

## *Foreword and Farewell*

Two broad themes are represented in the last issue of our 21<sup>st</sup> volume, democracy and governance, and the agency model of public administration. Because it is the last one I am editing as editor-in-chief, it is, for me, a kind of farewell.

The first part of this issue deals with the relationship between democracy and governance and consists of three interesting and relevant papers.

Implementation and application of artificial intelligence in public services is analysed by Nikola Štefanišínová, Nikoleta Jakuš Muthová, Jana Štrangfeldová, and Katarina Šulajová from Slovakia. They present the examples of implementation of artificial intelligence techniques in health-care and social services and sketch the trends and challenges in the adoption of artificial intelligence techniques in public services. Although there are many benefits, such as the cost savings, improved visibility, reduced waiting times, increased speed, accuracy and efficiency and improved quality of service, there are also some significant limitations. The authors warn on the trap of overestimating the potential of artificial intelligence in delivering public services.

Adnan Karataş from Turkey evaluates the relationship between democracy and governance. Actually, he tests the theoretical Lipset/Aristotle hypothesis by applying the correlation and regression analyses of quantitative empirical data. Recent multi-year governance and democracy data from the World Bank (governance) and The Economist Intelligence Unit (democracy) of 165 countries have been included in the analysis. The author finds that the quality of governance has a significant and positive effect on the quality of democracy and confirms all his hypotheses and sub-hypotheses.

Velibor Mačkić and Filip Rusmir from Croatia analyse the implementation of austerity policy within the electoral cycle in a sample of eleven new

member states of the European Union (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania) in the period from 2004 to 2019. The paper provides a brief overview of austerity policy from the viewpoint of the two most dominant economic schools of thought: neoclassical and Keynesian. Their empirical results confirm incumbents' opportunistic behaviour during election years, but only in the years when the countries were not under the European Union Excessive Deficit Procedure. Once under the mechanism, the political budget cycle disappears.

The second block of papers deals with the agency model of public administration.

Islam Jusufi from Albania inspects the establishment, institutional design, results, and termination of the European Agency for Reconstruction, an agency that managed the European Union's aid to the Western Balkans from 2000 to 2008. The Agency was abolished in 2008 because of its successful functioning, as it had fulfilled its tasks, thereby eliminating the very need which composed its rationale.

Jelena Dujmović Bocka and Boris Bakota from Croatia analyse the role of agencies in creating administrative networks, thus applying the network approach in the area of higher education. This paper gives an overview of relevant actors whose interactions and roles resemble network-like relationships. To examine the starting hypothesis that neo-managerial approach leads to networking within the higher education system, an empirical study was conducted at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia among teaching staff and students. The final chapters of the paper present and discuss the research results which support the initial assumptions.

Bojan Morić Milovanović and Željka Tutić, also from Croatia, investigate the role of business incubators in providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises in the Republic of Croatia. Empirical data have been collected through a survey questionnaire on a sample of 34 business incubators and descriptive statistical analysis is used to provide a detailed description of the current state, characteristics and operations of business incubators in Croatia.

Before I conclude my introduction to this issue, I would like to present some facts and figures about the Croatian and Comparative Public Administration in order to summarise my term as the editor-in-chief.

I was appointed editor-in-chief by the Executive Board of the Croatian Institute of Public Administration in October 2005, after a two-year peri-

od of crisis, during which only one issue was published in spring 2005. My predecessor, Professor Dragan Medvedović, successfully edited the journal established in 1998 under the title *Croatian Public Administration*. The four volumes in the period 1999 – 2003 were full of valuable scholarly papers written by Croatian and international authors.

After stabilisation in 2006, further volumes were published regularly. My basic goals were strong internationalisation and the improvement of journal's quality. To achieve the first one, we have fostered the comparative approach, promoted the journal among the world's governance, public administration, law, public policy, organisation and political science communities, motivated international authors, engaged renowned reviewers from all over the world, attracted three excellent international editors from Australia, South Korea and Spain in our editorial team, and – last but not least – searched for papers in English, even when the authors have been from Croatia. To further emphasise our goal, we changed the journal's title into *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration* in 2011.

Quality has been promoted through improvements in the editorial process, by widening the list of the indexing and referencing bases that now include Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus, HeinOnline – Law Journal Library, and several others, thorough language editing, strong integrity policy, full and completely free open access, standardisation of the review process, and intensive communication between editors, the corresponding editorial board members, authors, and reviewers.

Today, the journal is published by the Croatian Institute of Public Administration and the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb with the financial support of the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. It is the founding member of the CEE Network of Public Administration and Policy Journals. All the papers can be downloaded fully and freely from the three websites, including Hrčak, the official portal of the Croatian scholarly journals.

During sixteen years of my editorship, we have published 410 reviewed scientific papers and about 800 other texts, including book reviews, conference and project information, and others, on about 13,000 pages. Almost 50 per cent of the paper authors are from abroad and slightly more than 50 per cent of papers are in English. Two thirds of our reviewers are from abroad. In Croatia, our journal has been accepted as the best quality paper source, in terms of the authors' scientific advancement. Our authors have been from all over the world, from Australia, Albania and Austria to Lithuania, Mexico and Norway to USA, Ukraine and Uruguay.

Lastly, as the editor-in-chief, I have had the pleasure to communicate with such great people as professors James G. March, Klaus H. Goetz, John Halligan, B. Guy Peters, Hellmut Wollmann, to name but few. My co-editors were Zoran Pičuljan, Vedran Đulabić, Romea Manojlović, Dario Čepo, Carmen Navarro, Jill Tao, Stephen Jones and Mihovil Škarica. There are many others who have deserved the credits and appreciation. I wish to sincerely thank all of mentioned and all those for whom this format does not allow space.

My work in the Croatian and Comparative Public Administration was interesting and exciting. I have learnt many lessons about accuracy, dedication, timelines, honesty, probity, creativity, astuteness, and integrity. My information and knowledge expanded in parallel with the network of scientists I have had the privilege to cooperate with.

I am emotional and proud at the end of this endeavour, wishing the Croatian and Comparative Public Administration to flourish in years to come. May my wishes come true.

At the end, I wish all of you a pleasant reading and a Happy New Year.

Professor Dr. Ivan Koprčić  
Editor-in-chief