun to change in opposite directions, a change that has been influenced not only by economic factors but also by changes in the societies and political systems concerned, in particular the rise of populism (Gárdos-Orosz, 2021).

The specific welfare conditions of the transition states in Central and Eastern Europe (and partly in the Baltic States) – the (communist) welfare systems based on the expanse of state and state-owned enterprises in the socialist period, and its interruption with the democratic transition of the 1990s, the attempts to return to the former system based on a predominantly Bismarckian system, the budget crises that have been a permanent feature since the 1990s – have all had a significant impact on public services. Although these countries have sought to restore their Bismarckian welfare systems and have adopted the German welfare model, these challenges and acute problems have led to the emergence of fragmented systems that seek to respond to the most pressing problems of the moment. Although a process of convergence was set in motion here in the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, partly linked to EU accession, in most of the countries concerned this process came to a halt following the economic crisis of 2008-2009. While the role of municipalities may have been strengthened in the 1990s, often without adequate resources, through a kind of "cynical decentralisation", the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was the era of an increasing cen-

tralisation process. The centralisation was mainly linked to the reduction in the ratio of welfare spending to GDP. Perhaps the only exceptions to this were the Baltic States, but this was also due to the fact that their base in the early 1990s was very low, so that, in the wake of changes that ran counter to the general trends in Central and Eastern Europe, their welfare expenditure as a share of GDP was either below or barely below that of the other countries in the region. The situation of the Balkan states is also specific. In the Western Balkans, austerity has been less pronounced, but in the Eastern Balkans it has been more widespread (Hoffman, Fazekas & Rozsnyai, 2016).

### 3. Centralisation, Decentralisation, Concentration – Changes in Organisational Frameworks in Recent Decades – The “Thinning Out” of Local Self-Governance

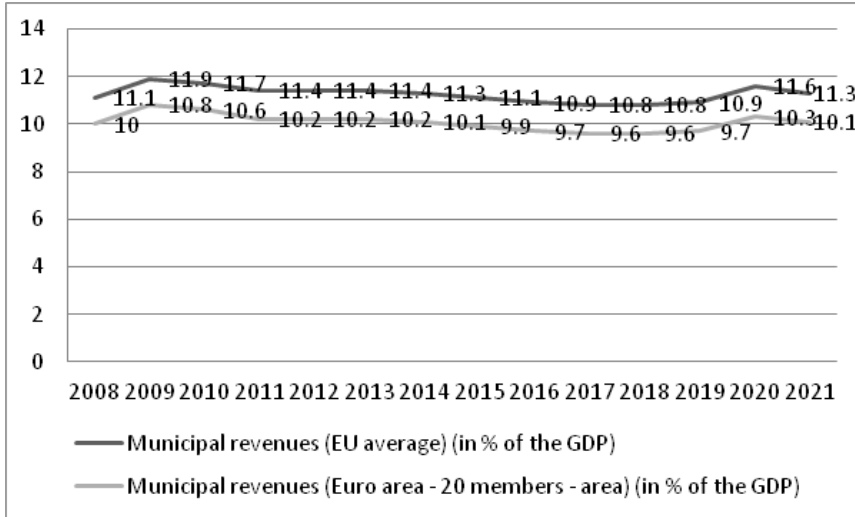
#### 3.1. Centralisation and Concentration: General Trend, but in Different Ways

It should be emphasised that during the first two decades of the 21st century a strong wave of centralisation could be observed in the majority of the developed countries. On the one hand, the three major crises of the era – the 2008-2009 economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and social crisis that followed, and the economic and political crisis related to the Russo-Ukrainian war – have, like previous crises, reinforced the effects of centralisation and consolidation of services. The centralising effects of crises have been reported by several monographs, studies, and articles (Andreotti & Mingione, 2016).

Alongside the crises, the globalisation trend has tended to reinforce centralisation, although these trends – as a countervailing effect – may also have led to a strengthening of local community provision in certain sectors, in particular public cultural services. Centralisation, driven by globalisation trends, also had an impact, when from 2013 to 2019 a relative abundance of funds could be observed in different public service provision systems.

