

Latest news on the plans for territorial reforms in ROMANIA

As of 16 November 2011

Objective of the Reform

Negotiations on reforming the current administrative system started in June 2011. The overall object of the reform is to decrease bureaucracy, make self-governments more efficient and increase the absorption rates of EU funds. The reform in view has three separate aspects: (1) reorganization of the present territorial division by redrawing the borders of administrative units, (2) administrative reform aiming at the redefinition of administrative competences at different levels with the purpose of improving efficiency and (3) regionalization to devolve certain competences from the central to the regional governments.

Main Point of debate

Drawing the borders of the new regions is the primary point of disagreement. Some wish to reorganize the administrative units on base of historic principles appreciating the significance of cultural coherence of the regions, others emphasize the primacy of an economic principle in a functional approach to regional development, finally there are those for whom the principal of rational administration with demographically symmetric regions compliant with the NUTS system is the most important. As such there various proposals. The first one published in June suggested transformation of the present eight development regions created in 1998 into eight mega-counties. According to other proposals counties should be united into larger administrative units rather on base of the historical regions, maybe even considering ethnic factors. Not all agree, however on the abolishment of the current county structures, some would supplement it with an intermediary administrative level that would be placed between the central and county level. There is, however a relative consensus that the number of the regions to be established should range between eight and fourteen.

Timing of Reform

Negotiations having come to a stale mate in June, the issue was postponed for autumn 2011. The largest government party stresses the urgency of the reform that should be put into legislation by the end of 2012 so that it could be implemented before the local and parliamentary elections to be held in 2012. Their main argument is to be able to apply for EU regional and cohesion funds via the newly established self-governments before the end of the 2007-2013 financial framework period of the EU. Opposition parties prefer, however a more considerate pace of the reform taking time for further in-depth analysis and negotiations fearing that a hasty reorganization of the administrative-territorial structure may be superficial and only a short-sighted measure to influence next year's election outcomes.

Legislative Process

Regardless of the final version of the reform package, a number of laws will need to be amended: The law 215/2001 on local administration, the law on administrative-territorial units dating from 1968, the law 500/2002 regarding local public finances, etc. Unless the new administrative regions, regardless of their size and competencies will keep the name "judet" (county), the Constitution will also need to be amended, as it currently stipulates that Romania is divided into counties.