

**Associations and representations of cities
and regions in the EU Member States:
*a mapping exercise***

**The file note was written by the
Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services (CSES).
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Catalogue number: QG-30-13-285-EN-N
ISBN: 978-92-895-0664-9
DOI: 10.2863/68637

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Executive Summary

This study aims to present an updated overview of the roles and functions of associations and representations of cities and regions in each of the European Union's Member States. A list of existing active Local and Regional Authority (LRA) associations is provided for each Member State. This list is then followed by a description of their role in the decision making process and their powers and responsibilities in connection with the Europe 2020 strategy. More specifically, particular consideration is given to the role of LRAs and their associations in developing National Reform Programmes. The study also aims to track the implications, if any, of the Treaty of Lisbon in terms of how LRAs contribute to policy formation at European level.

The main overall findings of this exercise were as follows:

There have been no major changes as yet in the way that LRAs function as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon or as a direct result of the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy. The involvement of LRAs or their representatives in the discussions on the formulation of National Reform Programmes (NRPs) at national level is perhaps the clearest manifestation of the role played by LRAs in implementing the Europe 2020 strategy. Based on the answers from the countries that responded to the survey questionnaire, regional and local associations do indeed appear to have some level of involvement in the decision making processes of the National Reform Programmes in certain countries. However, in other countries, where there has been LRA involvement in the development of the NRP this has been through direct interaction between the national government and the LRAs.

Most importantly the extent of the role of the LRAs and their participation is primarily dependent on the specific administrative system of individual countries, the respective legal competencies of the different levels of government, the legal and administrative reforms that are underway and political as well as regional and cultural factors. This file note makes reference to these considerations in order to provide a meaningful context for the description of the roles and responsibilities within each country.

Lastly, based on the twelve countries that responded to the survey, there has been no significant new convergence between the LRAs' areas of competence and the themes of the Europe 2020 strategy. In other words, although the LRAs may take Europe 2020 into account when carrying out their established functions, no change has been noted in the roles and responsibilities of LRAs which result directly from Europe 2020.

Introduction

In its proposal for Europe 2020, the Commission highlighted the importance of the partnership approach of the Lisbon agenda and called for this partnership approach to be implemented at all levels of government, including at regional and local level.¹ Furthermore, it called for the Committee of the Regions (CoR) to play a greater role. Specifically, it recommended that the European Council, “call on all parties and stakeholders (e.g. national/ regional parliaments, regional and/or local authorities, social partners and civil society, and last but not least the citizens of Europe) to help implement the strategy, working in partnership, by taking action in areas within their responsibility”.

One of the main reasons for emphasizing the involvement of LRAs is the consideration that the majority of EU legislation in Europe is implemented at local or regional level. LRAs are the level of government closest to the citizens and hence best suited to represent and reach them. Furthermore, several policy areas of Europe 2020, for example, innovation and sustainability, cover areas in which LRAs enjoy considerable powers. “Recognition of the importance of the territorial dimension is not new. It is at the core of the EU structural policies”². The adoption of the strategy at regional and local level can give it a truly territorial dimension.

As noted by the CoR in Dec 2009, “Territorial cohesion” has been recognized as a fundamental objective under the Treaty of Lisbon. The Treaty has further strengthened the role of the CoR and improved the standing of regions and cities in the European Union's political system by boosting the role of the Committee of the Regions throughout the legislative process. In addition to extended consultation requirements during the adoption of EU legislation, the CoR now also has the right to bring legal actions before the European Court of Justice. Another important change is that the local and regional right of self-government is now enshrined in the EU treaty. When new EU legislation is drafted, the competences of regional and local authorities must now be taken into consideration and they must be heard in wide-ranging consultations at an early stage. The Treaty also provides for greater subsidiarity monitoring by national and regional parliaments with legislative powers (the so-called “yellow card” procedure”).

¹European Commission, Europe 2020- “A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.” COM(2010)2020, published 3.3.2010.

² As noted in the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion “Turning territorial diversity into strength”, COM(2008) 616 final, {SEC(2008) 2550}.

For the implementation of the headline targets³ of the Europe 2020 strategy, Member States are required to set national targets and draw up National Reform Programmes, stating in detail the actions they will undertake in order to implement the new strategy. At EU level, the Commission is required to develop appropriate EU-level measures, which are then put forward to the Council. To meet the targets, there will be a number of flagship initiatives with specific themes⁴. Their implementation is the shared responsibility of the EU and the Member States. In addition, a set of integrated guidelines and country specific recommendations will be adopted to support the Member States. To ensure each EU country implements the Europe 2020 strategy in a way that corresponds to its particular situation, the five headline targets are to be translated into national targets in each EU country. This will take place as part of a dialogue with the Commission in order to ensure consistency with the EU headline targets.

Each country sets its own national targets as part of its National Reform Programme (NRP) which must be prepared by April each year. The LRAs can contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy by getting involved in drafting the NRP. So far, no definite processes have been adopted and no legislation has been passed to ensure the participation of the LRAs or their representative associations. In most cases, the approach used for the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy is clearly top-down. However, the involvement of associations representing local and regional authorities has been reported in countries such as Sweden, Slovenia and Cyprus⁵.

In some cases, such as Greece and Latvia, the national context for the implementation of overarching strategies has recently changed leading to administrative reforms. In most cases, however, the Europe 2020 Strategy has not yet led to any dramatic change in the role of LRAs. The specific administrative system of individual countries, their legal competences and administrative reforms are much more important factors when it comes to determining the LRAs' role. However, the Treaty of Lisbon and its emphasis on Cohesion Policy and the Europe 2020 Strategy have highlighted the role of associations of local and regional authorities.

³The headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy are: increasing the employment rate to 75% for people between 20-64; increasing investment in R&D to 3% of GDP; reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the share of renewable energies and moving towards energy efficiency; reducing school drop-out rates and increasing the share of 30-34 year-olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%; reducing poverty (numerical indicator to be defined); promoting social inclusion especially by decreasing poverty ; and growth.

⁴“Innovation Union,” “Youth on the Move,” “A digital Agenda for Europe,” “An industrial policy for the globalisation era,” “An agenda for new skills and jobs,” “Resource efficient Europe,” and “European Agenda against poverty.”

⁵ Of the nine countries that responded.

The CoR operates the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform (EUROPE2020MP) as part of its contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy. This is a tool which allows EU local and regional authorities to have a say in the policy process, from design to the implementation of the new Europe 2020 strategy. The CoR also issues a monitoring report on how Europe 2020 is implemented in each EU Member State.

In order to support this work, this note aims to provide an updated account of the existing associations of cities and regions in every EU Member State, examining the role they play in the political and institutional decision-making processes relating to Europe 2020. In addition, it aims to provide details of the attribution of political responsibilities for Europe 2020 and the related decision-making processes, where applicable. The following methodology was adopted for the purposes of the study:

Methodology

Preparatory tasks

Two studies already published by the CoR were used as a starting point for the current mapping exercise: “Division of powers between EU, the Member States, and Local and Regional Authorities” and “Procedures in local and Regional authority participation in European Policy Making in the Member States” (2008 and 2005 respectively). These two studies combined with the desk research carried out provided the background information for each country. The aim was to complement and update this information by means of a questionnaire sent out to relevant contacts in each of the Member States. The questionnaire aimed to collect information about active associations of regions and cities in each of the 27 Member States and to provide an account of their responsibilities for Europe 2020 and their involvement in the decision-making process related to the new Strategy. In addition, the questionnaire examined whether there had been any changes impacting on the role or responsibilities of these associations of regions and cities which had been introduced as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon or in connection with changes in national regulations. In view of their role in supporting and facilitating LRA involvement in issues at European level, information was also sought on LRA representation in Brussels, together with the contact details of people able to provide further information on the situation regarding the Europe 2020 in their country. Whenever details of such contacts were provided, they were contacted for follow up interviews.

The survey

The questionnaires were emailed to targeted organisations in each Member State. Follow-up calls were made and where no contact could be established, an alternative contact was identified for the country in question. Anyone who did not have the information we were looking for was asked to recommend other contacts. Once the response was received, follow-up interviews were scheduled, where agreed.

Responses

Twelve of the twenty-seven Member States responded to the questionnaire and three provided contact details for a follow-up interview. Organisations from eight other Member States undertook to provide information, but there has been little response from the remaining Member States and a number directly refused to take part. A list of countries and the nature of their responses can be found in the annex.

The information provided in the following sections is therefore only partial in nature. Those countries for which we were unable to get any response to our survey are indicated with an asterisk.

Information from the National Reform Programmes

In order to supplement the information derived from the questionnaire survey, a broader information search was carried out, using documentation available in printed form and on the Internet. In particular, the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) of the Member States were examined, once these had become publicly available in English⁶, since the guidelines for these documents indicated that they should give explicit consideration to how stakeholders and LRAs in particular, were involved in preparing the document. Summaries have been prepared of references to LRA involvement in the development and implementation of NRPs and to any reference to the role of LRA associations in particular. The results of this process are presented as an additional section for each country.

⁶ At the time of submitting the file note, there is no NRP available for Greece. The Italian NRP is not available in English, but its content has been reflected in the relevant section.

1. Description of Individual Member States

1.1 Austria*

Introduction

Austria is a federal republic with nine federal states (bundeslaender). It is a centralised federation with no fixed division of competences between the different levels of the government.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (Osterreichischer Stadtebund)
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Austrian Association of Municipalities (Osterreichischer Gemeinbund)
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The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns has a representation in Brussels which is closely aligned to Austria's diplomatic representation at the European Union. The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns is therefore in a position, on the basis of a constitutional regulation,⁷ to take part in information exchange and decision-making processes at both national and European level.

Representatives of the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns take part in meetings at the EU's Committee of the Regions and at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe⁸. The association is also a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

The task of representing Austrian local government on the committees of international organisations is shared equally between the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns and the Gemeindebund (the Association of Municipalities).

In accordance with Article 23d B-VG of the Austrian Constitution, cities and municipalities are called on to submit comments if cases where draft legislation affects the key interests of the communities.

⁷ Article 23 c & d B-VG, BGBl. 1013/1994, Austrian Constitution

⁸ Osterreichischer Stadtebund website: <http://www.staedtebund.gv.at/>

Role in Europe 2020

A new domestic stability pact was developed for the years 2011-2014, giving Europe 2020 a significant role in its overall framework. The new pact completely revises the system for public entities, fixing ambitious levels of stability contributions for each of the provincial governments and municipalities and allowing each of them to individually define their respective legally binding upper liability limits.

A working group consisting of representatives of the federal government, the provincial governments and the municipalities has been set up to discuss a fundamental reform of the financial equalisation scheme. The federal Ministry of Finance has commissioned the drafting of five expert opinions by independent research institutions on a number of key issues for the reform including enhancing the autonomy of the sub-national public entities in the area of taxes and dues, transfers and cost bearing, municipal structures and co-operation as well as enhanced task orientation. The federal and provincial governments and municipalities will also be involved in the discussion on how to improve budgetary consolidation and the medium-term design of the budget management system.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

There is no specific mention of the involvement of the two national Associations of Cities and Towns and Municipalities in the Austrian National Reform Programme. In more general terms, however, the NRP mentions that the provincial governments and the municipalities were involved in the negotiations for a new domestic stability pact for the years 2011-2014.