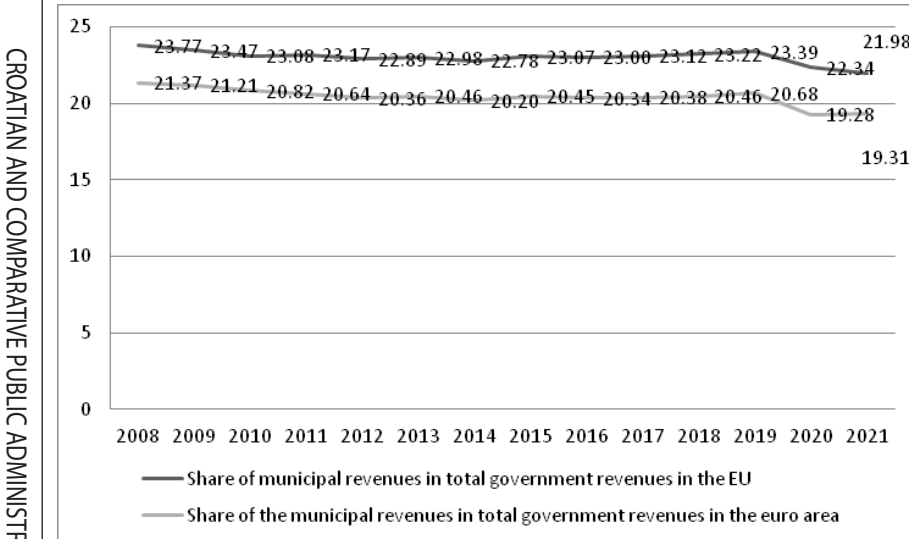
Centralisation tendencies were also reinforced by the changing political environment resulting from globalisation tendencies and reactions to

Figure 1. *Share of municipal expenditures (in % of GDP) in EU Member States (from 2008 to 2022)*



Source: Author, based on the data of the EUROSTAT COFOG (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/government-finance-statistics/data/database>).

Figure 2. *Share of municipal expenditures (in % of general government expenditures) in EU Member States (from 2008 to 2022)*



Source: Author, based the data of the EUROSTAT COFOG (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/government-finance-statistics/data/database>).



them. The populist tendencies that have emerged since the 2010s (Thomas & Tufts, 2015), as well as the hybrid regimes that have evolved, particularly in the semi-peripheral countries, have generally been aimed at centralising public service systems, also in order to ensure greater political control and influence (Agartan & Kuhlmann, 2019).

Centralisation – partially the concentration of the municipal service provision systems – tendencies have been present in a wide range of advanced post-industrial societies, but in different forms in different service systems and geographical units (Hoffman, Fazekas & Rozsnyai, 2016; Đulabić & Čepo, 2017). These characteristics were different, but certain trends and patterns are clearly discernible in the various systems. These patterns also fit in well with the trends of local governance transformation (Pálné Kovács, 2019).

### 3.2. Centralisation and Concentration in Western and Northern Europe: A More “Hidden” Weakening of Municipal Roles

Kuhlmann and Wollmann (2019) have highlighted that both centralisation and decentralisation can take different forms. Their analysis has indicated that two main trends emerged in local and regional administration and local and regional reforms, although these systems were shaped by a number of impacting factors.

The first has been typical of the “Western and Northern European countries”, where these various reforms have been partly top-down, with the primary aim of modernising the municipal public service provision systems. In the field of local and regional public services, the role of municipal service provision could be considered as a significant one. Various reforms have focused on the transformation of municipal systems and sought to create larger units of service provision, but they were carried out within the municipal system. At the heart of this “Northern” model has been the concentration of local government services, creating larger, more efficient units by merging and integrating separate local and regional units (Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2019). The trends towards integration and concentration were further reinforced by the changing municipal context at the turn of the millennium, in particular the increasing urbanisation trends. The emerging housing crisis in large cities, with affordable housing being pushed to the periphery of cities, and the resulting intensification of suburbanisation, posed challenges that could not be adequately addressed by

traditional spatial arrangements in local government, as the service unit extended well beyond the administrative boundaries of local government. In order to manage these *de facto* units, various solutions were adopted: on the one hand, merged units or specific forms of compulsory partnership cooperation were used. These concentration tendencies, which have evolved in Northern and Western European countries, can also be observed in Southern, Central and Eastern Central European countries, as it will be discussed below. For example, the metropolitan areas of Portugal (*área metropolitana*) can be seen as such a compulsory co-operative concentration response to urbanisation challenges.<sup>2</sup>

