The State of Local Democracy in Central Europe

Edited by

Gábor Soós
Gábor Tóka
Glen Wright

Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative
Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative

Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI), as one of the programs of the Open Society Institute (OSI), is an international development and grant-giving organization dedicated to the support of good governance in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Newly Independent States (NIS). LGI seeks to fulfill its mission through the initiation of research and support of development and operational activities in the fields of decentralization, public policy formation and the reform of public administration.

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- support and dissemination of in-depth comparative and regionally applicable policy studies tackling local government issues;
- support of country-specific projects and delivery of technical assistance to the implementation agencies;
- assistance to Soros foundations with the development of local government, public administration and/or public policy programs in their countries of the region;
- publication of books, studies and discussion papers dealing with the issues of decentralization, public administration, good governance, public policy and lessons learned from the process of transition in these areas;
- development of curricula and organization of training programs dealing with specific local government issues;
- support of policy centers and think tanks in the region.

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Contents

Acknowledgements .................................................................................. vii

List of Contributors ................................................................................ ix

List of Tables and Figures .......................................................................... xi

1. Introduction ....................................................................................... 1
   Gábor Soós • Gábor Tóka

2. Country Report—Hungary ................................................................. 15
   Report on the State of Local Democracz in Hungary
   Gábor Soós • Judit Kálmán

   Indicators of Local Democracy in Latvia
   Inga Vilka • Maris Pukis • Edvins Vanags

4. Country Report—Poland ................................................................. 181
   The State of Democracy in Poland’s Gminas
   Aldona Okraszewskas • Jacek Kwiatkowski

   Autonomy of Local Government Administration in Romania
   Luana Pop

6. Conclusion: A Four-Country Comparison ..................................... 371
   Assessment of Progress Toward Local Democratic Systems
   Glen Wright

Appendices ............................................................................................... 409

Appendix A: Information Sheet
    on the Four Countries ...................................................................... 411

Appendix B: The Questionnaire of the
    Local Government Survey (in English) ..................................... 415
Appendix C: The Questionnaire of the
Local Representative Survey (in English) .... 433
Appendix D: Sampling ................................................... 447
Appendix E: Data Access ................................................. 455

Index ..................................................................................... 457
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List of Contributors

Judit Kálmán—Ph.D. student, Central European University.

Janusz Krzyzak—Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Malopolska Institute of Local Government and Administration, Cracow.

Jacek Kwiatkowski—Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Malopolska Institute of Local Government and Administration, Cracow.

Wojciech Odzimek—Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Malopolska Institute of Local Government and Administration, Cracow.

Aldona Okraszewska—Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Malopolska Institute of Local Government and Administration, Cracow.

Luana Pop—Lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest. She teaches Social Policy, Social Organization and Public Administration.

Maris Pukis—Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communication, Lecturer of the University of Latvia.

Gábor Soós—Research Fellow, Tocqueville Research Center.

Gábor Tóka—Assistant Professor, Central European University; Tocqueville Research Center.

Edvins Vanags—Director of Latvian Statistical Institute; Professor at the University of Latvia.

Inga Vilka—Director of the Municipal Consultancy Center; Lecturer at the University of Latvia.

Glen Wright—Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Adviser, UN and World Bank projects.
List of Tables and Figures

TABLES

CHAPTER 1
Table 1.1: Personal Interviews by Countries Conducted with Chief Administrative Officials February–March 2001 .......... 8
Table 1.2: Name of Polling Companies Administering the Survey in the Four Countries ............................................. 9

