

Foreword

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In this year's last issue of the Croatian and Comparative Public Administration journal, we are publishing a total of six scientific articles written by 10 authors. These articles are divided into two sections. Three articles that deal with the topics of administrative cooperation, budget transparency, and conflicts of interest are published in the first section, while the second section presents the three remaining articles, produced as part of the scientific project on public policy goals which we introduced in the previous issue.

In their article *Responding to the Conflict of Interest Risks in Central and Eastern Europe: Case of Slovenia*, professors Jernej Letnar Černič from the European Faculty of Law and Faculty of Government and European Studies, New University (Ljubljana and Kranj, Slovenia) and Polonca Kovač from the Faculty of Administration (Ljubljana, Slovenia) analyse the connection between the prohibition of conflict of interest and its influence on the rule of law. The analysis starts with theoretical and normative underpinnings of the prohibition of conflict of interest in Slovenian, European, and international frameworks, and goes on to examine the recent practice of administrative and judicial bodies concerning the prohibition of conflict of interest. Their main conclusion is that although the Slovenian legal framework has undergone a recent change in this segment, there is a potential but nevertheless real risk of conflict of interest that poses a threat to the realisation of the rule of law.

The second article in this section is dedicated to administrative cooperation and is entitled *Exchange of Information in Tax Matters: Experiences from Croatia and Slovenia*. It was written by Irena Klemenčič, assistant at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb (Croatia) and Maja Klun, professor at the Faculty of Public Administration in Ljubljana (Slovenia). The structure of the article is of a comparative nature and deals with the topic of administrative cooperation of tax authorities as a specific area of public adminis-

tration. The cases of Croatia and Slovenia are discussed in the context of European legislation that sets standards for increasing the transparency of the work of tax authorities with the aim of combating tax evasion. The two countries have different approaches regarding the topic under analysis. There is significant room for improving the implementation of the common European legal framework when it comes to the exchange of information between tax authorities as a specific form of administrative cooperation.

The final paper of the first section – *Impacts of Budget Transparency on Economic and Political Outcomes: A Review of Empirical Evidence* – is written by Simona Prijaković from the Institute of Public Finance in Zagreb. It considers the connection between budget transparency and social and economic development, especially at the level of subnational government. The conclusions of the papers are straightforward, according to which governments “with higher budget transparency are associated with better budget balance, credit ratings, budget estimation and forecasting, as well as with higher expenditures and revenues, underestimation of revenues and expenditures, lower borrowing costs, government debt, and inflation. ... Governments with higher levels of budget transparency are perceived as less corrupt, i.e. having better control of corruption, as well as higher government quality, effectiveness, and spending efficiency. Moreover, they have more popular governors and higher public participation.”

The remaining three articles produced as part of the scientific research project on public policy goals make up the second section.

In his paper *Coherence of Strategic Document Goals in Croatia: Education, Youth and Encouragement to Read*, Nikola Baketa from the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb deals with the specific policy field of youth policy. It analyses three strategic documents to determine the potential coherence of goals in a specific area. To a large extent, it also deals with the concept of coherence of strategic goals. The article identifies potential causes of the coherence of strategic goals and provides guidelines for similar future research.

The second article, entitled *Governance Priorities in Political Decision-Making: An Analysis of Process-Oriented Goals in Croatian Public Policies*, was written by Anka Kekez and Mario Munta, both assistant professors at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb (Croatia). The main goal of their paper is to describe and systemise different types of governance priorities in Croatia based on an analysis of 11 strategic documents dealing with very different public policies. They found out in their research that priori-

ties “... encompassed by Croatian policy documents are largely dominated by those focusing on operational governance, specifically by goals that aim to create the right conditions and operative procedures for improving policy implementation. Goals oriented toward the management of inter-organisational and interpersonal relations are also very common. Finally, a significant share of the goals relates to the efforts to lay the groundwork for designing new strategic or operative documents, as well as appeals to different levels of authority to follow through on already existing strategic documents.”

The last article in this section was written by assistant professor Borna Zgurić and associate professor Ana Petek, both from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb. In the article *Analysis of Croatian Security Policy Goals*, the authors first describe the goals of Croatian security policy, and then analyse them with regard to their transformation caused by global trends. In the article, they conducted an analysis of five strategic documents from the field of security policy and determined that security policy goals continue to be highly diversified. However, although the goals are in line with global trends, the article concludes that these goals are very poorly operationalised.

With the publication of this CCPA issue we have come to the end of another calendar year in which we have continued to successfully publish our journal. This past year has been marked by a steady and growing influx of new articles whose authors are showing an interest in being published in our journal. CCPA is becoming increasingly competitive with the tendency to publish even more interesting, relevant, and high-quality scientific articles in the coming year. Our goal will certainly be to speed up the review process in order to further reduce the time from submission to publication of individual articles, all with the aim of making them even more current and relevant to the scientific community and public administration researchers.

In the end, I would like to wish all the contributors of the CCPA journal, especially the editors, authors, reviewers, proof-readers, technical preparation and press, as well as all our readers, a peaceful holiday season and a happy and successful year ahead!

Professor Vedran Đulabić
Editor-in-Chief