Financial bureaucracies of Europe: Finance Officers’ Attitudes Regarding their Responsibilities and Roles

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Abstract: The broader goal of the paper is to explore one of the core questions in comparative research on public policy and administration: What is more important in influencing public officials’ attitudes towards policy-making – the distinctive administrative style of the country or the specific features of a policy sector? We are particularly interested in the attitudes of the public officials working in the field of finance regarding their policy-making roles. We zoom in on two questions: 1) Do the perceptions of financial officials regarding their responsibilities and roles in policy-making differ systematically from the perceptions of non-finance managers, and 2) Are finance officials influenced more by their professional group or by the administrative context in which they work? We address these questions using a survey of senior government officials in 19 European countries (7077 respondents), undertaken within the framework of the Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS) project – the largest comparative public management project undertaken in Europe to date. Overall, our results indicate that the national administrative traditions play a stronger role in influencing the policy-making attitudes of officials than their specific sector.

Keywords: administrative traditions, comparative public administration, public finance officers, fiscal bureaucracy