The literature highlights that systems of municipal concentration – merging of municipal units and the establishment of inter-municipal associations – have posed additional challenges, especially in the field of public (human) services, by which fundamental rights are exercised (Soukopová et al., 2022). Municipal human service systems should therefore provide services according to a relatively uniform standard. A particular tension has been created in these systems. In view of the wide range of municipal responsibilities, a specific, latent, “stealth” centralisation has emerged, whereby the freedom of local communities to organise services has been eroded through the (central) regulation of various service standards, typically not by acts of Parliament but by government and ministerial decrees and ordinances and in many cases by different soft-law documents (Kazepov & Barbeis, 2019). It should be mentioned that in Denmark, municipalities are responsible for the tasks of social care. As it is a developed welfare state and to avoid spatial inequalities, the standards of service provision are regulated by the central government. These standards could be interpreted as very detailed regulated service requirements; therefore, municipalities have very limited possibilities to establish an own, municipally managed and designed system. Because of this “stealth” regulatory centralisation, scholars highlight that Danish municipalities have become “implementing agencies of the welfare state” (Blom-Hansen & Heeager, 2011, pp. 230–234).

In addition to “stealth” centralisation, another trend has emerged since the 2000s, called “cynical decentralisation”. In this case, the primary objective of the reform has been not to strengthen welfare functions, but to transfer responsibility, while additional resources for increasing municipal tasks have not been provided or have been provided only partially. It is called

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed characterisation of the Porto Metropolitan Area (*Área Metropolitana do Porto*), see Hoffman et al., 2020

“cynical decentralisation” because it represents a real transfer of powers and duties from the central government and its agencies to the municipalities, but without additional resources. Therefore, municipalities face challenges in providing these services. Seemingly the municipal system has been strengthened, but is a cynical one, because the lack of resources is a strong limitation of effective local service provision (Pálné Kovács, 2019).

The latent, “stealth” centralisation has also taken on 21<sup>st</sup> century forms. With the informatics “revolution”, the widespread application of ICT and the emergence of the information society, information and data related to public services are becoming increasingly important. In the majority of developed countries, these data systems and platforms are generally organised by the central government. Since without this data, new types of public service organisation solutions for local authorities, which are extensively based on digital solutions and which in many cases are linked to the smart city concept, cannot be implemented or can only be implemented to a limited extent, the ownership of and access to data has also led to a kind of centralisation in these countries, which is only indirectly perceived at first sight. This centralisation is similar to the transformation of the business sector: the introduction of corporate digital ecosystems – for example, one of the most known is the System Applications and Products in Data Processing (SAP), which is the leading software in Enterprise Resource Planning market (Leimbach, 2008), resulted in the centralisation of company management and standardisation of the different corporate procedures and activities (Hein et al., 2020; Kostrubiec, 2023). The corporate ecosystem of multinational companies has been more centralised after the introduction of these platforms because the former differences in procedures and management have disappeared (Ludacka, Duell & Waibell, 2021). The impact of the ICT on public service is similar to the digital transformation of the business sector. However, these alterations are quite visible, the digital transformation is the “stealthy” one, but the evolvement of public service provision platforms could be interpreted as a very real and significant centralisation. This latent centralisation is also evident in Australia (Tomlinson, 2019).

