

Foreword

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In the second issue of this year's journal, we publish six academic papers dealing with the topics of local self-government, public audit, and university policy and management.

The first section features two articles concerning local self-government. A group of authors including Ruslan Maksat, doctoral student from the Department of Political Science, L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (Astana), and Gulsara Kappasova, Meiramgul Altybasarova, Amergaly Begimtaev and Kymbat Belgibaeva, all from the Department of Social Sciences, Journalism and Information, Toraighyrov University (Pavlodar), in their article on *Enhancing Local Governance in Kazakhstan: Leveraging International Experience and Decentralisation*, address the recent development of local self-government and decentralisation in Kazakhstan. The article presents and analyses comparative experiences of the reform of certain elements of local self-government and decentralisation in Germany, Denmark and Finland, and the possibility of their application in the context of local self-government development and reform in Kazakhstan. The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that it shows the way comparative experiences travel from one administrative system to another, and the possibilities and obstacles to their successful implementation.

Bojan Dadasović, doctoral student from the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, in his article on *The Impact of the COVID-19 Epidemic on the Perception of the Quality of Municipal E-Services: The Case of The City of Rijeka*, presents the results of research on the perception of the quality of e-services in local self-government. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on public administration are still being felt, especially in view of the introduction of some new work methods. These primarily include the use of information and communication technologies in the work of public bodies. This article in particular examines satisfaction with e-services on

the example of the City of Rijeka, based on a survey questionnaire that included 362 users. The article shows which city e-services the citizens are more and less satisfied with, which can ultimately serve as a guideline for improvement not only in the specific analysed case but beyond, as the findings and conclusions could be somewhat generalised and used in other local self-government units as well.

The second section, dedicated to the topics of public auditing, focuses primarily on improving the management of public audit institutions. Maja Zaman Groff, Associate Professor at the School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and Alenka Krese from Krese business services published an article on *Auditing the Aggregated Balance Sheet of the Republic of Slovenia: Challenges from Auditor and Auditee Perspective*. The fundamental importance of this article is that it contributes to the development of public sector auditing research, both from the auditor and auditee perspective. The main research method employed in the article is analysis of audit reports on the aggregated balance sheet in order to determine the challenges on both sides of the analysed process.

The following article in this section is titled *Audit Activities of the Supreme Audit Offices in the V4 Countries: Comparative Analysis*, written by Lenka Hudáková Stašová from the Faculty of Economics, Technical University of Košice, Slovakia. The article is by its nature comparative and analyses the activities of Supreme Audit Offices in the so-called Visegrad Group countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary). Several elements of the activities of audit offices are compared, such as the number of audits performed, the volume of audit findings, the number of criminal reports filed, the number of recommendations issued by auditors, and the number of measures taken by audited entities. Although the analysed countries are somewhat similar in terms of history, culture and economy, there are also significant differences between them, especially with regard to the size and structure of the public sector, and the position and operation of the audit offices analysed.

The last section of this issue is dedicated to university management and policy with a specific focus on two topics, namely, analysis of the contents of journals in the field of public administration, and university law in Croatia. In the article titled *The Scope and Trends of Public Administration Publications from Selected Journals Between the Year 2000 and 2019*, its authors Murat Onder from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul (Türkiye) and Israel Nyaburi Nyadera from the National Defense University, Nakuru (Kenya) address an

interesting and important issue based on a longitudinal analysis of the content of journals in the field of public administration. Their research sample consists of 2,798 scientific articles published in five leading journals in Scopus and Web of Science databases. The article is significant because it establishes "... huge disparities in author contributions by region, gender, and profession, as well as in funding. These findings are important in the wake of increased globalisation and internationalisation of academic research".

The last article in this issue was written by Ksenija Grubišić from the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb. Under the title *Academic Freedom as a Regulatory Principle: Between the Idea and the Role of the University*, the author tackles the extremely important topic of academic freedom, which has been gaining in significance at a time of the penetration of managerial ideology into the university. With an increasing emphasis on obtaining funds for research and scientific work, good reputation of the university in the public eye, the increasing burden of administrative and similar tasks, and other similar pressures to which scholars are ever more exposed, the subject of academic freedom becomes extremely relevant. The question of politicisation of universities is also posed, which is especially relevant for transition countries where the university community is still fighting for a position that will be independent of inadequate political influence and dedicated to academic and scientific research and work. The article focuses predominantly on the Croatian academic environment and in this sense represents a case study suitable for drawing conclusions that may be applicable in other countries as well, primarily in the countries of southern and eastern Europe that are in the immediate neighbourhood.

Scientific work lives not only through a one-time reading of published articles with research insights, but also through its re-interpretation in other administrative and scientific contexts, as well as through quoting and grounded criticism of previously published scientific articles. In the hope that this issue will also enrich readers and bring fresh comparative experiences on various topics related to public administration, we submit it to the judgment of our readers and fellow scholars.

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Editor-in-Chief