The detailed descriptions of the respective responsibilities for specific policy measures identify a number of federal provinces and municipalities that have taken the lead in various schemes and programmes in the key areas of employment, research & development, climate protection & energy, education, reducing poverty and social exclusion, competition & entrepreneurship and internationalisation.

1.2 Belgium*

Introduction

Belgium is a federal state composed of three regions and three language communities and the country has five legislatures in total. The adoption of the Special Law of 13 July 2001 led to a significant increase in the regions' fiscal responsibility. The revenue of the municipalities and the provinces is controlled by the regions.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Union of Towns and Municipalities in Wallonia (UVCW)
Association of the City and Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (AVCB)
Association of Flemish Towns and Municipalities (VVSG)
Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities (UVBC)

The main role of the first three associations is to support their communities in achieving their objectives and in enhancing and protecting their autonomy. They also represent their regions at numerous external bodies and commissions. Regional representatives from these associations also serve on most federal commissions, such as the Joint State/ Regional Working Group on Municipal Finances. The UVBC officially represents Belgian local authorities at the CEMR (Council of Municipalities and Regions) with the dual aim of providing information and representation.

The Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities (UVBC) is an organisation which represents v local authorities internationally and acts as a forum for the discussion of federal related matters. EU affairs are managed directly and consensually with the Walloon and Flemish sister- associations. UVBC aims to protect and promote the cities and municipalities it represents and to provide advice and assistance, especially by overseeing the secretariat of various commissions and working groups made up of local officials and representatives. These commissions and working groups examine concrete problems encountered by the municipalities and Public Centres for Social Welfare. Lastly, the UVBC aims to provide training and information on European matters, alongside domestic issues.

The Association of the City and Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (AVCB) also represents the Association in the commissions and working groups put together by external authorities.

Role in Europe 2020

Although the federal parliament is the ultimate forum for decisions on Belgium's Europe 2020 strategy, given the institutional arrangements in the country, the regions and language communities play a major role in formulating its main elements. The regions and communities, for instance, are represented within the Policy Monitoring Committee which prepares the political decision-making policy for the Europe 2020 strategy.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The National Reform Programmes are prepared based on close cooperation between the federal government and the federated entities. The regions and communities also produce regional reform programmes, the thrust of which is incorporated into the NRP.

The NRP was discussed at length during the European Semester hearing in the federal parliament, within the advisory committee in charge of European affairs. The regional authorities engaged their own parliaments in this process.

While no additional responsibilities are mentioned in the document, given the direct involvement of the regions and communities in the NRP process, in line with recent practice in Belgium, there is an implicit understanding that the Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities will play its usual role in this process.

1.3 Bulgaria*

Introduction

Bulgaria is a unitary state made up of regions, administrative districts and municipalities. Local government reforms began in Bulgaria at the start of the country's political transformation in 1991. They were followed by local administrative reforms in 1999 and in 2003. As a result, 28 provinces were created, grouped into six planning regions in order to facilitate the utilisation of EU Structural Funds in connection with the country's negotiations for EU accession. The 28 provinces are further divided into 264 municipalities⁹.

A cooperation agreement was signed in 2001 between the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NARMB). As a result, the association earned the right to represent and to act to protect the interests of the municipalities. It organises annual consultations with the Ministry of Finance on those sections of the draft state budget which apply to the municipalities. In 2008, the president of the NAMRB was also the head of the Bulgarian delegation at the CoR.

Role in Europe 2020

A number of strategic documents for regional and local development after 2013¹⁰ will act as the key mechanism for promoting and developing regional and local potential for achieving intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. They will identify the contribution of the regions and municipalities to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, examine how resources are mobilised and look at the participation of all stakeholders and the development of partnerships at regional and local level. The process of drawing up the regional development plans, district development strategies and the municipal development plans is supported through financing under the “Administrative Capacity” Operational Programme.

⁹ <http://www.sofia.bg>

¹⁰ National Regional Development Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012–2022); Regional Development Plans (2014–2020); District Development Strategies (2014–2020); Municipal Development Plans (2014–2020); National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria (2006–2020).

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The Bulgarian NRP is developed and implemented with the support of the specially created 'Europe 2020' working group within the Council for European Affairs, which brings together representatives of the government and the local administration. The working group also includes representatives of the social partners, the non-governmental sector and academia. The consultation process, involving a number of public discussions and stakeholder meetings, has been underway since September 2010, and most of the proposals and comments made in the course of these discussions were reflected in the final Programme presented in March 2011.

The NRP also contains a number of measures to boost the administrative capacities of local and regional authorities to help them operate the management and control systems of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

1.4 Cyprus

Introduction

Cyprus is a unitary State made up of municipalities, communities and districts; there is no regional level. Municipalities and community councils are the only two types of local authority which exist in the country. Municipalities account for about 60 per cent of the population, while 353 Communities Councils cover the remainder of the population¹¹. The tasks and responsibilities of the municipalities are determined by the Municipalities' Law of 1985. Their finances derive from municipal taxes, fees, duties and state subsidies. Cyprus is a highly centralised country in terms of its intergovernmental financial arrangements. Local government is principally financed through taxation and fees (two thirds) and central government transfers (one third)¹².

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Union of Cyprus Municipalities
Union of Cyprus Communities

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities is the main association of local authorities in Cyprus. It aims to contribute to the development of local government autonomy and acts as a spokesman for local government interests at national level. It also plays an active role in relations between Cyprus and the European Union. The Union of Cyprus Municipalities is a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and is represented at the Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE). It is also a member of the Standing Committee for the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM), a founding member of the Network of Eastern External Border Regions (NEEBOR) and recently became a member of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and of the Assembly of European Regions (AER). Finally, it is also actively involved in European programmes.

¹¹ The government of Cyprus web portal: <http://www.cyprus.gov.cy>.

¹² Division of powers between the EU, the Member States, and Local and Regional Authorities, 2008, <http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/DocumentTemplate.aspx?view=folder&id=5a988cbb-f36a-45e7-b0ec-6c03884f6f97&sm=5a988cbb-f36a-45e7-b0ec-6c03884f6f97>

With regard to regional policy and the Structural Funds, the Union of Cyprus Municipalities participates in follow-up committees on behalf of its member-municipalities and follows the progress of work in projects approved under the Structural Funds (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund) for Cyprus. It also represents the municipalities at the Steering Committee for the INTERREG IIIA/Greece-Cyprus Initiative which puts forward and approves financing proposals. It takes part in the finalisation process for the new regional policy and the Structural Funds for the 2007-13 period and is a member of the Advisory Planning Committee which discusses the National Strategic Documents for the new programming period. Lastly, it cooperates with the Planning Bureau of the Republic of Cyprus, which is the Cypriot government body responsible for the Structural Funds and other funds, grants and programmes of the European Union. Furthermore, the Union of Cyprus Municipalities also participates in the Follow-up Committee of the Rural Development Plan, where it monitors the work carried out under the Common Agricultural Policy in the area of rural development.

The Union of Cyprus Communities' primary objective is to help strengthen the institutions of local government, primarily by modernizing the existing legislation under which the local authorities are established and operate, either through improvement boards or village commissions. There are 352 Community Councils in the areas that are under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus; they cover 40% of the population and 90% of its territory. Another aim of the Union is to participate in international bodies active in the area of local self-government and to represent its members at local and international congresses.

The two Unions also participate in the decision making process on Cyprus' national positions on EU issues through frequent consultations with the national Ministries on various issues.

Role in Europe 2020

The national government has asked the Union of Cyprus Municipalities (together with other social partners and stakeholders) to submit written proposals on this issue. A public debate was organised on 14/1/2010 and the Union of Cyprus Municipalities was given the opportunity to submit its comments and observations. No specific responsibilities have been attributed to the Union of Cyprus Municipalities in connection with the pursuit of the goals of Europe 2020.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The management of Europe 2020 Strategy issues is co-ordinated by the National Advisory Committee made up of representatives of the social partners, NGOs, local authorities and other organised groups, including political parties. The Minister of Finance acts as chair and national political coordinator. The members of the National Advisory Committee are briefed on EU 2020 Strategy issues twice a year and provide comments and recommendations regarding the proposed policy and measures.

1.5 Czech Republic*

Introduction

The Czech Republic is a unitary state divided into regions and municipalities. Following the 2000 reforms, the Czech Republic is now divided into thirteen regions (kraje) and the capital city of Prague. The former seventy-six districts (okresy), which included three "statutory cities," (without Prague, which had a special status) lost most of their powers as a result of the administrative reform. However, they remain as territorial divisions and seats of the various branches of state administration¹³.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Czech Regions
The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO ČR)

The Association of Regions in the Czech Republic was set up as a private interest group one year after the administrative reform of 2000 came into effect. The main aim of the organisation is to promote the regions' joint interests, especially overseeing the overall development of the territory and tending to the needs of its citizens. The association appoints representatives to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The Czech Republic has twelve seats at the Committee of Regions. Seven of these seats were appointed by the association, and the remainder were appointed by the Union of Cities and Towns.

The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic is an interest group of legal entities and its members are made up of towns and municipalities. Its objective is to support and develop self-government and democracy in the public administration of the Czech Republic. The union participates in the preparation of laws and other measures having an impact on local authorities in order to strengthen the municipalities' influence in the legislative area. A substantial part of the SMO CR's activities focus on monitoring the impact of the Czech Republic's EU membership on local authorities. Hence it works to inform the government, parliament and EU institutions about the impact of their measures on the quality of citizens' life and the development of various areas. Its services include providing information and educating the representatives and employees of municipal authorities. Its daily work focuses heavily on legislative work in the area of the EU's structural and cohesion policy, social integration and grants.

¹³ Sourced from Wikipedia as directed by the Czech Republic government website: <http://www.czech.cz/>.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

Although defined by the national Government, the Czech National Reform Programme also seeks to reflect the diverse interest groups that exist within society. During the course of its preparation, the document was frequently discussed with representatives of the social partners, regional and local governments, academic stakeholders and the National Economic Council.

There is a clear division of competences in the Czech Republic between the State and local government bodies. Consequently, the NRP can neither replace nor incorporate strategic plans adopted by regions, cities and municipalities. The NRP includes the Government's priorities but also respects the competences of the public authorities in the Czech constitutional system. The Government is not in a position to outline development priorities for its regions or municipalities. However, the National Reform Programme does aim to reflect the regional dimension of economic policy, especially with regard to the future of cohesion policy. Primarily, however, it focuses on those priorities which lie within the competence of the Czech Republic's central government authorities.

There is no reference in the NRP to associations of LRAs.

1.6 Denmark*

Introduction

Denmark is a unitary state composed of five regions (“regioner”) and ninety-eight municipalities (“kommuner”). Greenland and the Faroe Islands have an autonomous status and each of them has its own government and legislative assembly.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Danish Regions Association
Local Government Denmark (LGDK)

Local Government Denmark (LGDK) is an interest group whose members are drawn from Denmark's municipalities. Its objective is to safeguard the common interests of municipalities, assist individual municipalities with consultancy services and to ensure that local authorities are provided with up-to-date and relevant information.

The interests of the regions are represented in Brussels by an office set up by the Danish regions – the Danish Regions Association. It also aims to act as an information channel on EU political initiatives that are important for the regions.

The two associations seek to influence EU decision-making and also aim to establish close relations with the corresponding authorities in other countries. They also participate in a number of international fora with a view to promoting the autonomy and protecting the interests of local and regional authorities in Europe. They participate in the CEMR, the European section of the unified international association, United Cities and Local Governments (ULCG). Furthermore, the two associations have a representation in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE).