### 3.3. Direct Centralisation in “Semi-Peripheral Countries”: The Transformation of Local Government Systems in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe

However, several above-mentioned “stealth” centralisation tendencies can be observed in Southern, Central and Eastern Central European

countries – especially concentration tendencies, and funding and regulatory centralisation (Plaček et al., 2020). Because these countries became important beneficiaries of European Structural and Investment Funds, and in these countries the national level management of these EU funds falls under the responsibilities of the central government and its agencies (Hoffman, 2023), special forms of funding centralisation have evolved, which can be interpreted as “development centralisation”. As in these countries the majority of the local and regional development is supported by EU co-financed funds, the local and regional development strongly depends on these funds. Thus, the main decisions on the local and regional development are actually made by these national fund management bodies (Hoffman, 2024).

Other local and regional public services reform trends that appear in the literature are the reforms in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe. In these countries, reforms have been also in principle aimed at modernising systems, but the literature also points out that in many cases reforms have been undertaken to reduce municipal expenditure, which has been accelerated by the various economic crises, particularly by the 2008–2009 economic crisis (Seixas et al., 2016).

In the Member States of the euro area and in those EU Member States which acceded to the EU in 2004 and thereafter, this trend has been further reinforced by the monetary and fiscal framework, and its enforcement system established by the European Monetary Union. In order to fulfil the so-called convergence criteria (also known as the Maastricht criteria), severe fiscal austerity measures have been implemented, which have also strongly affected the expenditures on public services. In other words, the EU, which, in the 1990s and 2000s, had been strengthening the convergence of the various service systems through its aid policy and its constantly evolving and expanding range of policies in the human services field, has since the last years of the 2000s had a different effect: the previous mechanisms of convergence have been replaced by an effect that reinforces divergence. The fiscal expenditure reduction reform has also had a strong impact on local government systems in the (semi-)peripheral countries of Europe (Dervis & Mistral, 2014). In order to restructure the public service capacities, in many cases by reducing them, and to better allocate the remaining capacities, several countries have opted for the direct central government provision of these services. Thus, in contrast to Northern and Western European solutions, direct centralisation and partial “nationalisation” of previously municipal public services have been introduced in Southern and Central and Eastern European countries.

The direct centralisation of services has not only been influenced by economic impacts, but also by other social and economic transformations and changes. In the European semi-peripheral countries, the more pronounced populist political wave since the 2010s and the associated transformations towards often hybrid regimes have also reinforced the centralised – often heavily controlled by the politics – management of public service systems, and thus we could see an increase in centralisation even during the 2013–2019 conjuncture period (Stubbs & Lendvai-Banton, 2020).

The increasing direct central intervention has not been the only trend as in some countries, especially after the economic stabilisation following the economic crisis of 2008–2009, even decentralisation reforms had been introduced from the mid-2010s until the beginning of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Portuguese education reform could be interpreted as a good example for this trend: towards the end of the last decade the reform sought to alleviate public expenditure on education by partially decentralising the system (Sebastião et al., 2020). In other words, much of the decentralisation reforms in the Southern and Eastern parts of the EU can also be described as a kind of cynical decentralisation, as mentioned above. These processes also fitted into the reforms of the Eastern European Democratic Transition era, where the economic crisis of the 1990s was treated similarly by the central governments (Bátora & Klimovský, 2022; Lopižić & Manojlović Toman, 2021). Thus, in several cases, municipalities were seen by these systems as special “trash cans” of services, performing tasks that the central government did not want to organise. This “trash can” effect can be observed by the transformation of the Hungarian healthcare system. Until 2011, the municipalities were the main providers of healthcare services, but after 2012, nationalisation in multiple stages took place (Medve-Bálint & Bohle, 2022). In 2023, municipalities were only responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure for general practitioners (GPs), and even the GPs’ service areas are defined by a central government agency. Thus, municipalities should handle directly the lack of GPs in Hungary and the spatial inequalities (Bálint, 2021).

In addition to the direct centralisation tendencies, the concentration of the services within the municipal systems and the regulatory centralisation – which have been widely applied by Northern and Western European countries – have been only partially implemented. The divergent approaches to centralisation, decentralisation and concentration, the divergent solutions of “centre” and “semi-periphery” have drawn different

patterns, which also have a strong impact on the organisation of local public services.

