



Public administration characteristics and performance in EU28:

Croatia

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1 SIZE OF GOVERNMENT

The share of the Croatian government's expenditure in the country's GDP is gradually decreasing, from 47.47% in 2010 to 46.89% in 2015. Despite this, Croatia's rank in the EU-28 was higher in 2015 than in 2010 as other Member States achieved a more favourable share. This explains Croatia's move from 15th to 12th place on the list. Being in the group of more centralised countries in Europe, Croatia has a relatively high central government share in general government expenditure. This declined slightly in the 2010-2015 period from 67.66% to 66.93%. The local government share of all municipalities (*općine*), towns (*gradovi*), and counties (*županije*) is about a quarter of the general government share. Additionally, the individual revenues of subnational authorities are about 19.5% indicating that a high share of their revenues comes from grants, half of them being granted from the central budget (Bakula 2016, p. 7).

Table 1: General government budget data

CROATIA	2010	EU 28 Rank	2015	EU 28 Rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Total expenditures (in % GDP)	47.47	15	46.89	12	-0.58	+3
Central government share (%)	67.66	13	66.93	16	-0.73	-3
State government share (%)						
Local government share (%)	24.72		25.46			
Public investment (in % GDP)	3.61	20	3.18	19	-0.43	+1
Debt in % GDP	58.31	20	86.74	15	+28.43	+5
Deficit in % GDP	-6.2	17	-3.3	20	+2.9	-3

Sources: AMECO, Eurostat

Although not much has been achieved recently in the public-sector reforms, the general government budget deficit decreased from -6.2% in 2010 to -3.3% of GDP in 2015. Several smaller-scale attempts to control the size of government might have had some impact despite their formalistic nature. No evaluation with clear quantitative indicators has taken place.

In the same period, the debt grew significantly from 58.31% in 2010 to 86.74% of GDP in 2015. To contextualise this indicator, it is important to mention that Croatia was hit by the six-year recession (2009-2014) with GDP decreasing by 12.5% (EC 2016, p. 5; WB 2016, p. 6). The economy started to recover late in 2014, with 1.8% GDP expansion in 2015, and positive expectations in the subsequent years.

The government's debt level has been constantly and significantly increasing from the beginning of the financial crisis; in 2008 it was at just 38.9% of GDP. During the five-year period (2010-2015), the public investment rate declined slightly, from 3.61% to 3.18%.

Croatia has a relatively large and resilient public administration. About 293 000 employees or approximately 18% of the work force is employed by the state (WB, 2016: 43-44). The number of public employees has not changed much despite certain government measures in that regard. Although the government announced reform measures during the period of financial crisis a significant decrease in their total number has not been achieved. Several intended measures for downsizing the public sector have been stopped or have not had a significant effect.

Public sector employment*

Croatian national statistics provide neither full nor structured information about public sector employment. No data in full-time equivalents are available at all. Data are available for state administration, including state civil servants and employees paid from the state budget; local civil servants and employees paid from local budgets; and public servants and employees in the public services paid from the state budget. However, such data are only occasionally published by the Ministry of Public Administration, starting with data for 2015 (Ministarstvo 2016).

The data published by the Ministry do not contain figures for public funds and agencies whose employees are not paid from the state budget. Because of this, the number of public employees in them may be established only by the method of approximation based on older data (for public funds, see data presented in Bejaković, 2014, with data for 2008). The data about employment in the army, the police, and the intelligence services are not available from national statistics or any other official source, but are easily accessible from other public sources (reports, ministers' statements to the media, etc.).¹ The data for the army and the police include only professional officers and soldiers and police officers but no other categories of employees working in those services. Furthermore, the number of paid state officials has to be added from a separate registry. There are no publicly available, recent and reliable data about public servants and employees in local public and social services paid from the local budgets. An approximation is possible only based on the data from older literature (situation in 2011; see Franić 2012). Local executive officials who are fully paid from local budgets are added from the data which are also not publicly available.

The data on employees in social security, employment services, schools, universities, and hospitals are not reliable, since the categories in a publicly-available report (Ministarstvo 2016) only partly coincide. Moreover, local governments and counties employ a certain number of such employees (the total of about 26 500), but not in identical categories. According to Croatian legislation, there are some additional categories within public services, encompassing employed personnel of public institutions in culture, environment protection, and some other areas (both centrally and locally financed). For this reason, the figures extracted from the report of the Ministry of Public Administration with the situation at the end of 2015, which for the mentioned reasons might serve only indicatively, are presented in brackets. However, public employment in core public administration is calculated from reliable and publicly available data.

Even if the presented data are considered with reasonable caution, they clearly show – even better than budgetary data – how centralised Croatia really is and how poor the local personnel and organisational capacities are. Our calculation shows that there are more than 10% more personnel employed in the Croatian public administration than the World Bank data indicated for 2014 (WB 2016 states 293 000 public employees). More than 18% of the work force is employed in the Croatian public administration.

¹ For example: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/stvarno-stanje-u-hrvatskoj-vojsci-i-moze-li-obvezno-sluzenje-vojnog-roka-rijesiti-nase-probleme-situacija-u-mornarici-i-zrakoplovstvu-je-kriticna/5592319/>, <http://www.narodni-list.hr/posts/113925002>, <http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/za-tajnu-sluzbu-radi-1000-agenata-a-dousnike-traze-svuda-okolo-nas-468893>

Table 2: Public sector employment

CROATIA	2015#
(1) General government employment*	317 075
• share of central government (%)	87.1%
• share of state/regional government (%)	-
• share of local government (%)	12.9%
(2) Public employment in social security roles	(10 345)
(3) Public employment in the army	14 465
(4) Public employment in the police	20 703
(5) Public employment in employment services	(1 332)
(6) Public employment in schools	(66 532)
(7) Public employment in universities	(17 450)
(8) Public employment in hospitals	(63 015)
(9) Public employment in core public administration**	75 183
(10) Core public administration employment in % of general government employment (9)/(1)	23.7%

Sources: *Ministarstvo 2016; author's approximations based on Franić 2012 and Bejaković 2014, other publicly available sources and registries. Two registries of centrally and locally employed public personnel which have been established by the Financial Agency and the Ministry of Finances are not publicly available. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics does not have structured information about categories of public employment used in this table.*

*According to the OECD, general government employment excludes public corporations.