CHAPTER 2
Table 2.1: Share of Classes of Revenues in Local Government Budgets ................................................................. 25
Table 2.2: Profile of Subnational Revenues: Composition by Revenue Source .......................................................... 26
Table 2.3: Revenues from Local Taxes ............................................................................................................. 27
Table 2.4: Distribution of Grants by Major Categories ........................................................................................ 28
Table 2.5: Local Government Expenditures by Sector ....................................................................................... 29
Table 2.6: Problems in Public Expenditure Management at the Local Level .......................................................... 31
Table 2.7: The Types and Number of Associations .............................................................................................. 34
Table 2.8: If Decisions are Ever Postponed, What Is The Most Frequent Reason for the Delay? ......................... 36
Table 2.9: Indicators of Decisional Performance .................................................................................................. 38
Table 2.10: Existence of Policies ........................................................................................................................ 41
Table 2.11: Indicators of Democratic Performance of Local Government .......................................................... 45
Table 2.12: Democratic Performance of Hungarian Local Governments ............................................................ 46
Table 2.13: Indicators of Democratic Performance of Local Representatives ........................................................ 47
Table 2.14: Classification of Civil Servants ........................................ 48
Table 2.15: Perceived Influence on Municipal Decisions .................... 51
Table 2.16: Perceived Influence of Local Societal Actors ................. 51
Table 2.17: Fragmentation of Local Representative Bodies ............... 55
Table 2.18: Cooperation in Local Assemblies ................................. 56
Table 2.19: Education of Representatives and Electorate ............... 60
Table 2.20: Local Representatives’ Civil Society Membership .......... 63
Table 2.21: Uses of civil Society Membership for Local Representatives ..................................................... 64
Table 2.22: Local Representatives’ Attitude towards Political Equality ..................................................... 67
Table 2.23: Local Representatives’ Attitude towards Political Participation ..................................................... 68
Table 2.24: Number of Local Party Organizations ........................... 70
Table 2.25: Membership of Local Party Organizations ..................... 72
Table 2.26: Party Nomination for the Local Election of 1998 (Joint Candidates Are Proportionally Divided Among Nominating Organizations) .................................... 72
Table 2.27: Local Organizations in Hungarian Political Parties ........ 74
Table 2.28: Number of Local Media .................................................. 82
Table 2.29: Audience of Local Media ............................................... 83
Table 2.30: Coverage of Local Media ............................................... 84
Table 2.31: Frequency of Local Media ............................................... 84
Table 2.32: Audience of Local Media ............................................... 85
Table 2.33: Local Media and Local Government Politics ............... 86
Table 2.34: Ownership of Local Media ............................................ 87
Table 2.35: Local Media Systems by Ownership ............................ 88
Table 2.36: Media Independence ...................................................... 89
Table 2.37: Candidates per Position in Local Elections .................. 90
Table 2.38: Citizen Participation in Local Politics ............................ 91
Table 2.39: Initiators of Collective Actions ............................................ 92
Table 2.40: Perceived Influence on and Understanding of Political Issues .................................. 94
Table 2.41: Strengths and Weaknesses of Local Democracy ......................... 97

