

Ibreljić, Izet; Kulenović, Salih; Kožarić, Amra

**Conference Paper**

## REGIONAL STATES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE BETWEEN EUROREGIONALISM AND ETHNOREGIONALISM

50th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Sustainable Regional Growth and Development in the Creative Knowledge Economy", 19-23 August 2010, Jönköping, Sweden

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

European Regional Science Association (ERSA)

*Suggested Citation:* Ibreljić, Izet; Kulenović, Salih; Kožarić, Amra (2010) : REGIONAL STATES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE BETWEEN EUROREGIONALISM AND ETHNOREGIONALISM, 50th Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Sustainable Regional Growth and Development in the Creative Knowledge Economy", 19-23 August 2010, Jönköping, Sweden, European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Louvain-la-Neuve

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/118910>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*

**50th European Congress of the Regional Science Association International  
19.-23. August 2010. Jönköping, Sweden**

**REGIONAL STATES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE BETWEEN  
EUROREGIONALISM AND ETHNOREGIONALISM**

**Izet Ibreljić, University of Tuzla, Bosna and Herzegovina**

**e-mail: [ibreljic@yahoo.com](mailto:ibreljic@yahoo.com)**

**Salih Kulenović, University of Tuzla, Bosna and Herzegovina**

**e-mail: [nihada.k@bih.net.ba](mailto:nihada.k@bih.net.ba)**

**Amra Kožarić, University of Tuzla, Bosna and Herzegovina**

**e-mail: [kozaricamra@yahoo.com](mailto:kozaricamra@yahoo.com)**

**Abstract**

Regional policy of European Union promoted a long time ago uniformly regional development as one of its own integration priority, and each phase in integration process of individual states monitoring appropriately growing distribution of the financial assets, which helps them to accomplish those developing goals. However, in regional Europe are also present disintegrations, which are solving by upgrading already accomplished self-determination of few regions by cultural, political and economical model of government. Therefore, pro-European regionalism architects primary present the *citizen* as active social subject.

In Southeast Europe, with big political and economical diversity, and territorial dispersion of nations, the discussion about different aspects of regionalism are becoming more and more significance. This area is characteristic by cultural diversity, disbelief, political barriers, stereotype, which are crowded by centuries. The escalation of the abduct ethno-nationalistic polities, at the end of the last century, lead here to the wars and “ethnic cleaning”. All that, complicate the realization of the euro-regional concept, and also threat further fragmentation of this area and don’t conduce to developing mutual identity of this region. Regionalization

and balanced regional development are here main criterion for incorporation in European economical structure, but also for democratization and society development.

The object of this research is to examine the possibilities of regionalization and balanced regional development of geo-area Southeast Europe, in context existing euro regional standards. To this end, it is necessary, throw complexly analysis of EU experiences in this area, which can be also useful, instructive and applicative, determined for rational solutions in this countries. It could be a contribution for affirmation of regional development in this part Europe, which is serious and inevitable duty (mission) that follows.

**Keywords:** region, regionalization, Southeast Europe, euro-integrations.

## **Introduction**

Regionalisation, regional development and regional cooperation as various international activities became a global process in last a few decades. In Western Europe all the countries implemented a territorial division into regions as a function of better management of the state. Therefore, the regionalization of the future EU members is not at all controversial. Regionalization is one of the prerequisites for the incorporation of some countries in the European economic structure since the process of European integration in the first phase is implemented and spatially, across the regions. Any future EU member states must sooner or later to begin the process of making its regional maps that must be functional and adapted to wider use in Europe.

As a middle level of management, between the state and local level, region must be economically efficient, but also a prerequisite of successful democratic and economic reform and a prerequisite for the development of transformer cooperation between neighbouring countries. Regionalism has become a modern model of economic life and development in terms of decentralization of functions within the state apparatus, and he needs a serious approach to be successful. As a result, regionalization must have adequate scientific basis, and must not be the result of a specific desire of the political establishment.

