

The application of the concept of political advisor in Croatia: legal, professional and political features

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Abstract: The traditional image of public administration has been based on concepts of neutral, ethical and professional public service which serves political executives ensuring the expert advice on policy making and the implementation of policy. In ministries the departments and especially senior civil servants were expected to offer a neutral and expert advice to the minister and in turn were guaranteed that their professional position is safeguarded despite the change of government. With the changing role of public administration, especially in the period of post NPM reforms, the civil servants' neutrality as well as their role has been challenged and the politicisation of the system has been detected as an underlying process. The concentration of power in the centre has been detected, with greater role of the prime minister's office, and greater role of partisanship for ensuring the advice to the leaders. The political advisors are considered to be an instrument to strengthen the political leadership and the role of (prime)ministers towards civil service. This in turn accentuated the problems of professionalism as well as the political accountability. The paper will try to cast a light on the issue of politico-administrative nexus in CEE/SEE countries, based on the analysis of the political advisors in Croatia. The case study of political advisors in Croatia is based on the methods of questionnaire and interviews combined with desktop research as the methods of collection of data, applied on distinctive populations of political advisors (governments from 2015 onwards). The research of political advisors, as the first research on this topic in Croatia, will give an insight in the changing patterns of governance in CEE/SEE countries and political advisors in general. The focus is on legal, professional and political framework of the policy advisor concept as applied in Croatia.