See explanation in the text.

** Data comprises the following categories: a) state servants and employees (situation on 31 December 2015; *Ministarstvo 2016*), b) state officials (*Register of State Officials*, https://www.sukobinteresa.hr/hr/registar-duznosnika?contact_name=&field_naziv_duznosti_value=&field_tip_duznosti_value_i18n=primarn_a&contact_name_1=&field_active_value_i18n=1&page=12; retrieved on 24 April 2017), c) local servants and employees (situation on 31 December 2015; *Ministarstvo 2016*).

2 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

2.1 State system and multi-level governance

2.1.1 The state/government system

Croatia is a unitary state (Constitution, Art. 1) with three governance levels: national, mezzo (20 counties as the second-tier governments called *županija*) and local levels (428 municipalities and 128 towns, 17 of which have the special status of large towns). The total number of local governments is 576 (counties included). The Croatian capital, the City of Zagreb (790 017 inhabitants), has a special status, having the competences of both the town and the county, and – unlike other local governments – a significant role in performing delegated state administrative tasks on its territory. The role of local

governments is not particularly strong because of their weak own economic and fiscal bases. Almost 51% of local governments have fewer than 3 000 inhabitants, and an additional 20% fewer than 5 000 inhabitants. The only exceptions from the generally low capacities are the large towns. Voluntary mergers of local governments were regulated as late as in 2015, but without incentives. No cases of amalgamation have been recorded. There are also some 4 300 territorial committees² and other forms of intra-municipal decentralisation with legal personality, but without guaranteed scope of affairs, powers and own resources. Croatia is also divided into two statistical regions (Continental Croatia and Adriatic Croatia) for regional development purposes according to the EU NUTS rules.

At the beginning of the 1990s (1990-1993), Croatia gained independence but continued to function within the institutional framework inherited from the socialist period, with only two governance levels, national and local. There were only 102 local governments with substantial responsibilities of providing a wide range of public services. In the 1993 reform, Croatia multiplied the number of local governments by five, from 102 to 510. The key role in the new system was given to the county level, as a supervisory and decreeing middle level.

The constitutional amendments of 2000 guaranteed the transfer of many public responsibilities to local governments and counties. The counties were redefined as 'territorial (regional) governments'. Functional decentralisation started in 2001 but this concerned only 33 major towns (6% of local governments) and counties, without real financial decentralisation. The lines of subordination of local governments to the central bodies were cut. The right to local self-government, general clause for local competence, and the principle of subsidiarity were constitutionally provided for. Territorial fragmentation was stopped only after 2006, after establishing the last six municipalities. There was no further decentralisation. The territorial structure became an issue of public debate after the beginning of the severe recession. The issues raised regarded among other things the inequality of citizens with regard to range and quality of local services because of vastly different local capacities. Statistical regions have neither a constitutional role nor autonomy.

Table 3: Territorial fragmentation process in Croatia 1991-2017

Type \ Year	Communes	Municipalities	Towns	Counties, The City of Zagreb, Autonomous districts (Knin, Glina)	Total	Chain Index ³
1991	101	-	1	-	102	-
1993	-	418	69	20+1+2	510	500
1998	-	420	122	20+1	563	110
2003	-	423	123	20+1	567	101
2006	-	429	126	20+1	576	102
2017	-	428	127	20+1	576	100

Source: Own calculation

² Territorial committees are defined as 'forms of participation of citizens', not as governments. They do not have any constitutional role in delivery of services or decision-making power. They may discuss and send their opinions to mayors and councils. They do not have any resources and they usually do not receive any money from local budgets, except in some large towns; but even there they may only decide about very small amounts of money under the strict control of the local administration.

³ See for example http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Chain_index

2.1.2. The distribution of powers between different levels of government

No exhaustive list of central government powers exists, although certain powers are granted to the central bodies by the Constitution. The legislative power may not be divided and is held fully by the Croatian Parliament. Other powers, such as national security, military and defence, may be also considered as exclusively central by methods of constitutional and legal interpretation. Aside from the Parliament, the President of the Republic, the Government, the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and other bodies of judiciary and public prosecution, the Croatian Constitution delineates the powers of the Ombudsperson and other parliamentary commissioners for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Croatian National Bank and the State Audit Office.

Guaranteed local scope encompasses 'affairs related to the organisation of localities and housing, zoning and urban planning, public utilities, child care, social welfare, primary health services, education and primary schools, culture, physical education and sports, customer protection, protection and improvement of the environment, fire protection and civil defence'. Counties have powers with regard to 'affairs related to education, public health, zoning and urban planning, economic development, transportation and transportation infrastructure and the development of the network of educational, health, social and cultural institutions' (Art. 135 of the Constitution).

Despite the constitutionally-guaranteed scope of local governments and counties, the role of local governments in performing public tasks is considerably limited. The list of public tasks, performed by local governments, deviates from the constitutional provisions, indicating a sort of unconstitutional situation (Koprić 2014). Moreover, local governments lack effective legal instruments to influence and challenge the Government's legislative policy. As a result, many public powers are overlapping, attributed to counties, central bodies, funds, agencies and institutions, or granted to civil society and private organisations.

There are several reasons for this, other than the basically centralistic orientation of the Croatian Constitution. Firstly, legislation significantly broadens central state powers using the constitutionally-provided possibility that public authority may be granted to various 'other bodies'. In reality, such a possibility has been used for vesting various public bodies and institutions with public authority, which effectively narrows local powers. This is, for example, a legal base for establishing public agencies and other bodies, as well as for granting public authority (*javna ovlast*) to various civil society, professional, and private organisations.⁴ Secondly, there is a sort of anti-local resentment, connected with the constitutional principle of citizens' equality before public bodies, and based on the shared conviction that the vast majority of local governments are self-preserving public institutions characterised by a rather low capacity for resolving real societal problems. Such resentment has been widespread not only among political

⁴ There were 25 professional chambers in 2012 with public authority granted by law (such as the Croatian Chamber of Health Professionals, the Croatian Chamber of Architects, the Croatian Chamber of Civil Engineers, etc.; Musa & Džinić 2012). Similarly, public authority in education of drivers has been granted to the Croatian Automobile Club, which is an association of citizens. The Register of Bodies with Public Authorities currently lists 795 associations of citizens (<http://tjv.pristupinfo.hr/?status=8&sort=1&page=40>). Moreover, there is a well-known example of the Vehicle Center of Croatia, which is a private company to which the public authority of vehicle technical examination and inspection has been granted (see at <https://www.cvh.hr/company-profile>; the company has a monopoly in this sector). There are 887 companies listed in the Register of Bodies with Public Authorities, but it is not possible to establish the shares of private and public companies (<http://tjv.pristupinfo.hr/?status=7&sort=1&page=45>).

elites but even more so among the general public. Thirdly, there is a real lack of local financial, personnel, and organisational capacities, which has caused adaptive displacement of public powers regardless of the constitutional provisions.