Representatives of regional and local authorities also sit on special EU committees set up within government ministries. These committees analyse the European Commission's proposals. The responsibilities of the regional and local authorities in terms of implementing EU legislation are not always explicitly laid down by law. The regional and local authorities do not have any legislative role but are involved in implementing EU obligations; when there are developments that impinge on their powers and responsibilities they are actively involved in the special EU committees set up within the ministries. As regards

transposing EU directives into national law, local and regional authorities are involved in drafting acts of parliament, as are other pressure groups whose interests are affected and who consequently participate in the national committees.

An “open coordination method” was introduced in 1999 for drafting and implementing EU law. It enabled local authorities to take on non-delegated duties and responsibilities. Accordingly, in all cases where these voluntary powers relate to EU affairs, the two associations of the regional and local authorities are involved in preparing the national action plans, in close cooperation with the Danish delegation to the CoR and the Parliamentary European Affairs Committee.

Role in Europe 2020

A contact committee has been set up by the national government which includes representatives of relevant ministries, regional and local authorities and professional organisations in order to create a platform for a more systematic, and co-ordinated exchange of information and views on the Lisbon Process. This committee is now regularly informed about policy questions of relevance for Europe 2020 and is consulted when the NRPs are formulated. The members of this committee include the two associations that represent Danish local and regional authorities, the Association of Danish Regions and Local Government Denmark (LGDK), as well as a large number of social partners and NGOs.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

From the very beginning, the contact committee has been involved in drawing up Denmark’s NRP 2011 and met eight times in 2010-11. This involvement will be maintained in the future when, in addition to working on the reform programme, the committee will also be focusing on the implementation of individual focus areas within the strategy. This provides an overview of the area-specific discussions that take place in the special EU committees and within the framework of Denmark's EU decision-making procedure.

The NRP maintains that the committee has ensured national anchorage among the most important stakeholders and actors, including regional and local authorities, which has improved the basis for the decision making. The parties were involved on both a formal and an informal level, creating an opportunity for ongoing dialogue. At the same time, the members of the committee obtained a direct channel to the decision making process, which has created transparency, influence and perspective.

1.7 Estonia*

Introduction

Estonia is a unitary state. It is made up of rural municipalities (vald), urban municipalities (linn) and counties (maakonnad). Estonia does not have a regional level and the municipalities are the country's only level of self-government. The counties make up the provincial level.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Estonian Cities (AEC)

Association of Estonian Municipalities (AME)
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The Association of Municipalities of Estonia (AME) and the Association of Estonian Cities (AEC) are actively involved in representing local interests at European level. Estonia's EU policy is laid down in a strategy document entitled 'The Estonian Government's European Union Policy'. In principle, this document reflects the common position reached through a cooperative process involving the Estonian parliament and citizens, the government and officials, local authorities and their associations.

The AME and AEC have had a joint office in Brussels since 2005.

The AME is a national association of local authorities which groups together the majority of Estonia's non-urban (rural) municipalities in all of Estonia's 15 counties. The AME states that its main objectives are: involvement in the activities of international organisations; participation in the work of the Committee of the Regions and its commissions; assisting local authorities through international projects and consultations on access to, and use of EU Structural Funds; the development of cooperation with local authorities and their associations in other countries. In addition, it states that as a national association of local authorities, its activities are increasingly related to the EU's economic, social and foreign policy.

The Association of Estonian Cities (AEC) is a voluntary union set up to represent the common interests of cities and rural municipalities and to arrange co-operation between them. Both the AME and the AEC are members of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE), the Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Cooperation (BSSSC), and the Joint Consultative

Committee of the Committee of the Regions (CoR). AEC is also a member of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA).

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

There is no mention in the Estonian NRP of how the local and regional authorities have been involved in the decision-making process. Local governments are only referred to in connection with reducing and preventing unemployment, which will require closer institutional co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Unemployment Insurance Fund and local governments in order to define the responsibilities of each of these partners in more detail. There are plans for closer cooperation between state and local government in the years ahead in order to increase the impact of active labour market measures.

There is no mention of LRA associations in the NRP.

1.8 Finland*

Introduction

Finland is a unitary state which is divided into municipalities (kunta), provinces (laani) and regions (maakunnan liitto). The 1995 Local Government Act gave local government greater powers, including increased responsibilities for organising their own operations and administration. However, no other changes in the role or responsibilities of local authorities were reported in connection with the Lisbon Treaty and the Europe 2020 strategy.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA) is the interest group and service provider for all Finnish municipalities and cities. The AFLRA supports the international work of Finland's municipalities and regions in various ways and, in particular, aims to influence EU decision making. The Association's goal is to establish and develop local government's scope for action by exerting influence at EU level. Their Brussels office informs the Association about the initiatives of the EU institutions and about legislative proposals which are of relevance to local and regional authorities.

The AFLRA is also involved in EU affairs at national level in all areas which impact on local or regional government. The association is represented in a number of sub-committees of the Finnish National Committee of EU Affairs. The AFLRA issues opinions to ministries on EU affairs, and has been represented in a number of working groups covering EU affairs in the country's ministries. It is also consulted by various parliamentary committees.

Furthermore, the Finnish delegation to the Committee of the Regions and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities work in close co-operation with one other. The association has appointed a secretariat to the Finnish delegation to the CoR.

Role of Europe 2020

The Finnish regional and local authorities have not been given any new responsibilities in connection with the Europe 2020 Strategy. Thus far the discussion on the goals of Europe 2020 in relation to the local and regional level has focused mainly on Structural Fund programmes and how the priorities

of Europe 2020 can be reflected in future Cohesion Policy. The regional and local authorities play a collaborative role in some areas of Europe 2020, such as innovative public procurement and increasing employment. However, the local and regional authorities have expressed the view that they need to be more involved in dialogue on these issues.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

There is little mention of the LRAs in the Finnish NRP 201 with the exception of a reference to local government expenditure, which aims to reform the municipal service structure and improve productivity. There is no mention of LRA associations.

1.9 France*

Introduction

France is a unitary state divided into regions, departments and municipalities. Traditionally, the country has always been highly centralised. The signing of the Treaty on European Union and the new transfers of powers of the Union necessitated the revision of the French Constitution¹⁴. Although this 1992 revision had no real effect on the formal relations between LRAs, regions, central government and the EU, it spawned an idea that has continued to take shape - that the devolved authorities are the preferred partners in the process of democratising the European Union due to their proximity to the citizens. The constitution has evolved considerably in the meantime and laws have been adopted on the election of regional councillors and representatives to the European Parliament. The public funding of political parties introduced a means of representing regional interests within the European institutions. However, French law makes no provision for the direct involvement of devolved authorities in the EU policy-making process; accordingly, their involvement is largely indirect in nature.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Assembly of Departments
Assembly of Communities of France
Association of Regions of France
Association of Small Towns in France
Association of Mayors of Major Cities in France
Association of Mayors of Medium Cities in France
Association of Mayors of France
Association of Urban Communities in France
Federation of Mayors of Towns (FMVM)
French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AFcCRE)
Rural Association of Mayors of France

French associations are very active at EU level. The French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AFrCCRE), set up in order to advise and inform local communities about European policies which concern them directly or indirectly, is very active, especially in terms of anticipating the possible potential impact of legislation at local level.

¹⁴ Law No 554 of 25 June 1992.

The associations of French local and regional authorities played a very active role in the debate on the White Paper on governance adopted by the European Commission on 25 July 2001.

The repealing of Article 65 of the Law of 2 March 1982 allowed the regions to establish cross-border cooperation, subject to government authorisation. As a result, the Alsace and Aquitaine regions are members of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and Aquitaine, the Basque country, Pays de la Loire, Poitou-Charentes, Centre, Lower Normandy, Brittany and Limousin are members of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). In addition, 13 of France's largest cities are part of the Eurocities network. The main associations of French regional authorities are also represented within the CEMR and CLRAE.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

France has opted for a reform strategy combining fiscal consolidation with growth-oriented policies aimed at increasing labour market participation and competitiveness, developing universities and cutting red tape for businesses. The strategy is being deployed by both central and local governments, each of them contributing in their own respective areas of competence.

During the course of its preparation, the NRP was circulated to various stakeholders – local government associations, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, employers' and employees' organisations and the National Council on Policies for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The NRP mentions the involvement of local government in developments in research and innovation, the adoption of digital technologies, mobilising structural funds to involve local government in eco-policies and sustainable development, the abolition of the local business tax, the implementation of policies to promote the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and to combat poverty.

LRA associations are not mentioned explicitly.

1.10 Germany*

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Germany has a strong tradition of local autonomy. It is comprised of states (länder), counties (Landkreise) and local authorities (städte & gemeinden). The German Basic Law of 1949 (the German constitution) provides for local self-government and stipulates that the organisation of local government is the responsibility of the individual länder. The upper German house of representatives – the Bundesrat – is structured to give representation to the länder. Approval for treaties that modify the EU requires the same Bundesrat majority as is needed for the constitutional revision of the Basic Law¹⁵.

An ad hoc Act of Cooperation was drawn up in 1993 listing the terms that regulate Bundesrat and länder participation in EU affairs and legislation.

According to the ad hoc act, the first step involves establishing a German negotiating position. The government must inform the Bundesrat promptly of any EU proposals which may be of interest to the länder. Urgent proposals or proposals on confidential matters are discussed by the Bundesrat Commission for European Affairs. The next step is for the Bundesrat to issue an opinion, which may be binding in areas that fall under the exclusive competence of the länder or when it has been adopted by a two-thirds majority. In other cases, the opinion is advisory in nature and is not binding on the government. Where the general political responsibility of the Federation or its financial interest is at stake, the federal government has the power to override the Bundesrat veto.

There are also a number of set procedures governing participation in the EU's Council of Ministers. When the matter in question falls under the exclusive competence of the federal government then only the government takes part. In cases where the matter falls under the exclusive competence of the länder, a land's minister nominated by the Bundesrat leads the delegation and the federal government is also represented. In the case of shared competences, the länder may ask to participate.

Participation of länder representatives in the advisory bodies of the Commission and the Council of Ministers follows the procedures described above.

¹⁵ Article 23 of the Basic Law passed in 1992.

The Federal Reform of 2006 restricted the exclusive right of the länder to speak on behalf of Germany on policy areas relating to education, culture and broadcasting. It also reduced the number of issues requiring the consent of the länder.

EU matters are also discussed by the Conference of Länder Ministers of European Affairs and the Heads of the State and Senate Chancelleries, as well as by the Conference of Minister-Presidents. They also participate in informal discussions and working groups.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of German Cities
Association of German Counties
Association of German Towns and Municipalities
CEMR German section (RGRE)
Higher Level Regional Associations of Germany HKV

The participation of German länder in EU policy making and the German position on EU matters are defined by a number of established processes. However, German cities are also active at EU level through their associations. The German Counties Association has an ad hoc committee specifically devoted to EU affairs and has also set up an office in Brussels. The German Association of Cities has a mandate to represent the interests of its municipalities at EU level.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

Germany’s 2011 National Reform Programme was created by the federal government and took into consideration input from numerous government departments and the länder. This process involved cooperation between the government departments and the länder to agree and coordinate the document's contents. In particular, the länder were involved in translating the five Europe 2020 headline targets into national targets, especially in areas of land competence, such as education, and in areas where the federal government and the länder have joint competences such as in the field of science and research. In general, the development of the LRA's input to the NRP has been in line with the normal processes of interaction between federal government and the local authorities. In some cases, conferences of specialised ministers of the Länder delivered detailed comments on the NRP. (These were incorporated into the report and are published in full in addition to the report). There is no reference to the role of representative associations in this process.

