

# Politicisation of the civil service in the Western Balkans: Learning from the Global South?

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**Abstract:** The relation between politics and administration including the politicisation of the civil service belongs to the traditional core themes of the study of comparative public administration. The Western Balkans comprise Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. They are located in South East Europe and seek accession to the European Union. Evaluations by international organisations such as the European Commission and the OECD regularly criticise rampant politicisation at all levels of the civil service. However, there are only very few academic studies that compare civil service politicisation across countries of the region. This is an important omission, which this paper addresses by (1) examining politicisation at the level of formal institutions, (2) presenting data from a survey of civil servants in the region to capture politicisation practices across civil service ranks and, crucially, state institutions, and (3) exploring domestic and international determinants of variation in civil service politicisation. The conclusion discusses civil service politicisation in the Western Balkans in a wider international context comparing to both EU member states and the Global South as a reference point that may have been under-appreciated thus far.