## 4. Conclusions

For these reasons, a particular "fault line" is also emerging in the European municipal public service systems, which roughly corresponds to the dual development of centralisation and decentralisation in Europe: the welfare systems of the centre are expanding slightly or at least maintaining expenditure levels in relation to GDP, but in Southern and Central and Eastern European countries opposite trends could be observed, with the Baltic States being the clear exception, although there are also some differences in the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

Thus, the relationship between centralisation and decentralisation and between state and local government has also changed: traditional forms of influence have been reduced and new solutions have emerged, partly outside the previous framework. As part of the ICT revolution and the evolution of the "smart administration" and "smart cities", a new form of centralisation has emerged: the "platform centralisation" which is based on centralised data management of the given countries and the centralised regulation of access to those data which are required for the performance of municipal tasks.

All these processes have been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its management, which has, on the whole, reinforced centralisation tendencies, partly through "traditional" centralisation and partly through new, less visible forms of centralisation, notably through funding and soft-law instruments, centralised data management, and further centralisation of public service regulation.

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## "NO COUNTRIES FOR MUNICIPALITIES?" – OLD AND NEW FACES OF CENTRALISATION IN THE TIME OF CRISIS

### *Summary*

*It is a "cliché" in the administrative sciences that centralisation tendencies are accelerated by crises. Public service provision and administration have been transformed by the digitalisation and application of ICT. My article will focus mainly on the impact of these changes on regulatory issues. New approaches have evolved: centralisation and concentration have new "faces", and a soft divergence between different European countries can also be observed. "Soft power" issues, like regulation and standards of public service provision and central financial tools have become new elements of centralisation reforms, and the concentration of local public services and local administration has become a new issue, especially in Northern and Western Europe. Similarly, the "platformisation" of local services can be interpreted as a new form of centralisation: the data required for these activities are centrally managed, and the access to these data is defined by the central governments. A "Northern" and "Southern/Eastern" approach to centralisation can be distinguished. The Northern pattern is based on new forms of centralisation, and the "traditional" forms of centralisation have a more significant influence on the Southern approach (however, new forms of centralisation can be observed as well).*

*Keywords: centralisation, decentralisation, digitalisation, fiscal decentralisation, regional development, public service provision, concentration*

## “NEMA ZEMLJE ZA OPĆINE?” STARA I NOVA LICA CENTRALIZACIJE U VREMENU KRIZE

### Sažetak

Činjenica da se centralizacijski trendovi ubrzavaju u kriznim vremenima već je postao klišej u upravnim znanostima. Javno upravljanje i pružanje javnih usluga stubokom su izmijenjeni digitalizacijom i primjenom informacijsko-komunikacijske tehnologije. Rad se ponajviše fokusira na učinke ovih promjena na regulacijska pitanja. Novi pristupi koji se razvijaju, centralizacija i koncentracija, pokazuju nova lica i počinje se primjećivati svojevrsna divergencija među europskim državama. Novi elementi centralizacijskih reformi postaju pitanja „meke“ moći – regulacija općih standarda pružanja javnih usluga i financijski instrumenti. Također, koncentracija lokalnih javnih službi i lokalne uprave postale su nove teme, posebice u zemljama sjeverne i zapadne Europe. Slično tome, „platformizacija“ lokalnih službi može se tumačiti kao oblik centralizacije: podacima koji su potrebni za obavljanje ovih aktivnosti upravlja se centralizirano i uvjete pristupa navedenim podacima definirale su centralne vlasti. Mogu se razlikovati sjeverni i južni/istočni pristup centralizaciji. Sjeverni obrasci centralizacije ukazuju na nove oblike centralizacije, dok tradicionalni oblici centralizacije imaju snažniji utjecaj na južni pristup. No, i u tim se zemljama mogu vidjeti elementi novih oblika centralizacije.

Ključne riječi: centralizacija, decentralizacija, digitalizacija, fiskalna decentralizacija, regionalni razvoj, pružanje javnih usluga, koncentracija