Finally, many central bodies, institutions, funds, and agencies have their deconcentrated networks of branch offices throughout the state territory. There are 1 279 branch offices of various ministries and other central state administration bodies. In addition, state administration comprises a network of 20 first-line offices of state administration at the county level (one for the territory of each county) with headquarters in 20 county seats, 91 deconcentrated offices and 302 registry offices in smaller towns and municipalities. These first-line bodies fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Administration. The number of branch offices of public funds, institutions, and agencies is unknown. Such hypertrophied and overlapping networks of branch offices result in about 15-30 of them in towns throughout Croatia, limiting the possibility of integrated administrative service provision and e-government development and truncating the space for integrated management of local autonomous affairs.

Although large towns and counties have moderately benefited from such an institutional game, it seems that the real winners are central bodies and various non-governmental organisations and subjects (liberal professionals, professional associations and chambers, civil society organisations, private organisations and entrepreneurs). Public governments have mainly retained general accountability for service quality, affordability, price regulation, etc. in cases when professional and citizens associations, chambers, and private subjects are granted with public authority. All the elements presented above prove the enormous fragmentation of public administration, not only in territorial but also in organisational terms.

Government level:	Legislation	Regulation	Funding	Provision
Central government				
Defence, army & national security	+	+	+	+
External affairs	+	+	+	+
Internal affairs & police	+	+	+	+
Justice incl. courts and prisons	+	+	+	+
Finance incl. tax and customs	+	+	+	+
Economic affairs & management of state assets	+	+	+	+
Agriculture	+	+	+	+
Regional development & regional policy	+	+	+	+
Environmental protection	+	+	+	+
Water policy & management	+	+	+	+
Energy & electricity	+	+	+	+
Public transport (incl. railways, air traffic, sea and river traffic, highways)	+	+	+	+
Science, universities & research	+	+	+	+
Education	+	Shared with	+	Shared with

		counties and large towns		counties and large towns
Social policy, youth, pensions	+	+	+	Shared to a limited degree with counties and towns
Health	+	Shared with counties	+	Shared with counties and large towns
Culture	+	Shared with counties and local governments	Shared with counties and local governments	Shared with counties and local governments
Spatial planning, Land Registry Office (cadastre)	+	Shared with counties and local governments	Shared with counties and local governments	Shared with counties and local governments
Counties				
Social welfare centres	Basic legislation by the State	+	+	Shared with large towns
County roads	Basic legislation by the State	+	+	Shared with large towns
County hospitals	Basic legislation by the State	+	Shared with the State	Shared with large towns
Primary health care	Basic legislation by the State	+	+	+
Primary and secondary schools	Basic legislation by the State	+	Shared with the State	Shared with large towns
Economic development & tourism	Counties' strategic plans	+	+	+
Spatial planning	Basic legislation by the State	+	+	+
Local government				
Water supply and drainage	Basic legislation by the State	+	+	+ (obligatory cooperation of local governments)
Communal utilities (incl. local roads & transport, cemeteries, lighting, parks, etc.)	Basic legislation by the State & local decisions	+	+	+
Spatial & urban planning	Basic legislation by the State	Local zoning and urban plans	+	+
Environmental protection (local aspects only)	Local decisions	+	+	+
Nursery schools & pre-schools	Basic legislation by the State & local decisions	+	+	+
Sports & recreation	Local decisions	+	+	+
Civil defence & fire services	Basic legislation by the State	Shared with the State	Shared with the State	Shared with the State
Local culture	Local decisions	+	+	+

2.1.3. Intergovernmental cooperation

Institutional development after 1990 has clearly put stress on the central government powers and capacity. The first basis for such a development was found in the need to establish many new institutions and bodies of the newly independent state at the beginning of 1990. That was followed by a need to manage the huge problems and

losses caused by the war. That is why decentralisation only came onto the agenda at the beginning of the 2000s. However, the long and exhausting process of accession to the European Union and need for coordinating and supporting the absorption of EU funds redirected efforts to raise capacities of the central level yet again.

The significance of local governments in providing public services is relatively low, except in the case of the largest towns. The City of Zagreb is economically the strongest and the most prosperous local government with the best organisational, financial and personnel capacities among local governments due to its particular position and legal framework which is not really comparable to that of other local governments. The situation of local governments is caused by limited space for local autonomy and rather scarce local resources. Poor capacities were one of the main reasons why the vast majority of local governments did not have a minimum capacity for taking over their constitutionally-guaranteed powers at the beginning of the 2000s. In addition, the proliferation of public agencies during the subsequent Europeanisation phase significantly narrowed the scope for local activities and developing their capacities.

Counties were relatively weak after the 2000/2001 reform, with poor financial and personnel capacities. However, having been chosen as the second-best option for organising decentralised functions in social welfare, health, and education they have slowly but continually built their personnel capacities and regained some strength and importance. Since they did not have their own resources for funding functions and services taken over at the beginning of the 2000s, they have relied on the central grants and centrally-managed resources for decentralised functions (state budget provides about 60% of their resources; expenditure for decentralised functions has increased by 53% in the period 2001-2016, see Jambrač 2016).

The result of all these processes and circumstances is an overdeveloped machinery of central government accompanied by the robust sector of centrally-established public agencies and weak and fragmented local governments. The counties have played the role of an obedient agent of central policies and intermediary in organising centrally-led and financed health, education, and social welfare services. They easily overpower small municipalities and smaller towns, which have to cooperate with county bodies in order to get their financial, institutional, and political support and protection.