The NRP was approved by the federal cabinet on 6 April, 2011 after which it was submitted directly to the Bundestag and the Bundesrat.

1.11 Greece

Introduction

Greece has always been one of the EU’s most centralised countries, with limited devolved powers. The recent Kallikratis Plan¹⁶, however, introduced a number of major changes to local government. Under the plan, the administrative system of 13 peripheries, 54 prefectures and 1033 municipalities and communities was replaced with seven decentralised administrations, 13 peripheries and 325 municipalities¹⁷. In contrast to the previous arrangements, the peripheries and municipalities are fully self-governing. The Autonomous Monastic State of the Holy Mountain has long been a self-governing entity and is exempt from these reforms. These reforms will most likely lead to greater financial autonomy and control for local governments. However, by merging several units into larger groups, there is a risk that the regions could be under-represented at national level.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece (KEDKE)
Local Union of Municipalities and Community Councils (TEDK).
Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (EETAA)
Union of Prefectoral Administrations of Greece (ENEA)
Union of Regions of Greece

The Central Union of Municipalities and Communes of Greece (KEDKE) is a legal entity under private law and is the main institution representing the first level of local authorities in Greece. It has an office in Brussels and also participates in European organisations representing local interests. Its main functions include informing municipalities about EU policies; assisting municipalities and supporting them (in legal matters) in the implementation of EU policies; providing technical support to local associations and giving them the means to participate in European projects. It also aims to bring developments that are under discussion in the European institutions to the attention of the municipalities so that they can give their opinion and provide feedback.

¹⁶ Law 3852/2010

¹⁷ As a result of the Kallikratis reform (LAW 3852/2010) there have been changes in the financial autonomy of the Decentralized Administrations, Peripheries and Municipalities.

There is a representation of the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government in Brussels, which is a public institution¹⁸. Its main function is to support local and regional governments by providing legal and technical assistance in various EU related areas, such as preparing proposals to secure EU funds, development projects etc. It also liaises with various EU bodies and liaises with organisations such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the CPMR and the Assembly of European Regions (AER). The ENAE still exists despite the fact that the Kallikratis reform made the prefectures defunct. The ENAE now represents the 13 regional units (peripheries).

Role in Europe 2020

There has been no change in national legislation as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon or in connection with the Europe 2020 Strategy. The National Reform Programmes must be drawn up by April of each year and 2011 will be the first time that this process has been implemented following the introduction of the new strategy and the local government structural reforms. In addition, there has been new convergence between the areas of LRA competence and the areas covered by Europe 2020. The role of the national and local authorities and their associations is discussed below.

Attribution of Responsibility for Europe 2020

Preparatory Phase

No significant changes have been noted in the area of EU affairs as a result of the Kallikratis Reforms. Municipal authorities take part in the management of Structural Funds through the Regional Council and Regional Monitoring Committees. The Regional Council is a forum for local governments and provides an important link in the governmental processes.

In addition, there have been no legal provisions or practical arrangements for involving sub-national bodies in the drafting and decision-making process establishing the Greek position on European policy. No changes are reported as having been made in connection with the 2010 reforms. However, with the significant transfer of powers to the seven self-governing decentralised

¹⁸ The principal stakeholders are the Greek state (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economy and Finance), the Union of District Government of Greece, the Consignments and Loans Fund, the Central Union of Municipalities and Communes of Greece (KEDKE), Local Unions of Municipalities and Communes (TEDK), the Technical Chamber of Greece, the Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Co-operatives (PASEGES) and other social sector agencies.

administrations, a change in practices is expected because of the added weight given to regional representation in the reforms.

Implementing phase

As the sub-national levels of government do not have any legislative powers and as no changes have been reported in connection with the 2010 reforms, there are not issues as regards the division of powers among the tiers of government for the purpose of implementing EU directives.

The only legal provision that provides for consultation between organisations representing local bodies and the central authorities is a section of the Code on Municipalities and Rural Communities of 1995 on environmental protection and regional restructuring programmes. So far no changes have been made as a result of the 2010 reorganisation.

Although the law does not provide for the consultation of local bodies, there have been a number of cases where this has taken place through the intermediary of the KEDKE. This has only concerned specific issues for which the government's position has already been largely sketched out.

The KEDKE also has the option of approaching the central authorities to make a request to be included on a ministerial committee when a European matter has an impact on local interests; however, this has only happened once to date – during the run up to Greece's adoption of the Euro.

The impact on the role and responsibilities of associations and representations of regions and cities in Europe 2020 as a result of the added political weight of local authorities following the Killakratis reforms remains to be seen.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The Greek NRP had not been published at the time of this file note.

1.12 Hungary*

Introduction

Hungary is a decentralised unitary state. The country is divided into a capital (which is sub-divided into districts), counties, cities, and communities.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Cities of County Rank
Association of Hungarian Local Governments and Representatives (MOSZ)
Association of Hungarian Villages
Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TOOSZ)
Hungarian Partnership of Local Government Associations
National Association of County General Assemblies
National Association of Local Governments of Communes, Small Municipalities and Micro-regions
National Association of Self-Governments of Small Towns

The Association of Hungarian Local Governments and Representatives (MOSZ) and the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TOOSZ) are the two local government associations which represent local authorities before central government.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The drafting of the final version of the National Reform Programme was accompanied by a nationwide written consultation which was held from January 2011 to February 2011. Representatives of 32 organisations (NGOs, non-governmental organisations, research institutions of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, governmental institutions, authorities, chambers of commerce and local governments (county municipalities, mayors, regions)) provided their opinions and comments on the NRP using the questionnaire published on the website of the Ministry of the National Economy. In addition, several regions, counties and towns with county rights also sent in their comments. Although the comments covered all of the areas dealt with in the NRP, the most frequent comments emphasised the importance of consulting non-governmental organisations and criticised the lack of any detailed information on certain measures of the preliminary NRP.

The role of local government is particularly highlighted in the context of the 'Magyary Programme' to renew and improve the efficiency of public

administration and enhance competitiveness. As the largest employer in the education and health sectors, local government can have a significant impact on the labour market, both in terms of demand and supply. However, the Hungarian local government network is very fragmented compared to other countries, with problems such as regional inequalities, low efficiency and a lack of correspondence between responsibilities and financing in structural terms. The key elements of the renewal process include: improving the current fragmentation of the system; centralising the mayor's offices in small localities through the creation of district offices; and, lastly, limiting the borrowing powers of local governments to loans for development that are under central government control. Other key measures consist of a new career model for public servants giving them predictable and secure future prospects.

Lastly, the NRP proposes that a number of integrated local programmes aimed at reducing childhood poverty be launched in those micro regions which are lagging behind.

1.13 Ireland

Introduction

Ireland is a unitary State with a heavily centralised system of local government. Local government was recognised as part of the institutional fabric in 1999 with the passing of the twentieth amendment to the Irish Constitution which introduced the new article 28A.

There are currently 34 primary local authorities, eight regional authorities¹⁹ and two regional assemblies. The two regional assemblies- The Border Midland & Western Region (BMW) and the Southern & Eastern Region (S&E), were specifically created in 1999 with the principal aim of monitoring the impact of Structural Fund programmes (They are a result of the regionalisation arrangements negotiated by the Irish government in the context of Agenda 2000). The assemblies also host, and undertake various key functions relating to INTERREG/territorial cooperation programmes on behalf of Ireland.

Regional and local level associations have been given only a limited role under national law. There have been no formal changes in the role of the regional and local authorities as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of County and City Councils
Association of Irish Regions
Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland

Role in Europe 2020

There have been no changes in Ireland as regards the role of the regions and local associations or authorities in implementing the Europe 2020 strategy. It is also too early to see how the conventional role of LRAs is evolving. There has also been no clear convergence between the competences of these associations and the areas covered by Europe 2020.

¹⁹ As per section 43 of the Local Government Act in 1991.

Attribution of Responsibility for Europe 2020:

Preparatory phase

There is also no formal mechanism at national level to ensure the participation of local authorities in the preparatory phase of policy. All consultation is ad hoc and essentially a matter of discretion on the part of central government. The government departments, in particular the Department of the Environment and Local Government, are supposed to consult local authorities whenever proposals of relevance to local authorities are due to be negotiated at EU level. However, regional authorities do participate in the drafting of the National Development Plan and are consulted at least in this respect in EU policy making. Hence the establishment of the two regional assemblies has led to a gradual shift in attitudes towards local governments and they are beginning to be regarded as institutions closest to the people and are increasingly acknowledged as bodies whose opinions must at least be taken into consideration. In the past, the National Reform Plans (NRP) were drawn up using the social partnership process which has involved consultation with the social partners - the main employer groups and trade unions. Following the financial crisis, the future of the partnership is in question and there is an expectation that the new Irish government will include the regional dimension when drawing up the NRP.

The Association of Irish Regions (IRO) opened its office in Brussels in 2000 and works with and on behalf of the sub-national authorities in Ireland. The office maintains direct contact with the directors of the regional authorities and the regional assemblies and is routinely involved in coordinating the production and promotion of policy and position papers on behalf of the Irish delegation to the CoR. It also assists local and regional authorities in developing EU projects. This includes accessing EU funds and finding trans-national partners.

The work of the IRO is meant to benefit from both formal and informal links with key policy and decision makers in the main institutions. Formal contact with the Institutions is facilitated through representation at the CoR and through membership of European Commission consultative forums. At an informal level, the IRO has a close working relationship with individual departments of the European Commission, as well as with MEPs, the Irish Permanent Representation, other Irish representations, regional representation offices and various other Brussels based organisations.

Implementation

The main role of the local authorities in Ireland is executive in nature and is limited to achieving the objectives established by the central government and to tailoring policies and services to local requirements. This is because the Department of Environment and Local Government regulates the relations between the local authorities and central government and exercises administrative, financial and technical control over local authorities. Hence the Irish local authorities are relatively weak compared to their other European counterparts.

Since Irish local government bodies have limited administrative powers conferred upon them by national laws, the role of these associations is largely representative in nature. The Local Government Act 2001 does expressly recognise the three main associations of regional authorities in Ireland (Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland, Association of County and City Councils and the Association of Irish Regions) and their role in submitting requests and opinions to the central government. However, in practice, these associations do not have the financial resources for policy formulation or the statutory roles of their counterparts in certain other EU countries.

Local and regional level governments in Ireland have few formal roles or responsibilities in this area. However, since the formation of regional authorities, there has been growing recognition of the importance of involving the regions in national level decisions.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

Consultations were held with stakeholders, including the social partners, the relevant parliamentary committees and regional bodies when developing the National Reform Programme. This began in May 2010 and included written and direct engagement. The government also acknowledges that there will be a need for continued involvement with stakeholders in the implementation and further development of the National Reform Programme in the years ahead.

The NRP makes extensive reference to regional development issues and to the territorial aspects of the Europe 2020 Strategy. There is no mention of LRA associations.

1.14 Italy*

Introduction

Italy is a regionalised unitary state with three levels of government below central government level. The three levels are the regions, the provinces and the municipalities and metropolitan cities. Five of the twenty regions have a special status and enjoy greater autonomy for geographical or cultural reasons.