CHAPTER 3

Table 3.1: Number of Municipalities According to Number of Population .................. 114
Table 3.2: Number of Municipalities According to Statistical Regions .................. 115
Table 3.3: Number of Municipalities by Legal Status .................................. 117
Table 3.4: Number of Municipalities by Percentage of Minorities ..... 118
Table 3.5: Categories of Municipalities Based on Their Socio-Economic Development Level .......... 119
Table 3.6: Indices and Their Weights Necessary for Determining a Territory’s Level of Socio-Economic Development ........ 120
Table 3.7: Territorial Differences Among Latvia’s Pagasts ....................... 120
Table 3.8: Financial Situation of Local Governments .................................. 121
Table 3.9: Revenue Structure by Type of Self-Government in Latvia, 1999 ................................. 129
Table 3.10: Expenditure Structure by Type of Self-Government in Latvia, 1999 .......................... 130
Table 3.11: Differences of Fiscal Autonomy, Depending on Region and Legal Status ................ 130
Table 3.12: Comparison of Amalgamation and Cooperation ...................... 135
Table 3.13: Additive Index Score of Democratic Performance According to Number of Population ........................................ 144
Table 3.14: Additive Index Score of Democratic Performance in Different Categories of Municipalities ........................................ 145
Table 3.15: Additive Index Score of the Quality of Administrative Staff in Different Categories of Municipalities ................. 147
Table 3.16: Ranks of Informal Influence on Local Government Decisions ........................................ 152
Table 3.17: Ranks on Informal Influence of Local Social Actors on Local Government Decisions ... 153
Table 3.18: The Voter–Leader Ratio ................................................................. 156
Table 3.19: Distribution of Councilors by Age Groups ....................... 157
Table 3.20: Distribution of Councilors by Their Education .......... 157
Table 3.21: Representatives’ Social Capital Depending on Region and Legal Status ........................................ 159
Table 3.22: Presence and Activities of Political Parties on the Local Level, Depending on Legal Status and Ethnic Composition ........................................ 161
Table 3.23: Score of Indicator ‘Organizational Strength of Local Political Organizations’ ........................................ 162
Table 3.24: Regional Disparities of Civic Organizations ................. 164
Table 3.25: Level of Contacts between NGOs and Local Governments Depending on Legal Status ........ 164
Table 3.26: Dependence of the Influence of Local Media on Legal Status ................................................ 166
Table 3.27: Local Coverage of Media Depending on Size .......... 167
Table 3.28: Evaluation of Answers ................................................................. 168
Table 3.29: Score of Independence of Media from Local Government ................................................ 169
Table 3.30: Number of Lists of Candidates and Elected Deputies Accordingly to Parties, coalitions and Voters’ Associations in Latvia, 1997 ........................................... 170
Table 3.31: Characteristics of Competition and Turnout in Local Government Elections of 1997 ................. 171
Table 3.32: Citizen Participation Depending on Legal Status ........ 173
Table 3.33: Additive Index Scores (Indicators) ........................................ 177

CHAPTER 4

Table 4.1: Number of Municipalities ......................................................... 186
Table 4.2: General Characteristics of Voivodeships ............................ 189
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 4.3: Division of Administrative Voivodeships in Sub-Regions

Table 4.4: Legal Status of the Local Government

Table 4.5: Socio-Economic Characteristics in Poland

Table 4.6: Total Income per Number of Inhabitants

Table 4.7: Proportion of State Grants

Table 4.8: Financial Condition of Municipalities Budget

Table 4.9: Quorum

Table 4.10: Postponement of Decisions

Table 4.11: Budget Promptness

Table 4.12: Relationship of the Board and the Majority of Representatives

Table 4.13: Proportion of Extraordinary Sessions

Table 4.14: Proportion of Successfully Implemented Projects in 2000

Table 4.15: Success of Multi-Year Project Planning

Table 4.16: Efforts to Promote Efficiency

Table 4.17: Strategic Planning

Table 4.18: Strategic Planning (Above 50,000 Inhabitants)

Table 4.19: Success in Obtaining Citizens’ Contributions to Local Government Projects

Table 4.20: Regulation About the Handling of Citizens’ Requests

Table 4.21: Citizen Input in Budgeting

Table 4.22: Involvement of People Affected in Decision-Making

Table 4.23: Existence of Communication Strategy

Table 4.24: Existence of Staff to Inform Journalists

Table 4.25: Existence of Contacts with Journalists

Table 4.26: Proportion of Local Civic Organizations Involved in Decision-Making of Local Government