Cases of cooperation between counties are rare, even where they have common borders and function in the same regional space. Cooperation between small municipalities and towns is fairly weak or even non-existent, while horizontal cooperation between local governments is significantly more frequent with regard to larger and economically more developed local governments with better capacities. Intermunicipal cooperation is significantly rarer in the population of state-assisted local governments (Škarica 2015). Cooperation between deconcentrated offices of state administration and local governments is very weak, preventing the good local management of autonomous municipal and urban tasks. The spirit of centralism is ubiquitous.

2.1.4. Multilevel governance and public-sector reform

Certain efforts to foster multilevel cooperation and modernisation of public administration can be observed. Urban agglomerations around Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek, urban areas around Zadar, Slavonski Brod and Pula, local action groups (LAGs)

and the participation in European groupings of territorial cooperation are among new instruments of intermunicipal and multilevel cooperation connected with the EU funding.⁵ Some of the Croatian local governments participate in European transfrontier cooperation. Strategic planning of economic development on their territory is an example of good cooperation among local governments and counties: all counties have prepared their strategic development plans in cooperation with local governments which function in their territories.

Since counties are too small and financially weak, they are not able to manage regional development, although this is one of their main constitutional tasks. Support for regional development is centralised, with the Ministry of Regional Development and the central Agency of Regional Development as the main institutions. Many ministries and other central bodies tend to use counties as the mechanism for ensuring effective vertical information and reporting flow to and from local governments, and as partners in the implementation of state administrative tasks. The role of counties in the organisation of decentralised roles has increased their importance in the Croatian governance system.

Despite their small size, counties have been able to take over the organisation and provision of many local public and social services, except in the territory of larger towns, supplementing and replacing local governments with weak capacities. However, these arrangements are only informal and such a provision of local services is rather scant and precarious, leaving many citizens without access to basic local services and causing further demographic and other consequences.

Local governments generally have a weak position in their relations with the central bodies, despite the constitutionally-recognised status of local self-government and some mechanisms of legal protection. The upper chamber of the Croatian Parliament, the Chamber of Counties, was abolished in 2000 as it was not seen as a proper promoter of local interests but as the mechanism for the protection of the interests of counties' politicians. The Committee for Local Self-Government has been the forum for discussing legislation connected with local interests and the interests of local governments. Its weak position has been supplemented by the possibility of the accumulation of mandates at the local and central levels. A significant number of mayors and councillors are also Members of Parliament. This informal interest network has been able to thwart many legislative initiatives at central level.

In addition, there are three associations of local governments which promote their interests and serve as the focal points of their cooperation (Association of Municipalities, 283 associated municipalities out of 428; Association of Towns, 121 out of 128 towns; Croatian County Association, all 20 counties and the City of Zagreb are members). Lastly, there are examples of cooperation in agenda setting and reform planning, such as the participation of representatives of local governments in the Partnership for Open Government Council or in the Government's Decentralisation Commission.

The real power lies at the level of the ministries, with a strong influence and coordination being provided by the Prime Minister solely in urgent cases and for the most important issues. Territorially speaking, the implementation of central policies is under the full

⁵ Seven urban agglomerations and areas encompass 29 towns and 75 municipalities (104 local governments), 56 LAGs include 121 towns and 410 municipalities (531 local governments), 14 FLAGs (Fisheries LAGs) include 94 local governments in coastal zone, while seven Croatian local governments (two municipalities and five counties) participated in EGTCs.

control of ministries and other central bodies. Public agencies play an important role in that regard, with independent regulators whose power has been gradually increasing based on their important role in the regulation of network industries, control, licencing, and other powers.

State structure (federal - unitary) (coordinated – fragmented)	Executive government (consensus – intermediate – majoritarian)	Minister-mandarin relations (separate – shared) (politicised – depoliticised)	Implementation (centralised - decentralised)
Unitary - fragmented	Majoritarian	Separate – politicised	Centralised

2.2 Structure of executive government (central government level)

2.2.1. The core administration at the central level

According to the State Administration Act (2011), there are two levels and four types of state administrative bodies. At the central level, the Act lists 20 ministries, five 'central state offices', and seven 'state administrative organisations'. 'The central state offices', headed by the state secretaries, formally serve as a tool for improving the Government's efficiency but in reality they do not function as parts of the Centre of Government.⁶ The difference between the ministries and state administrative organisations lies in their political importance and political influence, as the ministers are members of the Government and the heads (*ravnatelj*) of 'state administrative organisations' (*državne upravne organizacije*) are not. This category includes the State Geodetic Administration, the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, etc. Ministers make decisions at the Government's meetings presided over by the Prime Minister. State secretaries of the central state offices and heads of the state administrative 'organisations are appointed by the Government. They may be present at the Government's meetings but are not allowed to vote. The total number of central state administrative bodies is 32.⁷

There is no clear distinction between different types of organisations at the central level, neither in systemic legal regulation nor in practice. All three types of organisations – ministries, central state offices and state administrative organisations – have similar types of competences, including public policies, drafting legislation, administrative supervision, etc. In practice, the making of decisions about the number of types, the number of organisations and their classification with regard to the types is predominantly a political matter. Ministries employ the vast majority of state servants and employees, 43 427 (2 171 on average). State administrative organisations are smaller, employing 2 834 of them (405 on average), while central state offices are relatively small organisations with a total of 281 state civil servants and employees (56 on average).

Beside ministers, state secretaries and 'assistant ministers' are politically-appointed state officials with a coordinative role within the ministries. More than one state secretary is usually appointed in each ministry. In practice, they serve in close collaboration with the ministers. 'Assistant ministers' head the administrative organisations within ministries and are responsible for some of the tasks that fall under

⁶ There are the following central state offices: for sports, for development of digital society, for central public procurement, for reconstruction and housing, and for Croats living abroad.

⁷ The smallest total number of central state bodies was 23 (in 2003), while the largest number fluctuates between 30 and 35.

the responsibility of the ministry. However, their managerial autonomy is almost non-existent because ministers and state secretaries have the dominant role in managing ministries.

There is a legal base and widespread practice of establishing 'administrative organisations' within the ministries and 'central state offices'. One type of such 'organisations within organisations' has been established and regulated by special laws, such as the Law on Tax Administration, the Law on the Police, the Law on the Financial Police, etc. Another type has been established by the Government's decrees on internal organisation of the ministries and 'central state offices'. Standard types of administrative organisations within the ministries include administrations, committees, and directorates. 'Sectors' can be established within central state offices as the 'administrative organisations within the central state offices'.