Many countries of Southeast Europe have adopted a regionalization and worked on the regional distribution of its geo-space in accordance with EU rules in order to achieve efficient decentralization. Often passed a bill on regional development and regional development strategies in which are specifically defined regional activities. However, it should be noted that these countries use a broad spectrum of approaches to regionalization, some of whom prefer the retrograde aspect on regionalism, mostly through the efforts of regionalization by the primary ethical criteria. This results in serious political problems. The scientific community is usually considered that the preference for ethnicity as a basis for regionalization of a geographic space leads to the anachronistic approach to regional issues, which can lead to separatist tendencies. Populist in the countries of South-eastern Europe, which for various reasons argue for such regionalization is most often refer to historical and contemporary experience of European regionalism.

### **1. European regionalism and ethno-regionalism in contemporary Europe and the conditions of implementation in the countries of South-eastern Europe**

Contemporary European concept of regionalization is treated as a project of socio-economic decentralization, which has to be based on democracy and the rule of law. In doing so, long term costs were lower than revenue. However, interest in regionalization can be an expression of the political elite in order to secure its political and economic Premiership. In this case it often takes no account of improving the standard of regional population, but about achieving personal goals on the political plane-retaining or gaining power. Treated populist regionalism in modern European countries usually manifests itself in more or less inflating ethno-regional tendencies.

Ethno-regionalism is a modern European geopolitical reality. It was based on ethnic specificity in various regions of multiethnic European states. Requirements for the different treatment of certain regions and highlight the need for wide autonomy and decentralization of the "milder" form of ethno-regionalism, which is usually resolved through state institutions. "Hard" ethno-regionalism disruptive political and economic system of the country in which to assemble. It is manifested through various forms of separation or ethnocentrism within particular countries. Contemporary West European analysts say that this process varies in

time and space and requires a complex study.<sup>1</sup> In these cases the region may be a factor encouraging separatism, but also to mitigate or completely eliminate the separatist tendencies.

Many European countries are still unstable in the ethno-political terms. Activities governments of these countries in order to control ethnic contradiction by improving the position of some minorities and decentralization of the management system only temporarily alleviate the separatist tendencies. This gives the right to occasional regional pessimists to the conclusion that the collapse of the state of Western Europe during the ethnic principle and the EU destabilization caused by these decays seem completely real.<sup>2</sup> Optimistic observation of European regionalism involves only the higher powers in the future autonomy and the use of the benefits of regionalization (higher percentage of taxes, bigger budget, greater influence of local authorities ...). Pro-European analysts are meant to democratic and economically decentralized country still prevailing viewpoint that stands for living together and populist mobilization of emotional resources, there is no realistic chance of long-term danger of losing its membership in the EU. Hence it can be expected that activity in the "problematic" regions (Catalonia, Corsica, Wales ...) based on an upgrade, but realized the cultural self-determination model of political and economic self-government.

Features European regions independently assessed taxes and fixed on their own path of integration into EU institutions and remove the possibility of Balkanization and western European space. However, in South-eastern Europe the concept of Balkanization is not completely eliminated. Here again is often favoured pre-war base of the "five national states"<sup>3</sup> also stands out from the maxim of the 1990s that the multicultural European regionalism is impossible. Optimistically looking at the future of Southeast Europe we can make a conclusion that the wars in the Balkans during the 20th century were the last great insanity of violent ethno-centrist policy.<sup>4</sup> In a detailed analysis of ethno-nationalist tendencies in Europe, a group of American authors has usually a similar opinion.<sup>5</sup> The reasons for optimism should be sought in the intricate tangle of political, cultural and economic interdependence in which the modern world exist. In this world, the idea of ethnic self-realization can be achieved

---

<sup>1</sup>See more in: G.V. Hamme, *La géographie de l' Extrême droite pent'-elle s' expliquer par l' ethnocentrisme des territoires? Un analyse multiscalaire en Europe occidentale*, Espace populations societes, No 3, 2008, pg 441-452.

<sup>2</sup>J.A. Balašev, *Etnički separatizam i kriza evropske državnosti*, NSPM, Beograd, 12. Maj 2009.