Compared to many other EU Member States, the procedures and legislation governing the participation of the LRAs and their associations in EU related matters are fairly well established in Italy.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Italian Communes (ANCI)
Conference of Presidents of Regional Assemblies
Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces (CRPA)
Inter-Ministerial Committee of Common European Affairs (CIACE)
National Association of Italian Municipalities
National Association of Municipalities and Mountain Communities
National Union of Italian Provinces
Union of Italian Provinces (UPI)

The Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces (CRPA) is a body responsible for political coordination among the regions and the autonomous provinces. At provincial level, coordination is carried out by the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI). The Association of Italian Communes represents about seven thousand communes and its main task is to keep the communes informed about developments in EU legislation, with a particular focus on the activities of the CoR.

A law passed in 2003 grants the regions the right to participate in the work of the EU's Council of Ministers and in the committees and working groups of the Council and of the Commission. The national delegations to the Council can be chaired by regional representatives. At the request of the autonomous regions and provinces, the government is obliged to appeal to the European Court of Justice against EU decisions in matters within their remit, if the State-Regions Conference (coordination body) makes such a request based on an absolute majority of the autonomous regions and provinces²⁰.

²⁰ Article 5, Law 131/2003, Italian Constitution.

A law passed in 2005 provided for the creation of the inter-Ministerial Committee of Common European Affairs (CIACE). It was founded with the aim of establishing a new procedure for incorporating the views of the regions and local authorities in the Italian position on EU legislation. The president of the CRPA or a person delegated by the president may request to participate at CIACE meetings when they discuss EU legislation of interest to the regions. This also applies to other associations of local authorities. The CIACE has a permanent technical committee (CTP) and the competent regional councillors are involved in its work. EU draft legislation relating to regions and local authorities is transmitted to the competent territorial associations for comment.

The procedure is particularly inclusive regarding matters that directly concern the regions and the autonomous provinces. The regional executive committees are given twenty days to comment on draft EU legislation in matters which concern them. If the Permanent Conference for Relations between the State, the Autonomous Provinces and the Regions so requests, the government may make a 'reservation of examination' in the EU Council of Ministers. Once again, the Permanent Conference has twenty days in which to formulate its opinion.

In the case of matters concerning the local authorities, the proposals are passed onto the UPI and ANCI for comment by the State-Cities and Local Autonomies Conference and the associations can then transmit their comments back through the Conference either by the date indicated or no less than one day before the proposal is scheduled for discussion at EU level.

A law passed in 1996 grants the regions the right to open liaison offices in Brussels for relations with the EU institutions. As a result, all regions now have offices in Brussels.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

Much of the discussions on the Italian NRP take place in the context of Italy's response to the Euro Pact. This involves numerous references to the implications for local and regional authorities of various planned reforms, especially in the fiscal system or references to examples of regional or local initiatives. However, there is little mention of the involvement of LRAs in the formulation of the response; references to LRA associations appear in the context of agreements for the implementation of particular measures.

1.15 Latvia

Introduction

Latvia is a parliamentary democracy that has been undergoing a long process of administrative and territorial reform since the end of the Soviet era i.e. the 1990s. Following the most recent reform, introduced on 1 July 2009, Latvia is composed of 109 municipalities and nine republican cities²¹. The reforms are considered to be important from the point of view of regional development at national level and in the context of the EU. According to the Law on Regional Development (in force since 23 April 2002) five planning regions operate in Latvia²². There have been no recent changes in national legislation in terms of the role, decision making processes or responsibilities of the regional and local authorities or their representation or associations. There have been no relevant changes in connection with the Europe 2020 strategy or the Treaty of Lisbon.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG)

Local authorities in Latvia participate in national policy related decision making and its implementation through the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) and through five planning regions. The LALRG receives draft national positions as a basis for co-ordinating local government opinion. Through its Brussels office, the LALRG helps lobby at EU level on issues related to the local authorities through various formal and informal networks.

The five planning regions also play a role in the national legislative and administrative processes and are involved in interregional cooperation at European level.

Role in Europe 2020

The national programme for EU 2020 is in the process of being drafted and will be presented to the European Commission in the first half of April 2011. Local politicians and staff from the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) were involved in consultations on the NRP and this is

²¹The Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Website: <http://www.rapl.gov.lv/pub/index.php?id=1621> (On 1 July 2011, the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government was incorporated into the Ministry of the Environment and a new institution was established– The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development).

²² Rural development programme for Latvia 2007-2013, [http://www.zm.gov.lv/doc_upl/RDP_final\(2\).pdf](http://www.zm.gov.lv/doc_upl/RDP_final(2).pdf).

considered to be the focus for discussing LRA participation in the Europe 2020 process. The priorities set by the EU 2020 strategy are regarded by the LALRG as not being closely aligned to regional and local priorities in Latvia and hence the reported level of interest has been low. The LARLG notes that the principal national, regional and local priorities are not included among European priorities and that European priorities have a somewhat narrow scope as instruments of development. There have been no reports of any changes in the powers and responsibilities of the local and regional authorities/associations in connection with the Europe 2020 strategy.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The NRP of Latvia is prepared by a working group specially set up by a decree of the Minister for the Economy. It is made up of representatives from a series of ministries, the social partners, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments. Issues related to Europe 2020 and the preparation of the NRP were also repeatedly discussed at a number of meetings at the Cabinet of Ministers, the Saeima (Parliament) and during inter-institutional meetings.

As part of a reform to optimise the state institutional structure and reduce the government sector's high budget deficit, the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government is being incorporated into the Ministry of Environment. Considerable efforts are also being made to strengthen the role of municipalities in attracting investments and promoting entrepreneurship by reconfiguring EU Structural Funds, improving the services offered by municipalities, amending the Public Procurement Law and regulations governing the rights of municipalities to lease and alienate their own property. This action also includes efforts to improve the cultural environment, the country's regional roads as well as water and waste management infrastructure. The role of the regions in education is also stressed on numerous occasions. The LALRG has been active in the discussions relating to these developments.

1.16 Lithuania

Introduction

The last package of administrative reforms in Lithuania was introduced in 2000. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania grants the country's administrative units the right to free and independent governance within the limits of their powers, as decided by local government councils. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania gives local governments the right to draft and approve their own budgets, to set local fees and to levy local taxes²³. We have not noted any reforms which will impact on LRAs in Lithuania as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon or the Europe 2020 Strategy. There is also no new convergence between the themes of Europe 2020 and the competences of the local authorities.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

(Association of County Governors)
Association of Lithuanian Resorts
Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania (ALAL)

The Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania (ALAL) is the main organisation representing the general interests of local authorities within the national legislative and budgetary processes as well as on the international arena. The association serves as the secretariat for Lithuanian delegations to the CoR and CLRA CoE, providing its members with administrative and analytical support. The ALAL is the main channel for communicating European policy issues to Lithuanian local authorities; it also represents the position of Lithuanian local authorities on EU policy issues. The Association of County Governors brings together the governors of Lithuania's counties. However, following the 2010 reform of regional governance, it has lost much of its importance as the administrative position of county governor was abolished under the reform. The Association of Lithuanian Resorts groups together several municipalities and represents their interests in the field of tourism.

²³ Section X, Article 119-124, Constitution of Lithuania
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter2/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=274999

Role in Europe 2020

Local authorities are not specifically included in the legislative process, except for those issues which directly concern their interests, in which case a mandatory consultation is launched. The process of consultation on the National Reform Programme took place in 2011 in cooperation with the Ministry of the Economy, which is responsible for drafting this document. A round of consultations with the local authorities is planned to take place in the near future.

Lithuanian local authorities have not been given any new specific roles in connection with the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy as the implementation of the strategy is considered to be a horizontal mission, affecting the relevant sectors and requiring better implementation of power already enjoyed by LRAs.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The National Reform Programme was prepared by an inter-institutional working group coordinated by the Ministry of the Economy, made up of representatives of the ministries, the Bank of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Office of Statistics. The document was discussed in targeted consultations with the Lithuanian academic community, universities, economic and social partners as well as with the municipalities. The document was published on the website of the Ministry of the Economy. In order to further monitor the implementation of the NRP, an inter-institutional working group was set up, consisting of representatives from the ministries, the Bank of Lithuania and the Lithuania Office of Statistics.

On a more practical level, the document mentions that local authorities will be involved in implementing the Programme for Reducing Social and Economic Differences between Regions (2011–13), which aims to reduce differences in the quality of pre-school and general education which exist between the regions. They will also take part in the Regional Culture Development Programme for 2011-20 and in drawing up a policy for the development of renewable energy sources.

There is no specific mention of the role of the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania.

1.17 Luxembourg

Introduction

Luxembourg is a unitary state with a municipal level of decentralisation and is divided into 116 municipalities. No changes have been introduced as a result of the Lisbon Treaty that may impact on the local level of government or on the association representing them.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities (SYVICOL)
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The Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities (SYVICOL) is the only representative association for local authorities, representing all 116 municipalities. The committee of SYVICOL is involved in making recommendations to members of the national Luxembourg delegation at the Committee of the Regions and to the government. Members of staff of SYVICOL act as co-ordinators for the national delegation to the EU.

Role in Europe 2020

To incorporate the Europe 2020 strategy at national level, the Luxembourg government has set up a national “Europe 2020” reform programme covering all aspects of this European strategy. In addition, a national strategy for promoting social inclusion and reducing poverty is also being drawn up, under the leadership of the Ministry for the Family and Integration. SYVICOL is actively involved in these processes on behalf of the local authorities. It provides opinions on an ad hoc basis on matters relating to the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, the national delegation at the Committee of Regions and the representatives of the municipalities do not participate directly in EU policy making. This is a prerogative of the national parliament and there is nothing to suggest that this situation will change in the near future. Nevertheless, SYVICOL regularly conveys its opinions or positions to the government and to parliament on matters relating to national law or regulation, including the transposition of EU legislation.

No new responsibilities have been attributed to the municipalities and no new procedures have been introduced for pursuing the goals of Europe 2020. The municipalities are, however, invited by the government to take their own initiatives in certain areas of action, such as gas emissions and energy efficiency. As a result, a growing number of municipalities are involved in such initiatives, including participation in a cooperation project entitled 'EU2020 Going Local' through the government and the *Pro-Sud* union, with a view to sharing best practices, especially in the areas of transportation and energy.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

In Luxembourg, the broad guidelines and specific measures of the NRP were established following extensive consultations between the executive and legislative powers, national public and local authorities and the social partners. The government has also set up an Urban Policy Information Cell (CIPU)⁷² in cooperation with the major cities and urban regions. In addition to acting as an awareness raising tool for local players in implementing the strategy, the CIPU makes a direct contribution to the NRP in its urban policy section and in the local and regional contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy. There is no specific mention of the LRA associations in the NRP.

1.18 Malta

Introduction

Malta is a unitary parliamentary republic and this defines the country's framework for policy decision making. The regional level exists purely as an administrative territorial entity (three regions in total) while local governments are limited to administrative responsibilities with little policy discretion. Malta is the only country in Europe where municipalities and local councils are entirely financed by the central government and do not levy any taxes on property (the most common source of income). This situation means that the role and responsibilities of LRAs in relation to Europe 2020 are relatively circumscribed.