In practice, these 'organisations within organisations' function as purely internal organisational units within administrative bodies, except for those that have been established by special laws – they are much larger, and have greater importance and a higher level of autonomy in the implementation of policies and regulations. When theoretical criteria apply (Verhoest et al. 2012), some 25 type-1 agencies (administrative organisations without legal personality but with a certain degree of managerial autonomy) can be identified within the Croatian state administrative system (Government's offices and professional services, administrative organisations within ministries and central state offices, central state offices, and state administrative organisations).

There are many other bodies at the central level, such as executive and expert agencies, independent regulatory bodies, public funds, other public bodies and legal entities with public competences. All of them may be subsumed under the term public agencies. Some of the agencies have this term in their official name ('agency for ...'), while others have terms like institute, fund, office, centre, bureau, etc. in their titles. The process of agencification was at its peak in 2009 when 87 public agencies were identified. In the 2010-2012 period, 19 agencies and similar bodies were abolished, but seven new ones were established (Musa & Koprić 2011; Musa 2014).⁸ Currently, there are 86 agencies.

Great complexity, diversity, and a lack of common standards characterise the Croatian agency sector. Croatia experienced a mushrooming of public agencies during the Europeanisation phase.⁹ There were also other problems alongside this mushrooming such as coordination with other parts of the public sector, poor management and

⁸ The Ministry of Public Administration collected information about public agencies and other more autonomous bodies (MABs; comp. Pollitt, 2004; Musa, 2014) in 2012 and 2015 on survey basis, trying to institute the process of further de-agencification and rationalisation of public administration. Although both rounds of data collection suffered from theoretical and methodological inconsistencies, they gave additional insight into the agency model of public administration in Croatia. In the first round, the Ministry succeeded in collecting data from 173 and in the second round from 176 agencies and other bodies. However, the results of the rationalisation process are rather modest, because of bureaucratic resistance, weak implementation of the Government's decision, and political contingencies.

⁹ Formal institutional requirements during the EU accession process are widely recognized. An empirical research shows that 70% of public agencies at the national level were established in the period after 2001 (Musa 2014, pp. 494-496), which coincided with the formal Europeanisation process since in 2001 Croatia signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. That agreement was the first formal contractual step in institutionalising the relationship of Croatia with the EU. More than half of public agencies (56%) were established because of Europeanisation, i.e. 35% of them for satisfying the formal EU requirements and additional 21% for adaptation and institutional capacities. In the mentioned research, as many as 64.5% of a survey respondents reported that there the EU influences organisation and functions of their agencies (Musa 2014: p. 524).

functioning, wastefulness, poor relationships with citizens and society, the influence of politics, a lack of transparency, etc. Agencies function in a legal grey area, with great institutional and organisational obscurity (see Musa, 2013). The Ministry is currently preparing a draft law on public agencies, which if adopted will regulate the specifics of this type of public organisation for the first time in Croatia. Its purpose is to impose transparency and accountability in their functioning, to ensure better performance management and focus on results, to protect the autonomy of independent regulators, to regulate clear competences for their establishment, etc. It is expected that the draft will have entered the formal procedure by summer 2017.

2.2.2. The Centre of Government's coordination capacity

The Head of Government is the Prime Minister and the Government further comprises the Deputy Heads of Government and Ministers elected by the Parliament to which they are accountable. Currently all Deputy Heads of Government are also Ministers. The Croatian Constitution grants certain executive responsibilities to the directly elected President of the Republic. They are concentrated in defence, national security, foreign affairs, and some other sectors. The President may preside over the Government meetings under certain conditions. Although the President is indeed involved in a limited range of political processes, he/she as a rule does not use this competence to preside over Government meetings.

Government meetings are held on a weekly basis, on Thursday mornings as a rule. They are preceded by a meeting of the inner cabinet comprised of the Prime Minister and Deputy Heads of the Government. Ministers and other persons may be invited to attend the inner cabinet meetings at the Prime Minister's discretion. The inner cabinet decides on the most important governance issues. The Prime Minister has a significant role in leading the Government and making decisions on the basic political and governance issues. In doing so, he or she obviously relies on his/her informal networks, governing party officials, and coalition partners. The Prime Minister is supported by the Prime Minister's Office, which is led by the Head of the Office who has a status of a state (i.e. political) official, structured into two parts responsible for public policies and public relations. The number of approved positions in the Office is 49. One of the influential Government bodies is the Personnel Commission charged with the preparation of all appointments decided on by the Government. Its meetings are not open to the media. The Personnel Commission is a small body comprised of Deputy Heads of Government and led by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, Deputy Heads of Government, and Ministers participate in the Government's meetings. An absent Minister may be replaced by a State Secretary. The Government meetings are open to the media, except for the concluding part when certain set matters are on the agenda. Drafts of all Government decisions are posted on the Government's Internet page before the meetings. Their final forms are also accessible after the meetings. Summaries of decisions made during the closed part of the meetings are also published on the same day, immediately after the meeting. Decrees and some other decisions have to be published in the official journal (*Narodne novine*).

The preparation of decisions starts a long time before the beginning of the formal Government procedure in accordance with the annual legislative plan and sectoral strategies, action plans and other policy and legal documents. Parts of the Government's decisions are prepared as a response to issues assessed as politically sensitive and

urgent by the Prime Minister or inner cabinet, be they domestic or connected with the EU or some other circumstances and processes. In taking such initiatives, the role of the Prime Minister and his/her office is of utmost importance. All draft laws and other regulations and decisions have to be coordinated with other line ministries in a formal procedure. There is also an obligation to enable public consultations before submitting them to the formal procedure before the Government.

The procedure formally starts when the draft decision has been submitted to the Government's General Secretariat (73 approved positions). The Secretariat is responsible for technical preparation of the Government's decisions. The Office for Legislation also plays an important role (25 approved positions). It is responsible for legal analysis of the received drafts, their harmonisation with legislation, and regulatory impact assessment.

