

Decentralisation and Intergovernmental Networks in Europe: Complex Tools for Complex Societies

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Country	Municipal level	Intermediary level	Regional or state level
Federations and quasi-federations			
Austria	287		8
Belgium	589	10	6
Germany ⁱ	11.116	402	16
Italy ⁱⁱ	8.047	110	20
Spain	8.122	43	17
Switzerland	2.324		26
Unitary countries			
Czechia	6.253		14
Denmark	98		5
Estonia	213		
Finland ⁱⁱⁱ	317		1
France ^{iv}	36.744	101	17
Greece	325		13
Hungary ^v	3.177		19
Iceland	74		
Ireland	31		3
Luxembourg	105		
Netherlands	393		12
Norway	428		18
Poland	2.478	380	16
Portugal	308		2
Slovakia ^{vi}	2.927		8
Slovenia	212		
Sweden	290		21
United Kingdom	389	27	3

Defining decentralisation

- Process through which powers, functions, responsibilities and resources are transferred from central to peripheral governments

Perceived benefits of decentralisation

- It favours citizen participation
- It empowers democratic values
- It increases accountability and responsiveness
- It promotes a more equitable distribution of resources
- It is a tool for managing diversity in complex societies
- It counterweights central power and spreads it

Hidden risks of decentralisation

- Subnational governments are not always more efficient
- Overlapping of services
- It can foster negative competition between govts.
- No rational allocation of resources, but political variables
- Incoherence or contradiction of policies
- National macroeconomic goals into question
- Setting up of clientele networks

RIGs Assymetries

- Information
- Financing
- Capacity
- Administrative
- Policies

Reasons to decentralise

- Political

(Belgium, Spain, Italy, UK)

- Technical

(Netherlands, Scandinavian countries, France)

Trends of decentralisation

- **Worries about territorial and social cohesion**

(i.e. Spain, Germany, Italy, Norway,...)

- **Changeable institutional design and doubts on competences share**

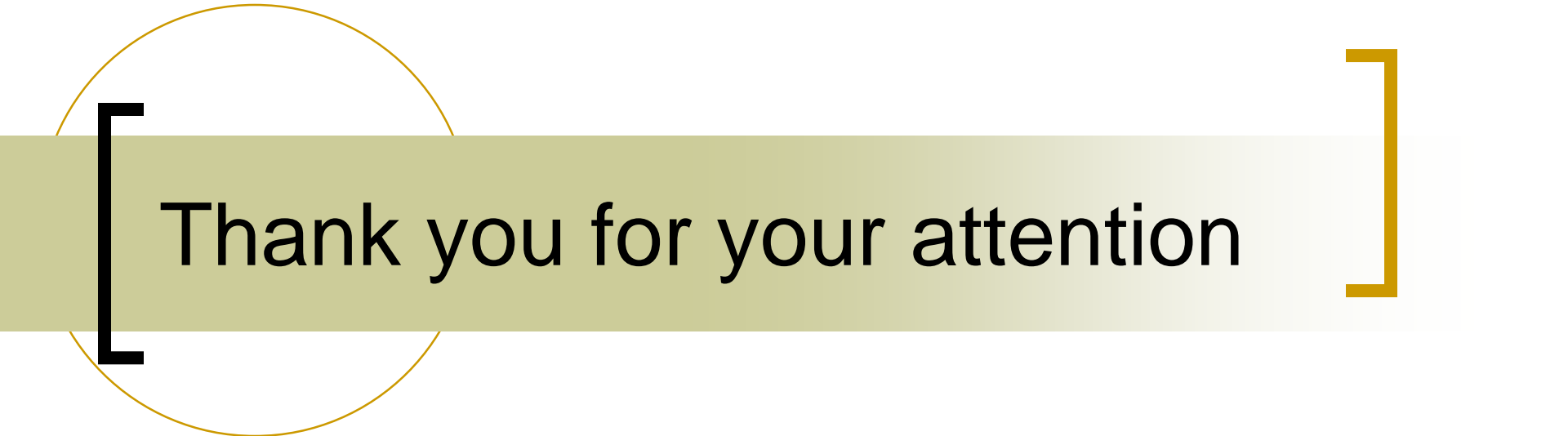
(i.e. inter-municipal corporations and provinces in Belgium, Spain, Italy; balance between departments-regions, role of metropolis in France; new regional assemblies in Ireland; decrease of municipalities in Greece)

Potencial contradictions between goals:

(i.e. upscaling of local governments and citizen engagement in Netherlands, Norway, Denmark)

And recentralisation

- Symbolic policies (Slovak Republic, Lithuania)
- Back to the past (Hungary)
- Afraid of territorial tensions (Romania)
- Budget and financing reforms, ease to pass laws in Bundesrat (Germany)
- Asymmetries and local govs dependence (UK, Ireland, Spain)
- Limitations to the general clause of competences (Spain)
- Incompatibility with austerity and controls (Greece)
- Incompatibility with principle of equity (Norway)



Thank you for your attention

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