<sup>3</sup>F. Tuđman, *Nacionalno pitanje u savremenoj Evropi, državnost nacija ključ mira Evrope*, Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1990., pg 311-317.

<sup>4</sup>The Gardian, London, 19. 03. 2006.

<sup>5</sup>See more in: Foreign Affairs, March/April 2008.

through more efficient way within the broader European integration with the support of European funds. This will redirect ethno-regional euro regional tendencies.

## **2. Limits of regionalization in the countries of South-eastern Europe**

Nowadays, the regionalization of any country is not a single act, but the strategy and long-term process, so the legal act, which means its formal regionalization, only the first act. The attitude towards this process in contemporary South-East Europe is constantly changing, usually in accordance with the day to day needs, while ignoring the fact that this is one of the important strategic issues of development of the country. In academic circles, the prevailing opinion about the necessity of regionalization and decentralization of the state space, while in the sphere of political considerations the basic question of sustainable policy which should ensure equal regional development and social peace in the country.

Otherwise heterogeneous approaches regionalism activity in the area of South-eastern Europe have something in common, and that is a long time he had in mind the breadth and intensity of European integration and the importance of European structural funds and cross-border regional cooperation in economic development objectives. The ideas of regionalism are often the topic of scientific and political expensive, but very few discussed the reform of the state, which would include effective regionalization in which the nationality was only secondary importance in the process of regionalization.

The idea of regionalism and political circles today in some countries of Southeast Europe is regarded as a separatist and dangerous and as such can lead to the artificial creation of regional identity. As a result, the general public there is hostility toward regionalization. Countries do not have sufficient management capacity or developed legal and political culture, which means that the necessary training and education of the broader layers of society in order to properly understand these processes. Only then is the territorial decentralization will be treated in line with historical legacy, or in a context that is often disguised in the form of marks as a phenomenon of federalization or separatism. Socio-economic scene in South-eastern Europe today marks the unstable political system, the underdevelopment of civil society and poor transition macro management which further complicate the problems of ethnic and separatist phenomenon. This has resulted treating their territorial integrity.

South East Europe (except Croatia) have not to date implemented the key tasks in the process of market transformation in the presence of excessive state (cumbersome state apparatus assumes full responsibility that can not be effectively implemented), irresponsible state (public intervention restricts economic freedom) and the state of private interests (political elite and the privileged social strata use this state to realize its interests).

Besides all this, the geographic South Eastern Europe there is a desire to intensify cooperation with the EU which would secure external support for reconstruction and modernization of physical and social infrastructure and organization of multinational cooperation. To this end, in most countries crystallized the view that it is necessary to decentralize the country first in accordance with the NUTS system, then in accordance with policy options for these territorial units to give greater powers. This would lead area through the integration and European political and economic institutions and secure the opportunity to follow part of the prosperous world. In this way the problematic history of this part of Europe was overcome.

### **3. The contemporary processes of regionalization in some countries of South Eastern Europe**

Macro region South-eastern Europe, which occupies about 7% euro-area and about 6% of European population is politically, ethnically, economically and demographically very heterogeneous territory. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, here came the slow pace of transition, which, among other things, resulted in delay in the process of modernizing the economy and rising corruption, which is further worsened the economic situation and caused the poverty of much of the population.