Table 4.27: Initiation of Referendum by Local Government
Table 4.28: Use of Modern Forms of Communication ......................... 224
Table 4.29: Proportion of Vacant Positions ........................................ 227
Table 4.30: Number of Vacant Positions in Municipalities .................. 228
Table 4.31: Proportion of Civil Servants with a Degree ...................... 229
Table 4.32: Proportion of Civil Servants Positions Occupied without Adequate Qualification ...................................... 230
Table 4.33: CAO’s Reports to Mayor and Council .............................. 232
Table 4.34: Planned Financial Supervision ........................................ 233
Table 4.35: Perceived Influence on Municipal Decision ..................... 235
Table 4.36: Perceived Influence of Local Societal Actors on Local Government Decisions ........................................ 237
Table 4.37: Proportion of Independent Local Representatives ............ 239
Table 4.38: Number of Representatives per Faction ........................... 240
Table 4.39: Existence of Representatives Belonging to a Majority Coalition .................................................... 240
Table 4.40: Informal Majority Coalition ............................................. 241
Table 4.41: Strength of Cooperation of the Majority Coalition .......... 241
Table 4.42: Level of Separation of Majority and Minority .................. 242
Table 4.43: Voter–Leader Ratio .......................................................... 244
Table 4.44: Characteristics of Councilors ........................................... 245
Table 4.45: NGOs with Leaders Who are Representatives in the Local Government ........................................ 247
Table 4.46: Proportion of Representatives Holding a Position in NGO .................................................... 247
Table 4.47: Division of Mandates ........................................................ 249
Table 4.48: Number of Parties in Municipalities .............................. 250
Table 4.49: Density of Local Civic Organizations ............................. 256
Table 4.50: Proportion of NGOs Supported by Local Government .... 257
Table 4.51: Proportion of NGOs Supporting Local Government ....... 259
Table 4.52: Proportion of NGOs Contracted with Local Government about Service Provision ............................. 261
Table 4.53: Ownership of Local Media .............................................. 262
Table 4.54: Number of Printed and Electronic Media Giving Some Coverage of Public Affairs in Municipalities .......... 263
Table 4.55: Local Coverage of Printed Media .................................... 264
Table 4.56: Local Coverage of Electronic Media ................................ 264
Table 4.57: Audience of Local Media ................................................. 264
Table 4.58: Local Media and Local Government Politics ............... 265
Table 4.59: Direct Transmission of Electronic Media about Local Government Sessions ................................. 266
Table 4.60: Importance of Local government Subsidy or Advertising in the Income of Media Outlets ................. 267
Table 4.61: Number of Candidates per Representative Positions ...... 268
Table 4.62: Civil Society Proposals..................................................... 268
Table 4.63: Requesting Meetings ........................................................ 269
Table 4.64: Public Demonstrations .................................................... 269
Table 4.65: Petitions ........................................................................... 270
Table 4.66: Challenging Local Government Decisions .................... 271
Table 4.67: Political Parties’ Role in Initiating Local Political Action ............................................................... 272
Table 4.68: NGOs’ Role in initiating Local Political Action .......... 272
Table 4.69: Individual Citizens’ Role in initiating Local Political Action ............................................................... 273

CHAPTER 5

Table 5.1: Transfers and Own Revenues of Total Revenues of the Local Councils ....................................................... 297
Table 5.2: Average Percentage of Transfers and Own Revenues by Municipality Size ........................................ 297
Table 5.3: Average Percentage of Transfers and Own Revenues by Type of Municipality ........................................ 298
Table 5.4: Extraordinary Meetings of Local Councils After the June 2000 Elections ........................................ 307
Table 5.5: Average Proportion of Capital Expenditure within Total Local Budget Expenditure in 2000 (Economic Classification) by Number and Achievement of Investment Projects

Table 5.6: Average Proportion of Some Types of Expenditure Within Total Local Budget Expenditure in 2000 (Functional Classification)

Table 5.7: Planning on Different Activities by Historical-Cultural Region

Table 5.8: How Much Do You Trust in the Following Institutions

Table 5.9: How Much Do You Know About the Activities of the Mayor and Local Councilors Undertaken During the Last Year?

Table 5.10: If you Had to Solve a Problem at Any of the Following Institutions, Did You Had to Give Something in Exchange (Gifts, Money, Services)?

