

Senior civil servants across meritocracy and political appointments: The case of directors of agencies in Slovakia between 2003-2024

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Abstract: The research investigates career paths of top civil servants as heads of agencies in Slovakia. Based on past research proving tendency of politicians to use political appointments in agencies to regain control over them, and considering the context of highly politicized CEE country, we expect to further observe patronage practices. Research is testing this assumption on the basis of comparisons across changes in government, changes in personal leadership of the Ministry, as well as formal legislative changes that were taking place during the period of our focus. that took place in 2015, transforming them from meritocratic recruitments to political nominees. Research is based on an original data set consisting of career background of all heads of labour offices agencies that held office in the period 2010-2023, focusing on managerial, professional and political experience before and after the changes have occurred. Therefore, the research has the potential to contribute the debate on patronage and politicization on agency level in CEE countries as well as on the professional characteristics of civil servants between different types of recruitment.