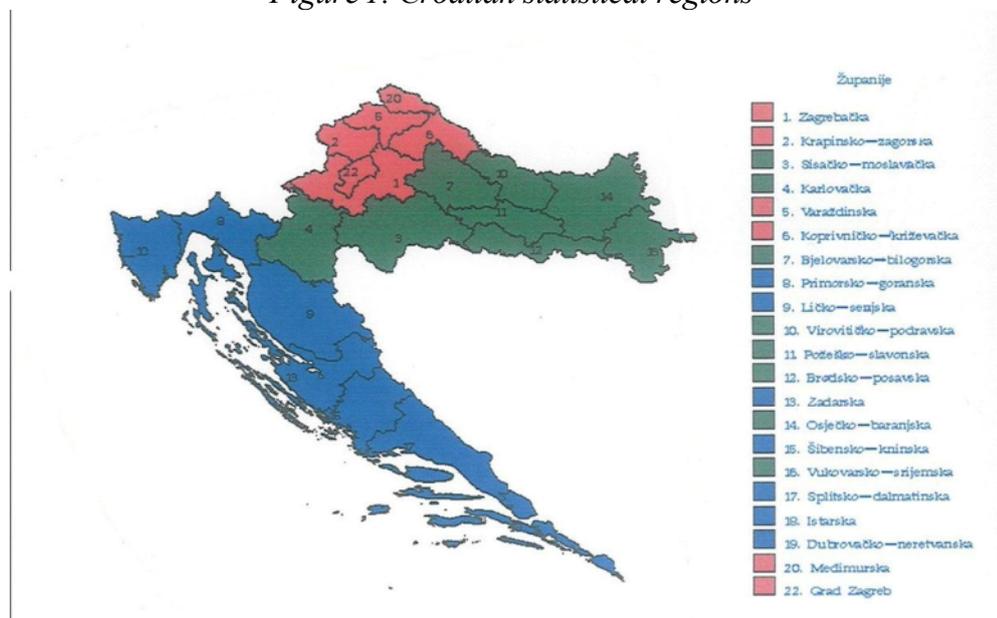
The main weakness of the modern economic system of South East Europe (with the exception of the Croatian in many criteria) can be briefly summarized as follows:

- Delay of systemic reform and unreliable institutional box
- Low GDP per capita growth due to low production of mainly uncompetitive products
- Limited interregional reform due to the production of the same or similar labour-intensive products
- Obsolete industrial capacity

- o Limited inflow of FDI
- o High unemployment rate, etc.

Analyzing the history of this region an economic-political analyst said that there is always a necessary protection of some big powers. According to him, it would be EU today, but not to protect, but the transform the geographic space.<sup>6</sup> One of the key priorities in this area is decentralization of the countries of South-eastern Europe. In this activity the most advanced is Croatia. She was previously decentralized into 21 administrative units, and since 2007 by grouping these units have been created three statistical regions (Eastern, Adriatic and North-western Croatia) for use in Europe, which shows the following picture:

Figure 1. Croatian statistical regions



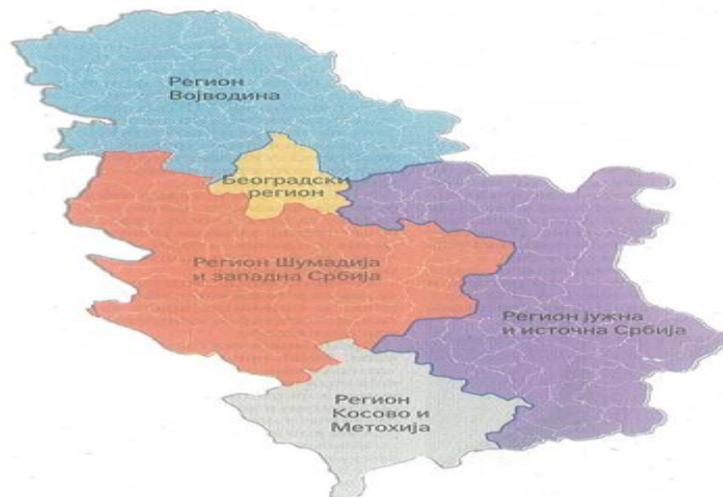
Source: *Ekonomski fakultet Split, Analiza varijanti NUTS 2 klasifikacije hrvatskog teritorija, Split, 2006, pg...*

These are the statistical regions that the EU recognizes and they do not have the self-governing character. Law on Regional Development of the Croatia from December 2009 have defined objectives and principles of management of regional development and implementation of regional development policy. Activities in regionalization in Croatia are still continuing and the internal (review of county) and on the Euro-regional level (participation in the creation of the Adriatic Euro-region ...).