The last phase before scheduling a decision for the Government's meeting is professional and political coordination. There are five bodies called 'coordinations' with their respective 'professional working groups' responsible for coordination. They are, as a rule, led by a Deputy Head of the Government and have competence in (1) foreign and European politics and human rights, (2) the system of homeland security and the Croatian war veterans, (3) economy and structural reforms, (4) sectoral policies, and (5) managing state assets. Members of 'coordinations' are Ministers, State Secretaries of the Central State Offices, Heads of the State Administrative Organisations, and other persons as decided by the Government, while representatives of the Office for Legislation and the Ministry of Finances are obliged to participate in the meetings of each 'coordination'. There are five offices supporting the work of 'coordinations'. The heads of these offices also manage the meetings of the professional working groups, which are in reality forums of civil servants from various ministries, discussing technical, legal, and professional issues in advance of the 'coordination' meeting. 'Coordinations', the meetings of which follow the professional working groups' meetings, are competent to consider inter-ministerial and political issues.

Generally, 'the development of coordination instruments in Croatia suffers from inefficiencies and is greatly influenced by politically-driven considerations' (Musa & Petak 2015). The effects of such a coordinative mechanism are: intensive and frequently informal political influence; a lack of strategic planning in the Government's functioning; neglected substantive professional analyses of policies and their impacts based on evidence; siloisation; incoherence; fragmentation; negative coordination among ministries; financial, technical and legal gatekeeping; and a still relatively weak influence of interested societal actors on the public policies, regulations and decisions. The centre of government does not have sufficient expertise and capacity for thorough policy analysis. Regulatory impact assessment is added to the legal review of draft regulations as a second-rate task (Petak 2013; 2015).

The machinery of the centre of government consists of the Prime Minister's Office, the General Secretariat, the Office for Legislation, nine other offices, one agency, and one directorate.¹⁰ The total number of paid persons in this machinery was 503 at the end of

¹⁰ The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, the Office for Gender Equality, the Office for Associations of Citizens, the Office for Mine Action, the Office for Combating Drug Abuse, the Office for the Protocol, the General Administration Office of the Croatian Parliament and Croatian Government, the Office of the Representative of the Republic of Croatia before the European Court of Human Rights, the Office for Internal Audit, the Office of the Committee for Relations with Religious Communities, the Agency for Transactions and Mediation in Immovable Properties, and the Directorate for the Use of Official Aircraft. It is obvious that some of them do not perform the standard tasks of the centre of government.

2015. Prime Minister's advisors, special political advisors and members of various councils may be engaged on top of that.

2.2.3. Budgeting and monitoring mechanisms

Despite certain modernisation measures, budgeting in Croatia remains close to the traditional model. The Budget Act of 2008 obliged the ministries and other central state bodies included in the central budget to prepare the three-year strategic plans. The practice of their preparation started in 2009, for the period 2010-2012, under the guidance of the Ministry of Finance.

From 2007 onwards, in July of the current budgetary year, the Government adopted three-year guidelines of economic and fiscal policies which serve as the official basis for budget preparation. Currently, the bases for these guidelines include the EU Country Specific Recommendations, the National Reform Programme (prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development and the EU Funds) and the Convergence Programme (prepared by the Ministry of Finance).

The budget preparations for the following year start at the end of February, when the Ministry of Finances, in cooperation with the ministry competent for structural reforms and coordination of the EU funds, issues instructions for strategic planning for all other budgetary organisations. By 15 August, the Ministry delivers its instructions for the budget preparation to the ministries and other budgetary organisations whose proposals for the next year's budget have to be communicated back to the Ministry by 15 September. By 15 November, the Government adopts the draft budget and transfers it to the parliamentary procedure. A similar procedure applies to the preparation of local budgets, under the guidance and based on the instructions of the Ministry of Finance.

Based on the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2011, the Government established the Fiscal Policy Committee in the course of the same year. However, two years later the Parliament adopted a decision to establish a new Fiscal Policy Committee. The new Committee, appointed for a five-year term in 2014, is fully independent from the executive and better institutionally designed to monitor the implementation of the Fiscal Rule. The Committee, comprised of independent experts and university professors of public finances, publishes its position papers.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act introduced a reporting duty, as well as a duty of submitting the statements of fiscal responsibility. The Ministry of Finance has a duty to report on the implementation of the Fiscal Rule. Such reports have to be attached to the semi-annual and annual reports about the budget implementation. Officials, managers, heads, and other managing persons heading state bodies, local governments, state or locally-owned companies and other budgetary organisations have to submit an annual statement of fiscal responsibility. By means of the statement, they confirm the legality and purposefulness of budgetary expenditure and the effective functioning of the internal audit and financial control system. The statements have to be based on the results of internal and external audits, answers given to the questions from the prescribed survey, all the other relevant data and the assessment of responsible officials, managers and heads. These persons are responsible for the fiscal situation and may lose their position if they disobey the law.

2.2.4. Auditing and accountability

The State Audit Office was established in 1993 as an independent body responsible for external audits of revenues and expenditure, financial statements and financial transactions of all public bodies and organisations, in the broadest sense, and of the use of funds from the European Union and other international organisations or institutions that fund public needs. Based on both the external and internal assessments, this body gained constitutional status by means of the constitutional amendments of 2010. Its new position was regulated by the Act on the State Audit Office of 2011, ensuring its legal, organisational, financial and functional independence. It is managed by the Auditor General appointed by the Croatian Parliament for an eight-year mandate. The Auditor General may be re-appointed.

Audits are performed by the Certified State Auditors employed by the State Audit Office after an open competitive procedure for vacancies. The final decisions on recruitment and termination of service are made by the Auditor General. Candidates with a degree in economics, law or related fields have to take the Certified State Auditor Examination in accordance with the Certified State Auditor Examination Programme. The State Audit Office has a good public reputation based on professionalism, openness, independency and procedures and reports of generally solid quality according to the international audit standards.

The Ombudsperson was established as an independent commissioner of the Croatian Parliament by the Constitution of 1990. The term of office lasts eight years and the Ombudsperson is responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and from 2009 onwards also anti-discrimination standards. A selection of at least two candidates for the position of ombudsperson is made by the parliamentary Committee on the Constitution, after an open call procedure. The institution has continually been gaining a better reputation based on professionalism, resistance to politicisation and good results. According to the reports, which frequently cause resentment in the parliamentary debates due to bitter criticism focused on the unorthodox practices of the executive and administrative bodies, in the period 2013-2015 the number of complaints received was between 3 000 and 3 500. The Ombudsperson found about 30% of the complaints to be well-founded and took measures according to the law.