Table 5.11: Citizens’ Input in the Budgeting Process

Table 5.12: Percentage of Localities by Number of NGOs Functioning on Their Territory in 2000

Table 5.13: Percentage of Localities which do Have NGOs on Their Territory by Type of Involvement (2000)

Table 5.14: Percentage of Personnel Expenditure of Total Expenditure by Residential Area, Region’s Financial Capacity, and Socio-Economic Development

Table 5.15: Number of Full-Time Public Employees by Size, Type of Municipality, Ethnic Composition, Financial Capacity, and Socio-Economic Development

Table 5.16: Average Percent of Higher-Educated Personnel by Different Characteristics of the Municipality

Table 5.17: Planning and Regulating Activities at the Local Level

Table 5.18: No. of Parties, Independents, or NGOs Represented in the Local Council

Table 5.19: Number of Voters per Elected Representative

Table 5.20: Number of Political Parties which Have Local Organization Compared to the Number of Parties in Parliament
| Table 5.21: | Localization of the Romanian Social-Democratic Party .... 334 |
| Table 5.22: | Coverage of the Romanian Municipalities by Different Political Parties ........................................... 335 |
| Table 5.23: | Association between Different Local Organization of Political Parties and Regions ...................................................... 335 |
| Table 5.24: | Percentage of Municipalities with over 28% of Local Councilors Belonging to RSDP ........................................... 336 |
| Table 5.25: | Percentage of Municipalities by the Number of Political Local Events ............................................................ 336 |
| Table 5.26: | Percentage of Localities with NGOs on Their Territory by Type of Involvement and Number of NGOs (2000) .... 339 |
| Table 5.27: | Number of Media by Settlement Type ................................. 340 |
| Table 5.28: | Audience by Settlement Type ............................................. 341 |
| Table 5.29: | Coverage of Printed Media by Settlement Type .................... 342 |
| Table 5.30: | Coverage of Electronic Media by Settlement Type ............... 342 |
| Table 5.31: | Percentage of Municipalities by the Number of Issues Related to Local Government Covered by the First and Second Mentioned Local Media ................................................... 343 |
| Table 5.32: | Percentage of Municipalities by the Type of Issues Covered by the First Two Mentioned Local Media .......... 343 |
| Table 5.33: | Percentage of Media by Type of Ownership ...................... 344 |
| Table 5.34: | Percentage of Media by the Type of Support Offered by Local Governments ......................................................... 345 |
| Table 5.35: | Percentage of Media by Scope of Distribution ................... 345 |
| Table 5.36: | Percentage of Localities by Different Types of Indirect Conventional Participatory Forms (2000) ..................... 347 |
| Table 5.37: | Influence by Different Social Actors Upon Initiating Collective Actions ................................................................. 348 |
| Table 5.38: | To What Geographic Area Do You Feel You Belong? ...... 349 |
| Table 5A.1: | Number of Inhabitants—1999 ........................................... 354 |
| Table 5A.2: | Number of Inhabitants by Legal Status All Municipalities, 1999 ................................................................. 354 |
Table 5A.3: Municipalities and Population by Cultural-Historical Regions (1999) Non-Weighted Sample ......................... 355
Table 5A.4: Municipalities and Population by Cultural-Historical Regions (1999) Weighted Sample ......................... 356
Table 5A.5: Municipalities and Population by Cultural-Historical Regions (1999) .............................................................. 356
Table 5A.6: Number of Municipalities by Size and Cultural-Historical Regions ..................................................... 357
Table 5A.7: Number of Municipalities by Residence Area and Cultural-Historical Regions ............................................. 357
Table 5A.8: Administrative Arrangements, 2000 ........................................... 358
Table 5A.9: Municipalities and Population by Residence Area ........ 359
Table 5A.10: Municipalities by Legal Status ........................................ 359
Table 5A.11: Ethnic Composition of the Municipalities (1992) ......... 360
Table 5A.12: Ethnic Composition by Cultural-Historical Region —LGS Sample ........................................................................ 360
Table 5A.13: Ethnic Composition by Cultural-Historical Regions —All Municipalities ................................................. 361
Table 5A.14: Ethnic Composition by Regions Percentage of Total Population of the Region)—1992 ................................. 361
Table 5A.15: Socio-Economic Development by Region ...................... 363
Table 5A.16: Financial Power by Region (2000) .............................. 364
Table 5A.17: Number of Positions for Elected Councilors by Size of Municipality/County ............................................. 365
Table 5A.18: Structure of Local Budgets’ Revenues .......................... 366
Table 5A.19: Structure of Local Budgets’ Revenues, 2000 .................. 366
Table 5A.20: Average Structure of Local Budget Revenues, 2000  ...... 367
Table 5A.21: Structure of Local Budgetary Expenditure —Economic Classification, 2000 .............................. 367
Table 5A.22: Structure of Local Budgetary Expenditure —Functional Classification, 2000 .............................. 367
CHAPTER 6