<sup>6</sup>L. Qori, *Evropska Unija i Zapadni Balkan: Evropska perspektiva regiona*. HESPERAedu-Čigoja, Beograd, 2007, pg 78.

Unlike the Croatian, where is a very high degree of ethnic homogeneity (approximately 90% of the population are Croats), in Serbia (in spite of more immigration in the last two decades) the share of Serbs in the ethnic structure of the country is around 80%). Among other things, this is the reason why the presence of regional tensions, particularly after 2007, when they started discussing the formation of the region south of the Sava and Danube and intensified debate about the status of Vojvodina. According to official opinions (Secretary for Development) in the formation of Serbia's regions, in addition to the European statistical criteria should take into account the following: the geopolitical location, natural resources, the existing territorial organization, cultural and historical heritage.<sup>7</sup> With that in mind in Serbia was made following regionalization structure:

*Figure 2. The proposal for the regionalization of Serbia*



*Source: Politika, Beograd*

As we see in the picture, in the Serbian region is included Kosovo which officially exist as an independent state recognized by the United States and most EU members. The question of Kosovo and Vojvodina can be considered the basic problems in the regionalization of Serbia. On the status of Sandzak (inhabited predominantly Bosnian population) is much discussed and there was fear of provoking a political crisis. For these reasons, the key regional-development problems of Serbia remained aloof. Large regional discrepancies, failure enacted law on regional development strategies and national development, and secondly, show that Serbia is only on the beginning of time to become a regional state.

---

<sup>7</sup> [www.usz.gor.rs](http://www.usz.gor.rs) 10.6. 2009.

Regionalization of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European requirements is not yet even begun. It seems that representatives of all three constituent peoples who live here have a different opinion today. It is important to emphasize that the current administrative structure of the B&H, entities and cantons, is not appropriate to modern European standards of regionalization according to the NUTS system. One of opinions about regionalism in B&H can be seen in the following figure:

*Figure 3.- Proposal of B&H regionalization in four regions*  
*Slika 2. Prijedlog regionalizacije BiH na 4 regije*



Source: [www.zabih.ba](http://www.zabih.ba), 2002.

The establishment of regions, in addition activities in regionalization, could result in an influx of capital from European funds, the current reorganization of excessive government and creating conditions for more efficient use of regional resources. In addition, the newly formed region could be related through trans border cooperation with neighbouring countries and regions to use EU funds for these purposes. Although the current European regional initiatives in South Eastern Europe were not successful as the West European Union, since they are used primarily for the politicization of space in accordance with the needs of regional politicians, or for the purpose of rounding space near the border for the purpose of national homogenization, we can expect the change of situation any time soon.

## **Conclusion**

Regional problems in SEE countries are the basis of this research. Authors are limited due to the width of topics only on specific countries in the geo-space, not the setting in a detailed

analysis of their processes of regionalization. It is evident that the processes of regionalization and decentralization in the countries of Southeast Europe is in the early stages. How will they thrive depends on many factors, but most important is to form a European regional way of thinking, and that would give to the ethno-regionalism a different content.

## References

1. F. Tudman, Nacionalno pitanje u savremenoj Evropi, državnost nacija ključ mira Evrope, Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1990.
2. Foreign Affairs, March/April 2008.
3. G.V. Hamme, La géographie de l' Extrême droite pent'-elle s' expliquer par l' ethnocentrisme des territoires? Un analyse multiscalaire en Europe occidentale, Espace populations societes, No 3, 2008.
4. J.A. Balašev, Etnički separatizam i kriza evropske državnosti, NSPM, Beograd, 12. Maj 2009.
5. L. Qori , Evropska Unija i Zapadni Balkan: Evropska perspektiva regiona. HESPERAedu-Čigoja, Beograd, 2007.
6. The Gardian, London, 19.03. 2006.
7. [www.usz.gor.rs](http://www.usz.gor.rs) 10.6. 2009.
8. [www.zabih.ba](http://www.zabih.ba), 2002.