There have been no changes in the relevant legislation since 2008 or as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon and the Europe 2020 Strategy. In addition, there are no formal procedures for the participation of local level associations in the formulation of National Reform Plans. However, there are plans to organise a meeting at which all the mayors (elected heads of local councils) will be briefed on the NRP as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The meeting will also explore the ways and means in which regional and local authorities in Malta can contribute to the goals of Europe 2020.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee
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The Local Councils' Association

There is only one association in Malta which represents the local level – the Local Councils' Association (AKL), which was set up in 1994. It is empowered to represent all local councils in international affairs and has taken an active role in international and regional organisations ever since its creation. Malta is an active member of the Council of Europe and the Association is a member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA), the consultative body of the Council of Europe.

When Malta became a member of the European Union on 1 May 2004, the AKL took up membership of the Committee of the Regions. Members of the AKL attend the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee's (MEUSAC) sectoral committees with other civil society organisations and take part in the formulation of Malta's position on legislative developments in the European Union. MEUSAC provides general information on the European

Union, assists civil society organisations and local councils in accessing EU funds and facilitates consultation on the EU's legislative and policy proposals.

Lastly, there has been no new convergence between the themes of Europe 2020 and the competences of the municipalities (local government)

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The political responsibility for developing and implementing the NRP is vested in the Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment while the Policy Development Directorate (PDD) is responsible for its co-ordination. Each Ministry and key public sector entity has a designated contact person who reports on the progress of every measure falling under their responsibility.

The NRP was approved by the cabinet of ministers and will be tabled and debated in parliament together with the 2011-2014 Stability Programme. To increase the involvement of local authorities, the ministries and entities responsible for the implementation of the measures set out in the NRP will consult and liaise, where applicable, with the respective local councils and with the Local Councils' Association.

In January 2011, MEUSAC organised a public consultation meeting on Malta's National Reform Programme together with the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment. The president of the Maltese delegation at the Committee of the Regions and the policy coordinator for the Maltese delegation at the COR attended this meeting on behalf of the Local Councils' Association (AKL).

1.19 Netherlands

Introduction

Netherlands is a decentralised unitary state. It has three levels of government: central government, provincial government and municipality. All government units on the same level have identical powers and responsibilities. The law makes no distinction between small or large municipalities. Local government is considered to be autonomous.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO)
Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)
Association of the 10 Rural Municipalities (P10)
Association of the 32 Big Cities (G32)
Association of the Four Metropolitan Cities (G4)

Broadly speaking, all of the associations represent their members, provide services and information and facilitate the exchange of best practices. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), the Association of the Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO), and the Association of the 32 Big Cities (G32) all have representative offices in Brussels through which they represent their members at EU level.

The VNG and the IPO are represented in many areas through the interdepartmental working groups of the national government which prepare the Dutch position for the Council of Ministers. There is also a strong preference for a multi-level approach in accordance with the Code of Inter-administrative Relations. In Brussels, the two associations have contact with representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and other institutions and are active in the Council of European Municipalities and Regions. The VNG is a member of the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP). The HNP (Huis van de Nedelandse Provinces – House of Dutch Provinces) is the Brussels representation of the 12 provinces; it represents both the individual and collective interests of the provinces and maintains contacts with the EU institutions. All of the representations act as channels for contact and for the two-way exchange of information between the EU and the regions they represent.

Role in Europe 2020

There have not been any changes in the Netherlands as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon or the Europe 2020 strategy. The associations of regional representation take part in the EU 2020 institutional decision making process through the national administrative process. They are also involved in drafting the response of the national government and the contributions of individual associations.

No specific responsibilities have been attributed to local and regional authorities for pursuing the goals of Europe 2020. Municipalities do, however, have important powers in several policy areas relating to the key objectives of Europe 2020, e.g. social inclusion, labour market policy and reducing the numbers of early school leavers. At regional and local level, provinces and municipalities have extensive climate and innovation programmes which are often financed by the Structural Funds and the 7th Framework Programme.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The Dutch NRP acknowledges that achieving the Europe 2020 objectives will require the commitment of not only central government but also of stakeholders such as the social partners and the local authorities and these parties were accordingly consulted when drafting the NRP. It also refers to specific areas of education where the Programme relies on long-term regional cooperation between educational institutes, industry and local authorities. It notes that the government is involved in discussions with the local authorities and the social partners on the implementation of the new measures and is still negotiating the finer details of the measures with them. This particularly concerns those local authorities and social partners that have taken the initiative to prepare separate documents outlining their contribution to the National Reform Programme and the Europe 2020 strategy. The starting point for the local authorities is said to be 'the Triple Helix model of cooperation and multi-level governance'. There is no specific mention of LRA associations.

1.20 Poland*

Introduction

Poland is a regionalised unitary state with three levels of sub-national government: regions (voivodeship), counties (powiaty) and municipalities. Each of the voivodeships also has a centrally appointed voivode who is a representative of the Central government. He or she oversees the work of all three levels of regional government in order to ensure that its work is in line with national policy priorities.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Polish Cities (ZMP)
Association of Polish Counties (ZPP)
Joint Commission of Central and Local Government
The Convention of Marshals
Polish Association of Rural Communes
Union Of Polish Metropolitan Cities
Union of Polish Towns
Union of the Voivodeships of the Republic of Poland

The Joint Commission of Central and Local Government is the main forum at which local authorities are consulted on European affairs. In the case of the regions, this takes place at the Convention of Marshals, which is considered to be a very important partner for the Polish government in this area.

The Association of Polish Counties (ZPP) has a legal personality²⁴ and works to support the idea of local self-government, advocating the common interests of districts and pursuing the socio-economic development of Polish districts. The association principally works to represent districts at national and international fora. One of its most important roles in terms of its EU level activity is the organisation of action to foster the socio-economic development of districts, establishing international contacts and scientific and cultural exchange.

²⁴ The association acts under the regulations of the Act of 5 June 1998 on District Government (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No 91, item 578), the Act of 7 April 1989 'Law of Associations' (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No 20 item 104, as amended) and this statute.

The Association of Polish Cities (ZMP/APC) focuses most of its attention on domestic matters. Internationally, it is a member of a number of European interregional organisations. The association is a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), which represents the national associations of local and regional authorities in over 35 countries in Europe. The APC is also represented at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) and the Committee of the Regions.

Role in Europe 2020

The former national Lisbon coordinator, the Minister for the Economy, is responsible for implementing the “Europe 2020” strategy in Poland and for coordinating the effective implementation of the Polish NRP at all levels - from national to regional and local level. One of the most important roles of the Minister of the Economy is to increase the ownership (co-responsibility) of all stakeholders in the delivery of structural reforms, among others by adopting a participation-based governance model, carrying out public consultations on the process of drafting and implementing the NRP, increasing social acceptance for the implementation of reforms, providing information on the state of progress of NRP implementation, and taking action at EU level.

The Inter-Ministerial Team for the “Europe 2020” Strategy plays a particularly important role in the coordination process. It is tasked with creating better communication and dialogue between the government, social and economic partners, the regions and other stakeholders. The team monitors all action taken on an on-going basis.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The government's policy in the context of Europe 2020 is to give a greater voice to the regions, NGOs, employers and employees’ organisations, academics, environmental organisations and citizens. It also provides for the use of existing cooperation fora, such as the National Strategic Reference Framework Coordination Committee for 2007 – 2013, the Commission for Social and Economic Affairs, the Public Benefit Activity Council along with trilateral industrial teams and various partner networks. At regional level, the Regional Operational Programme Monitoring Committees, the Voivodeship Social Dialogue Commissions and the newly established National Territorial Forum are to be used as a key forum for NRP implementation. There is no mention of LRA associations, other than in these contexts.

1.21 Portugal*

Introduction

Portugal is a unitary state and has traditionally been a centralised country. It has a very high level of linguistic and ethnic homogeneity and has not experienced any significant claims for its regions to be recognised. The Islands of Madeira and the Azores enjoy an autonomous status. Their special status has been recognized through a series of amendments to the Portuguese constitution. As a result, the question of regional participation in European policy-making or in the Europe 2020 Strategy primarily concerns the two autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP)
Steering and Regional Development Committee (CCDR)

The Steering and Regional Development Committee (CCDR) is the most comprehensive body within the State's administration. Its primary aim is to promote integration between regional and local development, land use and the environment. It is also an important lever for consultation between central government and local administrations, as well as for connecting the regional and European level through the management of the Regional Operational Programmes and European territorial co-operation.

The National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP) is the representative structure of the Portuguese Municipalities (municipalities) and sections of municipalities (communes). It represents all political parties and all regions of Portugal (308 municipalities and 4 260 sections of municipalities of mainland Portugal and the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira). It is a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

Madeira and the Azores have a right to participate in EU policy-making as guaranteed by the Constitution. Representatives from the two autonomous regions are part of the national delegation and the permanent representation where they act as special advisers on issues relating to the autonomous regions.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The Portuguese NRP document stresses how the drafting of the ‘Portugal 2020-National Reform Programme’ has mobilised Portuguese society. It has an important territorial and sectoral dimension, not least in terms of the reorganisation of public finances.

Strategic territorial documents were prepared by the regional governments of Madeira and the Azores (Madeira 2020 and Azores 2020) and by the Regional Coordination Committees of Lisbon and the Tagus Valley and of the North (Lisbon 2020 and North 2020). However, there is very little direct mention of any involvement on the part of the LRA associations except with reference to the reorganisation of the school system, which was negotiated with the respective municipalities and with the Portuguese National Association of Municipalities.

1.22 Romania*

Introduction

Romania is a decentralised unitary state with a parallel system of local government and a devolved state administration.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Romanian Towns
Communes Association of Romania
National Union of Counties Councils of Romania
Romanian Association of Municipalities (AMR)
Romanian Federation of Local Authorities (FALR)

The Romanian Association of Municipalities (AMR), previously named the Romanian Federation of Municipalities (FMR), was set up in 1990. As an organisation, one of its chief aims is to represent local authorities, both domestically and internationally, and to provide them with support through professional services.

The AMR currently comprises 103 municipalities and the six districts of the Bucharest municipality - 109 members in total (all cities with the status of “municipiu” in Romania). It has a legal personality and promotes and protects the common interests of the local public administrations for the benefit of local communities.

In addition, the AMR founded the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities (FALR). The FALR is also a non-profit, apolitical representative organisation for Romanian local authorities. Its focus is mostly domestic, since it aims to become the unified voice of the local governments of Romania in representing their interests to the central government and to parliament. It also aims to maintain its relations with international institutions and bodies.

Role in Europe 2020

The Department for European Affairs (DAE) has developed a methodology for setting national targets for the Europe 2020 Strategy and has created a working group for each objective under the strategy, seven groups in total. Each group is made up of representatives from all institutions with responsibilities in the areas related to the objectives.

Territorial pacts are to play an important role in implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy, and in developing an integrated approach and effective co-ordination between all stakeholders with a view to getting local communities involved in achieving the objectives of Europe 2020.

To make the Europe 2020 Strategy visible and to ensure transparency in its implementation, the background documents on the national targets and their values have been published on the websites of the DAE and the ministries coordinating the sectoral working groups.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The NRP gives considerable prominence to the idea of territorial pacts. This will require the agreement of various levels of government (national, regional and local) and concerted follow-up action. It is planned that the associations of local authorities will work together with the relevant ministries to identify how to implement the pact in order to support the Europe 2020 objectives. Pilot territorial pacts will be signed with those municipalities or county councils willing to contribute to achieving the targets set at national level.

Public debates have been organised on the preliminary and final proposals for the Europe 2020 strategy. The national dissemination of information on the objectives and instruments of the Europe 2020 Strategy has been supported by local authorities.