Aside from the Ombudsperson, there are four other parliamentary commissioners: one each for children and gender equality (both established in 2003), one for people with disabilities (established in 2008), and one for public information (established in 2013). All of them have a fairly good reputation, particularly the Public Information Commissioner as she has put considerable effort into the establishment of an effective system of public transparency. The Commissioner has the task of providing legal protection of the right to access public sector information and to reuse such information (open data), as well as monitoring and promoting these rights.

Inspectorates are bound to the line ministries as their internal organisational units. For example, seven different inspectorates are organisational parts of the Ministry for Agriculture, the market inspectorate is a unit within the Ministry of Economy, the labour inspectorate is structurally bound to the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, etc. However, inspectorates are subject to legal provisions giving them greater autonomy within the ministries than other internal organisational units. They have legally-prescribed control and law enforcement powers, and the power to bring misdemeanour proceedings before the courts. Fragmentation and a lack of coordination and coherence have also been found in state inspectorates. Inspectorates are found in as many as 60

administrative fields, half of them in the central bodies, a bit under half in fragmented branch offices of central bodies, and only three in first-line offices of state administration (Strategija 2015). The situation was a little better before 1 January 2014 when the State Inspectorate was abolished after 15 years of functioning and its 780 inspectors and other employees were taken over by five different line ministries. One of the frequent remarks about the inspectorates is connected with their focus on control and punishment, while they treat the educational role as a poor third.

2.2.5. Coordination of administrative reform

Although a new and very complex institutional arrangement was predicted by the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020, there has not been any attempt to implement it. The obvious reason is political change in the government. Bearing in mind the strong position of line ministries and hesitation of several previous governments with regard to the establishment of a separate body for coordination of administrative reform, it is not surprising that the main role in the implementation of the Strategy is held by the Ministry of Public Administration. The capacity of the Ministry to impose the tempo and content of administrative reform is questionable because it has never played such a role; it has scarce human resources for fulfilling these tasks and it has not been known as a strong ministry.

However, it is also well known that the position of the Ministry of Finance is stronger than the position of many others, the Ministry of Public Administration included. Moreover, there is a role for the Ministry of Regional Development and the EU Funds with regard to coordinating structural reforms. Some other ministries also have certain responsibilities in administrative reforms (for example, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System with regard to civil service reform). The result is that the coordination of administrative reform is left to regular coordination mechanisms within the centre of government and to informal negotiations between ministries, but to a much smaller degree. Informal negotiations and mutual adjustments in the silo culture are highly ineffective. The whole situation is burdened by inter-party negotiations between the two main political parties that are coalition partners in the current government.

3 KEY FEATURES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

3.1 Status and categories of public employees

3.1.1 Definition of the civil service

The basic constitutional provision about the civil service stipulates 'The status of state servants and the labour status of employees shall be regulated by law and other regulations.' (Art. 117/3). Such a stipulation implies that only the civil servants employed by the central state (within the 'state administration system') are to be regulated specifically, while employees will have labour contracts. There is no constitutional provision regarding the position of civil servants who are paid from local budgets or serve in public services such as health, education, culture, social welfare and the like.

However, there are four categories of civil servants and other professionals employed by the central state and local governments whose status is regulated separately by special legislation. These are (1) civil servants in the state administration (ministries and other central bodies), (2) local servants who serve in the core local and county bodies (so-

called administrative offices), (3) public servants employed in centrally-financed public services, and (4) public servants who serve in locally-financed institutions (nursery schools, libraries, museum, etc.).

The status of the first category is regulated by the Civil Servants Act of 2005. Local servants and employees are regulated by the Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2008. Their salaries are regulated by the Act on Salaries in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2010.

The Act on Salaries in Public Services of 2001 regulates only the pay system in centrally-financed public services. Other issues may be regulated by special laws, despite the fact that employees in public services are employed on the basis of labour contracts. For example, professionals in the health service are regulated by the Act on Health Protection of 2008 and the Health Professions Act of 2009.

The situation in locally-financed institutions is similar. For example, although professionals in nursery schools are employed based on labour contracts, various elements of their status, recruitment, in-service training, and other issues are regulated by the Act on Pre-School Education of 1997. However, the Act on Salaries in Public Services of 2001 in principle does not apply to professionals in locally-financed institutions.

Employees and other workers in all parts of public administration are employed on the basis of labour contracts regulated by the Labour Act of 2014. However, certain issues of employees' status in local and county governments are regulated by the provisions of the Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2008.

The share of civil servants in centralised state administration, core local administration, and centrally-financed public services is large. The largest share of civil servants is in state administration – 93% of the total employment figure. In local administration, the share is 88% and in centrally-financed public services 86%. No data are available in that regard for locally-financed institutions.

The legal definition of the civil servant includes all individuals in administrative bodies who perform tasks regulated by the Constitution, laws, and other regulations as their regular profession. However, since 2001 people who perform IT, general and clerical jobs, planning, accounting and tasks connected with public assets and finances have also been included in the category of civil servants. In the previous period, all of these categories were considered employees, not civil servants. Employees are those who perform auxiliary and technical jobs in public administration.

Table 4: The regulation of various categories of civil servants in Croatia

Centralised state administration	Core local administration	Centrally-financed public services	Locally-financed institutions
The Civil Servants Act of 2005 (amended 14 times)	(1) The Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2008 (amended in 2011); (2) The Act on Salaries in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2010	(1) Different regulation in different public services; (2) The Act on Salaries in Public Services of 2001 (amended in 2009)	Different regulations in various types of local institutions

3.1.2 Configuration of the civil service system

The civil service system in state administration before 2001 was career based. Several aspects of a position-based system were introduced in 2001 and then somewhat more clearly regulated by the Civil Servants Act of 2005. Job analysis was a core tool introduced in order to achieve a more appropriate design of working positions in the state administration system. A new classification system was also introduced in 2005, differentiating three basic categories of positions: managerial, higher and lower positions. The basic characteristics for the classification of positions are the required professional knowledge, job complexity, level of cooperation with other bodies and relations with citizens, level of accountability and influence on decision-making in a body. The same criteria apply to core local administration. The classification systems in both parts were decided by Government decrees.

Legal regulation of the civil service in core public administration at the central and local levels is still based on the main elements of traditional, statutory, administrative law-regulated service to the state with authoritative elements. However, serious new elements, such as a transition to the position system or the introduction of modern human resources and the development of management tools have also appeared, complementing and changing the traditional model.

