

Foreword

UDK: 35.07(497.5)(042.3)

The autumn issue of *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration* brings together several important research topics that are explored in detail in the published articles. We are publishing six articles written by a total of 17 authors affiliated with universities from seven countries: the Netherlands, Chile, Armenia, Slovenia, Indonesia, Ukraine, and Croatia. In this way, this issue of the journal is truly international and comparative in its content, approach, and treatment of the analysed topics. The articles are, as usual, grouped into three sections.

This issue opens with the section Multi-level Governance and Local Civil Service, which contains two articles. Esteban Szmulewicz, Professor of Public Law at the Law School, Leiden University (the Netherlands), and the Catholic University of the North, Antofagasta (Chile), in his article *Challenges of Intergovernmental Relations in Non-Federal Countries: Reflections on the Management of the COVID-19 Crisis in the Netherlands*, addresses a topic that has been the subject of intense scientific analysis in recent years. Dealing with crises has become one of the central topics in the field of public administration, given the multiple crises faced by modern societies and their public administration systems. The author examines intergovernmental coordination mechanisms in a unitary country such as the Netherlands. He identifies a kind of transfer of authority to executive bodies at the expense of representative ones, as well as to ad hoc bodies created to deal more effectively with crisis management – in this particular case, the COVID-19 crisis. The second article in this section, *Improving the Competencies of Municipal Employees: The Case of Armenia*, was written by Svetlana Baghdasaryan, Arman Avetyan, and Goharik Martirosyan, teachers and researchers at two Armenian universities – Yerevan State University and the Russian-Armenian University (both in Yerevan, Armenia). The article explores the relationship between territorial reform of local self-government and the strengthening of local officials' capacities. Several

dimensions of capacity-building are analysed, especially considering the current gender imbalance and the need for greater inclusion of women in the local government system. The authors also highlight that “engagement with international programs and the adoption of innovative governance models are crucial steps towards more efficient, transparent, and responsive local government” – an important conclusion of their research.

The second section features two articles addressing an area that is becoming increasingly prominent in the scientific literature on public administration and related academic disciplines. The rapid development of information and communication technologies and artificial intelligence has brought unprecedented changes to nearly all aspects of public administration – from organizational structures and work-process optimization to the adaptation of skills and competencies of public servants, as well as the enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness across administrative systems. Professors and researchers from the Faculty of Administration, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) – Polonca Kovač, Matej Babšek, and Aleksandar Aristovnik – are the authors of the article *The Artificial Intelligence Act Between the EU and National Levels: The Slovenian Case Study*. Applying a multidisciplinary approach, they analyse the implementation challenges of this act in Slovenia. They identify key issues that can be grouped into three categories: gaps in awareness, institutional readiness, and administrative application. Slovenian experiences regarding the application of the AIA offer valuable insights that can serve other EU member states as practical guidelines on how to successfully implement the AIA and what challenges to avoid. The second article, *The Role of Electronic Records Management Systems in Enhancing Accountability in Educational Institutions: Evidence from Indonesian Senior High Schools*, was written by Nina Oktarina, Edy Suryanto, Dian Fithra Permana, and Ahmad Saeroji – teachers and researchers from the Faculty of Economics and Business, State University of Semarang (Indonesia), and the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Lambung Mangkurat University, Banjarmasin (Indonesia). The article analyses the application of digital technology in the administrative sector of secondary education. It examines the Electronic Records Management System in Indonesian high schools to determine its impact on efficiency and accountability. The authors identify significant improvements in document availability and completeness, as well as positive effects on accountability and transparency. However, they note that continued efforts are needed in employee training and periodic evaluation of the system to improve its implementation.

This issue concludes with the Public Law section, which contains two articles. Authors Mykhaylo Voznyk, Yaroslav Goloborodko, Vadym Vlad, Yurii Sevruck, and Katerina Rudoi – researchers from the National Defence University of Ukraine (Kyiv), the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (Kyiv), and Odesa State University of Internal Affairs (Odesa) – wrote the article *Reforming Military Law and Service in Ukraine: Lessons from the Military Police of Other Countries*. The article examines the organization and powers of military police forces in terms of investigating and prosecuting military-specific offenses. Based on a comparative analysis of military police systems in several countries, the authors provide recommendations for improving the functioning of the military police in Ukraine. The final article, *The Rights of Citizens in the Krbek's Doctrine of Administrative Law*, was written by Ivan Kosnica, Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. From a legal-historical perspective, the article analyses the work of one of the most influential Croatian administrative law scholars, Ivo Krbek. The author examines the development of Krbek's ideas on citizens' rights across three periods of his work: the interwar years, the Second World War, and the post-war period.

With this issue, we aim to contribute to the exchange of ideas among researchers from different administrative, political, and social environments, with the goal of building a common framework for understanding how public administration systems function around the world. In this way, we are building a community of scholars dedicated to the serious analysis of various aspects of public administration. Although contexts and circumstances differ, the research community shares a common denominator – the pursuit of legitimacy and the identification of trends in the development and functioning of public administration. We hope that this issue and the articles published in it make a meaningful contribution to building a global public administration community and to establishing the legitimacy of public administration systems worldwide.

Professor Vedran Đulabić
Editor-in-Chief