1.23 Slovakia*

Introduction

Slovakia is a regionalised unitary state. It is divided into regions and municipalities and a clear distinction is made between local self government and territorial state administration. EU related matters are primarily dealt with by the central government, with some limited involvement on the part of local or regional authorities.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Regional Self-government Presidents (ARSGP)
Association of Towns and Villages of Slovakia (ZMOS)
Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (UTCS)

Among its many objectives, the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (UTCS), aims ‘to ensure permanent participation and effective influence in the bodies, institutions and programmes of the European Union and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.²⁵’. The Union's members include almost all of Slovakia's large and medium-large cities, in total 78 full members, nine municipalities and five special members – the municipal areas of Bratislava and Košice.

The association of Towns and Villages of Slovakia (ZMOS) is an organisation with similar aims: to represent its members, disseminate information and provide support services.

Role in Europe 2020

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance were appointed as Europe 2020 strategy coordinators in the Slovak Republic and a number of other ministers, including the Minister of Transport, Construction and Regional Development also play an important role in developing and delivering the strategy. Representatives of economic, social and regional partners are involved in preparing the strategy and the National Reform Programme, especially through direct negotiations at a working level.

²⁵ <http://www.unia-miest.sk>

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The partners of central government, including the academic community and non-governmental organisations as well as LRAs, were all involved in the preparation and implementation of the NRP through a variety of informal platforms such as conferences and seminars. One of the Slovak Programme's essential objectives, which will involve the regional partners, is to develop appropriate technical, transport and social infrastructure including health infrastructure in the regions. The involvement of the regions is also expected in areas such as science, research and innovation, the education system, social cohesion, (equal opportunities and poverty reduction) and other aspects of cohesion policy together with policy monitoring and evaluation systems. Any role attributed to LRA associations is implicit rather than explicit.

1.24 Slovenia

Introduction

Slovenia is a unitary state which is divided into 210 local authorities.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia

Association of the Municipalities of Slovenia

Between them, these two associations represent most of Slovenia's municipalities and cover the majority of its population. The Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS) represents 166 of the country's 210 local authorities (approximately 90% of the Slovenian population)²⁶ while the Association of Municipalities of Slovenia (ZOS) represents small and medium sized municipalities. The SOS is represented at the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe (KLRO SE), at the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), at the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of SE Europe – NALAS and at the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities – COPPEM. It keeps the local authorities it represents updated with EU related news (CoR, Congress, Commission and Parliament) through a weekly electronic newspaper.

The ZOS works with the legal, economic and political interests of the member municipalities and with other Slovenian municipalities. It represents the interests of Slovenian municipalities at national and international level and links up with similar institutions and organisations abroad. It has a secretariat and specialist committees and organises various events, expert consultations, seminars and workshops. It puts forward solutions in the area of local self-government and acts as an intermediary between the municipalities and national bodies.

Both associations have a national coordinator at the Committee of the Regions and at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

²⁶ The Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia website:
http://www.skupnostobcin.si/zgmenu/english/general_about_sos/index.html

Role on Europe 2020

No formal legislative or procedural changes have been reported in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

In Slovenia, development planning for the National Reform Programme is regulated by a new Decree on Development Planning Documents and Procedures for the Preparation of Central and Local Government Budgets, which governs the methodology for development planning, policy-making and the setting of development priorities, and sets out how these aspects are linked to the drafting of a programme budget. Responding to Europe 2020 and the development of the NRP represents a significant part of this framework. The decree has also set up a new framework for the coordination of development policies: an umbrella task force for development planning, a fiscal policy group and working groups for individual policies. In the past, there were no formal procedures in place to include the associations in the discussions for National Reform Plans (NRP). However, in 2011, for the first time since the introduction of the Europe 2020 strategy, a formalised procedure was put in place to invite the local municipalities to meetings to present their views on the NRPs. The NRP document, however, makes little reference to the involvement of local authorities and there is no mention of LRA associations.

1.25 Spain*

Introduction

The Spanish state is made up of seventeen autonomous communities that are also self-governing units. The autonomous communities are further divided into provinces which are in turn made up of municipalities. Following the 2002 reform of the country's financial arrangements, Spain is now the most decentralised state in Europe and grants its autonomous communities the resources needed to fund the extensive scope of their powers.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Andalusia Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FAMP)
Aragon Association of Local Authorities (ASAEL)
Association of Basque Municipalities (EUDEL)
Association of Municipalities of the Balearic Islands (AMIB)
Asturian Federation of Municipalities (FACC)
Catalan Federation of Municipalities
Federation of Municipalities of Madrid (FMM)
Federation of Local Entities of the Balearic Islands (FELIB)
Federation of Municipalities of Aragon
Federation of Municipalities of Cantabria
Municipalities and Catalan Association of Counties (ACM)
Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)
Valencian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FVMP)

In December 2004, the Conference of Affairs Related to the European Communities (CARCE) reached an agreement on the participation of the autonomous communities in the EU's Council of Ministers in four areas: employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs; agriculture and fisheries; the environment; and education, youth and culture. Some of these areas overlap with those highlighted by the Europe 2020 Strategy. The relevant sectoral conference designates one autonomous community to represent all of the autonomous communities; the designated community then seeks to reach a position based on a consensus. The position of the autonomous communities is taken into account in so far as it is consistent with that of the Spanish state.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The Spanish parliament has played a crucial role in drawing up the provisions for implementing Spain's National Reform Programme, in cooperation with the autonomous communities, local governments, the social partners, and the 'third sector of social action'. Local government involvement has primarily taken place through the intermediary of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces.

In view of the considerable devolved powers of the autonomous communities in many of the policy areas covered by the Europe 2020 Strategy, an attempt will be made to promote the design of regional policies that are consistent with the goals of the NRP and to ensure that regional objectives are aligned with any European and national objectives. The corresponding ministries will discuss these issues in bilateral thematic meetings with the autonomous communities, and a transparent, homogeneous and harmonised reporting system will be maintained to ensure effective monitoring of the NRP.

Active cooperation is expected between the national government and the autonomous communities directly and with local government through the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP).

1.26 Sweden

Introduction

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a strong tradition of decentralisation. The country is divided into municipalities and counties and has a strong tier of local self government, which is made up of 290 municipalities. The regions exist for NUTS2 statistical purposes only. No formal or legislative changes have been introduced as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon or following the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy. However, the increased emphasis on territorial cohesion and social Europe in the Treaty of Lisbon has further underlined the importance of involving the Swedish municipalities and county councils in European affairs. Given the strong tradition of decentralisation in Sweden, Swedish local and regional authorities are active in various associations at European level. More and more local and regional authorities are increasingly establishing a presence of their own in Brussels.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)
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In Sweden, the county councils associations and the Association of Municipalities are represented by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). It is a formally recognised body which represents regional interests at national level; it also has a Brussels office in order to establish direct links with other EU institutions. As a result of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) has formalised a routine for informing the ‘Riksdag’ (Parliament) whenever the Association considers a draft legislative act to be in breach of the subsidiarity principle.

Role in Europe 2020

Swedish local and regional authorities are responsible for large parts of the policy areas covered by Europe 2020, e.g. education, poverty reduction and environmental protection. Local and regional authorities are also large employers and have a substantial influence on the local business climate. Considering the size and areas of competence of local and regional level authorities, their involvement as key partners for the success of the new strategy is considered to be imperative. However, no formal procedures have been introduced to recognize the local and regional authorities as key partners in drafting and implementing Europe 2020. Against this background, SALAR is

actively encouraging the government to establish formal consultations with local and regional authorities when drafting its National Reform Programme.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

Sweden's 2011 reform programme is based on the measures proposed by the government in the 2011 Budget Bill and the 2011 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill. In view of the degree of local self-government in Sweden, the local level plays a leading role in implementing several of the targets set by the Swedish government. Local and regional support for the Europe 2020 Strategy's targets and aims is considered to be crucial for the successful implementation of the strategy.

The 2007–2013 national strategy for regional competitiveness, entrepreneurship and employment sets out the government's priorities for regional growth and represents an important instrument for converting the EU's common targets for growth and employment into regional and local priorities. It forms the basis for regional development and the Structural Funds programme. Regular consultations take place between the government and the social partners on issues relating to the Europe 2020 strategy as well as other EU affairs that concern the social partners. These consultations take place both at political level and with senior civil servants. In order to bring the dialogue with the social partners more in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy's new annual cycle (the European semester) and the national decision-making process, the government intends to set up a reference group made up of representatives from the ministries concerned in the government offices and the social partners. This group will also include the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The reference group will meet regularly during the year at strategic moments in the implementation of the strategy. This initiative was launched after consultation with the social partners.

1.27 United Kingdom

Introduction

The United Kingdom is a multi-national state which is a hybrid of a unitary state (in the case of England) and an asymmetrical federation/regionalised state (as in the case of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). There is an asymmetry of power that emerges from this system of devolution, resulting in varying levels of institutional strength, which has an impact on the implementation of EU policy. For example, Scotland has greater legislative powers than Wales and a greater capacity to respond independently to EU initiatives, though co-ordination on EU matters across the UK remains strong.

There have been no changes in the function or role of local and regional authorities as a result of the Lisbon Treaty.

Associations of Local & Regional Authorities

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Local Government Association (LGA)
Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Welsh Local Government Association

The main role of these associations is to provide assistance and support to their respective regions and local authorities, gather information for ministers and authorities and to monitor issues of regional and local interest in order to influence the EU decision-making process. They also work to maintain relations with their counterparts in other regions. There is no formal participation in the processes relating to Europe 2020.

Participation of LRA Associations in NRPs

The UK's 2011 National Reform Programme has a section which specifically covers the involvement of stakeholders in drawing up the programme. It explains that all the actions reported in the NRP were subject to extensive public consultations, including making the draft document available for comment on the UK Treasury's website. The main detail provided, however, concerns the involvement of the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The actions and policies relating to Northern Ireland outlined in the document, for instance, were subject to approval by the Northern Ireland Assembly. Similarly, a related debate was held in the Scottish Parliament while the Welsh Assembly Government held a stakeholder event on the NRP.

There is no mention in the UK's NRP of the involvement of local authorities or their associations in the development of the NRP, although there are a number of references to local authority actions in line with Europe 2020 objectives.

