

Under the Radar? Mapping Local Agencies in Croatia

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Title **Under the Radar? Mapping Local Agencies in Croatia**

Abstract One of the most prominent features of public governance in the past decades has been a proliferation of the agency type public organisations. The rise of regulatory state and the spreading of the New Public Management practices from the 1980s have been both beneficial to the spreading of the agency type of public administration. Thus, public agencies have been established at the national, regional and local level in order to provide public services, to issue authoritative decisions on the rights or obligations of citizens and legal persons, to distribute public funds, to gather, analyse, and disseminate information, and similar. They are funded by public resources and accountable to the politicians. It is expected that they are more efficient than the core public administration, sufficiently independent to perform their public role, but at the same time that they are controlled through various accountability mechanisms, such as enhanced transparency. However, the intensive proliferation of agencies and their incompatibility with the traditional accountability mechanisms has raised concerns over lack of accountability and transparency and incentivised the introduction of practices aiming to enhance these values.

In the recent years, especially with the process of Europeanisation and introduction of managerial practices, the agencies have been mushrooming at the regional and local level in many CEE/SEE countries. However, the process of agencification at the local and regional level has been less explored compared to the national level. Moreover, local and regional agencies have been even less visible to and less scrutinised by the public.

This paper seeks to address the issue of agencification at local and regional level in Croatia. The main research questions the paper is about to explain are a) what is the quantity and what are qualitative features of the agencies at the local and regional level in Croatia, especially in relation to the issues of legal type, managerial practices, transparency and accountability; b) to what extent is the process of agencification related to the Europeanisation process.

The research will be conducted on the basis of the collection of

empirical data through various sources (online available documents, official statistical data, databases) and the legal analysis, combined with the questionnaire.

Keywords: agencies, local agencies, Europeanisation, local government, Croatia