Table 6.1: Difficulty Local Governments Experience in Paying for Current Operating Costs .......................... 381
Table 6.2: Dates by which the Percentages of Local Governments Passed Their Budgets ........................................ 385
Table 6.3: Capacity to Make Decisions without a Quorum .......... 385
Table 6.4: Delays in Decision-Making in Councils .................... 386
Table 6.5: Long-Term Development Programs ......................... 386
Table 6.6: Political Party Influence and the Difference in Terms of the Number of Factions ............................... 390
Table 6.7: Public Attitude Towards the Establishment of a Majority Coalition on Councils .............................. 390
Table 6.8: Level of Political Activity at the Council Level .......... 391
Table 6.9: Comparison of the Number of Councilors that Also Hold an Office in a Civic or Social Organization .......... 394
Table 6.10: Involvement of Citizens in the Budget Process through a Public Budget Hearing ............................... 399
Table 6.11: Source of Influence on the Budget Process and Decisions at the Local Level ...................................... 400
Table 6.12: Role and Activities of Media .................................. 403
Table 6.13: Local Government Ownership of Local Media .......... 403
Table 6.14: Causes of Social Tensions ....................................... 407

APPENDICES

Table A.1: Basic Data Featuring the Surveyed Countries .......... 411
Table A.2: Major Ethnic Divisions (Ethnic Groups of Over 1% of the Population) .................................................. 412
Table A.3: Number of Local Government Units ....................... 412
Table A.4: Public Administration Characteristics ....................... 413
Table A.5: Municipalities by Population Size Categories
Number of Municipalities .................................................. 413
Table A.6: Municipalities by Population Size Categories
Number of Inhabitants .................................................. 414

FIGURES

CHAPTER 2

Figure 2.1: Perceived Influence on Local Government ............... 52
Figure 2.2: Voter–Leader Ratio ................................................ 58

CHAPTER 3

Figure 3.1: Relationship between Territory Development Index and Number of Population in Pagasts in Latvia in 1999 ........................................... 117
Figure 3.2: Ways People Can Best Influence Decisions ................. 142
Figure 3.3: Participation of People in Local Affairs of Their Community in 1999 Compared to Five and Ten Years Ago .............................................. 143
Figure 3.4: Local Governments as Main Responsible Authorities for 12 Issues ................................................ 151
Figure 3.5: Groups of Territories with Which Leaders Identify ...... 176

CHAPTER 5

Figure 5A.1: Internal Political versus Administrative Influence Upon Local Decisions .................................................. 368
Figure 5A.2: External Influence Upon Local Councils’ Decisions .... 368
It is still favoured today over a national Polish identity, and constitutes an identifying factor for the local population. A central aspect of this identity is the Spiš dialect—a regional dialect rooted in Polish grammar, which even at present remains the colloquial language of the region and is perceived as the mother tongue. Jaroslava Benicka (University of Banská Bystrica) described a further example of regional structural ruptures in the post-war period, namely the resettlement of the population of the Javorina region as part of the creation of a military training ground for the Czechoslovakia Europe and Central Asia.

Democracy has emerged as a cross-cutting issue in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits since the 1990s and in the internationally agreed development goals they produced. World leaders pledged in the Millennium Declaration to spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The International Day of Democracy provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world.

The structure of the unitary state of the Grand Duchy combines the features of a centralized unitary state of the French tradition with the consensual political system of Belgium and the Netherlands. Many of the elements of its institutional framework are inherited from former occupations. German and French influences are evident in the territorial division, in its financial means of autonomy, and in relations of the local authorities and the central state.