2. Annexes

2.1 Status of the Survey

Country	Status	Contacted
AUSTRIA	No reply	oestgb@skynet.be / andrea.krainer@bgld.gv.at
BELGIUM	No reply	kimpens@vbbe.be / abovy@blbe.be / Marc.Thoulen@avcb-vsgeb.be / mwasseige@mrbc.irisnet.be
BULGARIA	No reply	forumderregionen@gmail.com / obshtina@elnics.com / d.pehliyanov@namrb.org
CYPRUS	Complete	fp@ucm.org.cy
CZECH REPUBLIC	No reply	lucie.cadilova@cityofprague.cz / Linda.Kopecka@cityofprague.cz
DENMARK	No reply	regioner@regioner.dk / asa@regioner.dk
ESTONIA	No reply	Ille.allsaar@ell.ee / kaimo@ell.ee /
FINLAND	Complete	hannele.hakkinen@aflra.fi / maileu@regeringen.ax / erja.horttanainen@kuntaliitto.fi / isa.ojala@kuntaliitto.fi
FRANCE	No reply	info@brplpc.org / charlotte.sugliani@brplpc.org / cprevot@amf.asso.fr
GERMANY	No reply	angelika.schlunck@stk.bayern.de / AdR@stk.bayern.de
GREECE	Complete	eetaa@arcadis.be
HUNGARY	No reply	mfbbruxel@skynet.be
IRELAND	Complete	robert.collins@iro.ie
ITALY	No reply	areaue@regione.lazio.it / delegazioneitaliana_cdr@regione.fvg.it / lcoveri@consiglio.regione.vda.it / l.bosc@regione.vda.it
LATVIA	Complete	evita@lps.lv / mudite.priede@lps.lv / maris.pukis@lps.lv

Country	Status	Contacted
LITUANIA	Complete	roma.zakaitien@lsa.lt / ks@lsa.lt
LUXEMBOURG	Complete	info@syvicol.lu / laurent.deville@syvicol.lu
MALTA	Complete	lca@lca.org.mt / jmagro@lca.org.mt / aaron.farrugia@cor.europa.eu
NETHERLANDS	Complete	annemiek.wissink@vng.nl / bverkerk@delft.nl / everheij@delft.nl / simone.goedings@vng.nl
POLAND	No reply	mazovia@skynet.be / alicja.majewska-galeziak@europarl.europa.eu
PORTUGAL	No reply	mca@reper-portugal.be / c.ribeiro@cm-lisboa.pt
ROMANIA	No reply	bruxelles@uncjr.org / calin.chira@amr-bruxelles.eu .
SLOVAKIA	No reply	bratislava@skregions.eu / predseda@unsk.sk
SLOVENIA	Complete	info@skupnostobcin.si / Miha.mohor@skupnostobcin.si / ivo.piry@gov.si
SPAIN	No reply	oficina.bruselas.cm@madrid.org / Marialuisa.martinez.diez@madrid.org / marisa.monforte@madrid.org
SWEDEN	Complete	th@skl.se
UNITED KINGDOM	Complete	brussels.office@lga.gov.uk / richard.kitt@local.gov.uk

2.2 Questionnaire

CSES was commissioned by the Committee of the Regions to update information about the role that associations of cities and regions play in the political and institutional decision-making process relating to Europe 2020, especially as a result of changes in the Lisbon Treaty. In particular, we are researching the attribution of political responsibilities for Europe 2020 and the related decision making processes. By providing responses to the following questions on your own country, you will help inform the Committee of the Regions of the current situation and ultimately strengthen the regional input towards achieving the Europe 2020 objectives.

1. Please state if there have been any changes since 2008 (especially as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon) in the processes through which the regional and local authorities in your country participate in EU policy making:
 - a) through representation in the Council
 - b) in the work of the Commission
 - c) through national legislative processes
 - d) through national administrative processes
 - e) at the Committee of the Regions
 - f) through interregional cooperation at a European level
2. What responsibilities have the regional and local authorities been attributed with for pursuing the goals of Europe 2020? What steps have been taken or procedures introduced as a result?
3. As a result of the Treaty of Lisbon, Europe's elected regional and local representatives can challenge new EU laws they consider to be in breach of the subsidiarity principle at the European Court of Justice. Have any new implementing procedures been put in place to include this new function/ What is the process for implementing this right?
4. Regional and local authority representative organisations can play an important part in the processes that are the subject of this questionnaire. Please refer to the annex and kindly update the list of associations for the local and regional authorities from your country.
5. What is the role played by each of these organisations in EU matters?
6. Can you suggest any additional sources/authorities that we might refer to/contact for additional information about these processes?

Country	Association	Name	Position	Phone	Email	Web
Austria	Austrian Association of Municipalities	Robert Hink	Secretary General	+43 1 512 1480	oesterreichischer@gemeindebund.gov.at	www.gemeindebund.at
Austria	Austrian Association of Cities and Towns	Thomas Weninger	Secretary General	+43 1 4000 89980	post@staedtebund.gov.at	www.staedtebund.gov.at
Belgium	Union of Towns and Municipalities in Wallonia (UVCW)	Isabelle Compagnie	Head of Department	+32 8124 0635	isabelle.compagnie@uvcw.be	www.uvcw.be/
Belgium	Association of the City and Municipalities of the Brussels-Capitale Region (AVCB-VSGB)	Marc Thoulen	Director	+32 2 238 51 40	welcome@avcb-vsgeb.be	www.avcb-vsgeb.be
Belgium	Association of Flemish Towns and Municipalities (VVSG)	Betty De Wachter		+32 22 11 56 15	betty.dewachter@vsg.be	www.vvsg.be
Belgium	Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities (UVBC)	Jef Gabriels	Chairperson	+32 2 233 20 01	vbsg@pop.kpn.be	www.uvcb-vbsg.be
Bulgaria	National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria	Diana Kaneva	International affairs	+359 294 34468	namrb@namrb.org	www.namrb.org/
Cyprus	Union of Cyprus Municipalities	Stella Kourou		+32 22138112	cor@ucm.org.cy	www.ucm.org.cy
Czech Rep.	Association of Czech Regions			+420 236 003 481	indrova@asociacekraju.cz	www.asociacekraju.cz
Czech Rep.	The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic	Oldrich Vlasák	President	+420 234 709 711	predseda@smocr.cz ; smocr@smocr.cz	www.vlasak.net
Denmark	Danish Regions Association	Asger Andreasen	Chief Adviser	+322 550 12 80	asa@regioner.dk	www.regioner.dk/
Denmark	Local Government Denmark (LGDK)	Birgit Yazdani Øbakke /Omer Ciric		+32 2 550 1264/3	bib@kl.dk ; oci@kl.dk	www.kl.dk/lgdk
Estonia	Association of Estonian Municipalities (AEM)	Ivar Tedrema	Vice-Chairman	+372 524 99 02	ivar@kambja.ee	www.emovl.ee
Estonia	Association of Estonian Cities (AEC)	Kaimo Käärman-Liive	Public Policies	+372 694 34 18	info@ell.ee	www.ell.ee/
Finland	Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)	Heli Niemelä		+32 2 549 0871	heli.niemela@kuntaliitto.fi	www.kuntatieto.fi

Country	Association	Name	Position	Phone	Email	Web
France	Assembly of Departments	Catherine Bertin	Chef de service Europe	+33 1 45 49 60 20	adf@departement.org	www.departement.org/content/lassemblee-des-departements-de-france/
France	Assembly of Communities of France (AdCF)	Daniel Nouaille	Vice-president	+33 1 55 04 89 00	adcf@adcf.asso.fr	www.adcf.org
France	Association of Regions of France (ARF)	Alain Rousset	President	+44 145 55 82 48	regions.de.france@arf-regions.org	www.arf.asso.fr/
France	Association of small towns in France	Olivier Dussopt				www.apvf.asso.fr
France	Association of Mayors of major cities in France (AMGVF)	Michel Destot	President	+33 1 44 39 34 56	amgvf@grandesvilles.org	www.grandesvilles.org/
France	Association of Mayors of France (AMF)	Jacques Pélissard	President			www.amf.asso.fr/
France	Federation of Mayors of mid-sized towns (FMVM)	Bruno Bourg-Broc	President			www.villesmoyennes.asso.fr
France	Association of rural French Mayors (AMRF)	Vanik Berberian	President	+33 4 72 61 77 20	amrf@amrf.fr	www.amrf.fr/
Germany	Association of German Counties			+49 30-590097-0	info@landkreistag.de	www.kreise.de/landkreistag/
Germany	Association of German Cities			+49 221 377 10	post@staedtetag.de	www.staedtetag.de/
Germany	Association of German Towns and Municipalities			+49 30 77 3070	dstgb@dstgb.de	www.dstgb.de/
Germany	Higher Level Regional Associations of Germany HKV					
Greece	Central Union of Municipalities and Communes of Greece			+30 0 210 3899 600	info@kedke.gr	www.kedke.gr/
Greece	Union of County Councils of Greece					
Hungary	Association of Hungarian Local Governments and Representatives (MOSZ)			+36 32 470 444	mosz@godollo.hu	
Hungary	Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TOOSZ)			+36 1 413 0482	toosz@toosz.hu	www.toosz.hu/
Ireland	Association of County and City Councils			353 57-8662977	director@acc.ie	www.councillors.ie
Ireland	Association of Irish Regions	Robert Collins		+32 2 282 8474	robert.collins@iro.ie	www.iro.ie/

Country	Association	Name	Position	Phone	Email	Web
Ireland	Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland	Philomena Roche	President	+ 357 067 42222	director@amai.ie	www.amai.ie/
Italy	Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces (CRPA)			+39 6 488 82 91	conferenza@regioni.it	www.regioni.it/
Italy	Union of Italian Provinces (UPI)			+39 6 684 03 41	upiroma@tin.it	www.upinet.it/
Italy	Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI)			+39 0 668 00 91	info@anci.it	www.anci.it/
Latvia	Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG)	Agit Kaupuž	Adviser to the European Union LP	+ 32 2 204 0670	kaupuz.agit@lps.lv	www.lps.lv/
Lithuania	Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania (ALAL)	Arunas Gražulis		+37 0 5212 29 58	arunas.grazulis@lsa.lt	www.lsa.lt/
Luxembourg	Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities			+352 44 36 58	info@syvicol.lu	www.syvicol.lu/
Malta	Maltese Local Councils' Association			+356 21 446 428	lca@lca.org.mt	www.lca.org.mt/
Netherlands	Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)			+31 70 3 738 393	informatiecentrum@vng.nl	www.vng.nl/
Netherlands	Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO)			+31 70 888 12 12	ipo-info@wb.ipo.nl	www.ipo.nl/
Poland	Joint Commission of Central and Local Government					
Poland	Association of Polish Counties (ZPP)			+48 22 656 63 34	biuro@powiatypolskie.pl	www.zpp.pl/
Portugal	National Association of Portuguese Municipalities	Fernando Ruas	President	+351 239 40 44 34	anmp@anmp.pt	www.anmp.pt/
Portugal	Comissões de Coordenação Desenvolvimento Regional (CCDR)					
Romania	Association of Communes of Romania	Emil Draghici	President	+40 245 230.890	primar@vulcanabai.ro	www.acor.ro/
Romania	Romanian Federation of Local Authorities			+40 21 402 20 92	fafr@fafr.ro	www.fafr.ro/
Slovakia	Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia			+421 2 544 35 914	umosr@gtinet.sk	www.unia-miest.sk/
Slovenia	Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia			+386 2 234 1500	info@skupnostobcin.si	www.skupnostobcin.si/
Slovenia	Association of the Municipalities of Slovenia			+386 1 230 63 32	info@zdruzenjeobcin.si	www.zdruzenjeobcin.si/
Spain	Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)	Pedro Castro Vázquez	President	+34 913 64 37 00	femp@femp.es	www.femp.es/

Country	Association	Name	Position	Phone	Email	Web
Sweden	Swedish Association of Local Authorities & Regions (SALAR)	Linnea Lundström	Senior EU Policy Advisor	+32 2 549 08 63	ll@skl.se	www.skl.se/
UK	Local Government Association	Richard Kitt		+44 207 664 31 21	richard.kitt@lga.gov.uk	www.lga.gov.uk/
UK	Welsh Local Government Association	Katie Cavell	European Affairs	+32 2 50 644 88	mailto:katie.cavell@wlg a.gov.uk	www.wlga.gov.uk/
UK	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities			+44 131 474 92 00	serafin@cosla.gov.uk	www.cosla.gov.uk/
UK	Northern Ireland Local Government Association			+44 2890 249 286	office@nilga.org	www.nilga.org

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