Many more similarities to the private sector labour law may be found in the legal regulation of public services at the central and local levels. However, there is a relatively strong protection of professionalism in these services, trying to impose the standards of their various professions (medical doctors, teachers and professors at all educational levels, social workers, librarians, etc.).¹¹ Only a small proportion of personnel in public administration have almost completely 'normalised' private sector-like employment contracts with the pay system regulated by public authorities and harmonised with the salary system in the public sector. This applies predominantly to employees in all sectors of public administration.

Legislation enables the mobility of civil servants between sectors of public administration (central, local, public services). Open competitions are obligatory for new young civil servants, trainees, and in other cases when explicitly regulated by the law. In all other cases, mobility is provided for via so-called internal calls.

Civil service legislation also comprises rules on the rights and obligations of civil servants. The rights include the right to salary, political rights, the right to be protected in the event of whistleblowing, the right to equal treatment in service, and some others. The duties relate to respecting legality, timeliness and efficiency of work, giving information and reasoning, respecting privacy, protecting official secrets, respecting professional quality and ethical standards, and others. Furthermore, civil service legislation regulates the system of disciplinary responsibility and responsibility for damage caused to citizens.

¹¹ Various professions in public services are separately regulated by special laws which usually provide for standards of public services according to professional rules (medicine, education, social work, culture, etc.), the role of professionals' representatives in a service standards setting, rights and duties of professionals, education and in-service training, professional ethics, etc.

3.1.3 Development of civil service regulation

The first systemic law on the civil service in state administration was adopted in 1994 and was based on the traditional, Weberian career model. The first legal regulation of salaries in public services was adopted simultaneously and was based on the personal pay grades. The next law was the Act on State Servants and Employees of 2001, the intentions of which were to introduce certain elements of the position system (Koprić & Marčetić 2003). The new Act on Salaries in Public Services of 2001 also introduced remuneration according to working positions. Finally, the Civil Servants Act of 2005, amended many times in the past decade, opted for a further elaborated position system and modern human resources development and management tools. In 2013 a new draft Law was prepared with quite a radical approach to the 'normalisation' of the civil service based on contractual relations between the state and civil servants and the almost non-existent protection of civil servants with regard to politicians (Marčetić 2014). The draft was severely criticised and did not enter the legislative procedure.

In core local administration, old and inappropriate rules inherited from the socialist period were retained until 2001 under the vague notion of 'appropriate application of the Administration Act of 1978', causing many practical and legal problems at the local level (Koprić & Marčetić 2003). Since no specific law was adopted, the situation was characterised by a low level of transparency. Although the first Bill on Local Civil Servants was prepared in 2001, the new Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government was only adopted seven years later, in 2008. In the period 2001-2008, rules from the Act on State Servants and Employees of 2001 were applied to local servants in an 'appropriate' manner. Since such a term was unusual and imprecise, various interpretations were possible, and the final decision in each disputable case was in the hands of the central control bodies. One of the main causes of a political conflict that prevented the adoption of the new piece of legislation was the salary system for local governments. In the end, the Law on Civil Servants and Employees in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2008 was adopted without provisions about the salary system. It was regulated only two years later by a separate act, the Act on Salaries in Local and Regional Self-Government of 2010. The beginning of the recession significantly undermined the political resistance which previously prevented the adoption of the local salaries law.

Aside from the basic issue of the 'normalisation' of the civil service, which is highly controversial, other challenges are much more closely connected to the practice of attracting and retaining the appropriate people, modernisation and development of administrative education and in-service training, human resource management, the growing capacities of civil service courts and other quasi-independent bodies in the field (the Civil Service Committee, the Ethics Council), financial support to the new system of civil servants' motivation, establishment of a fully reliable, complete and open register of public employees, and similar measures, than to the current civil service legislation changes.

Generally, the development of the Croatian civil service legislation went through the expected process of consolidation during the transition and the EU accession. The challenges, as well as the solutions, seem to be similar to those in other countries. The level of coherence of regulation between governmental levels is high, with fairly similar rules and standards at the central and local levels. Regulation of professionals in public services at both levels is different in comparison to that in core public administration, which is a normal and appropriate situation. There is a significant difference between

civil servants and employees and other workers, with certain rules similar to those for civil servants especially at the local level.¹² However, the share of employees is relatively low, about 13.5% on average, in those parts of the civil service for which data are available. That means that the civil servant status is standard in the Croatian public administration.

3.2 Key characteristics of the central government HR System

3.2.1 The management of HRM

The main body competent for harmonising the HRM system and HRM policy at the central level is the Ministry of Public Administration. However, implementation is mainly decentralised. All state bodies with more than 50 employed persons establish their organisational units for HRM. Moreover, the Ministry is not in charge of HRM in public agencies, public services and institutions, and local governments. The position of the Ministry is not especially strong, but it may use the Administrative Inspectorate, which is an important organisational unit of the Ministry, to enforce the civil service legislation standards at both central and local levels. A separate HRM unit within the Ministry is competent for civil service legislation, HRM, human resource development, in-service training, ethics and values, and other civil service issues. It tries to influence the HRM practice in core public administration by collecting and analysing data, learning from comparative cases, preparing various analyses and recommendations, etc.

3.2.2 Internal processes of the civil service

Recruitment and selection is implemented in a decentralised manner, meaning that each body is responsible for employing its staff, in line with the constitutional principle of equal access to public services (Art. 44). There is a long tradition of merit-based recruitment for civil service by means of an open, publicly-announced competitive procedure. Selection is based on the knowledge, competences and skills test, previous results, and interviews. Psychological testing may also be performed. One of the members of the recruitment commission has to be from the Ministry of Public Administration. Only the ten best candidates make it through to the final selection. The decision, which has the legal nature of an administrative act, has to be elaborated and a selection made in three months at the latest. It must be delivered to all candidates who are entitled to instigate an appellate procedure before the Civil Service Commission. The final decision is then taken by the Administrative Court. Recruitment is for life, in principle. At the beginning, the new civil servant has to undergo a trial period of three months, while the trainees have to train for 12 months. Both categories have to pass the State Exam in the subsequent period of six months.

Promotion is also merit-based, but predominantly relies on the internal-call procedure. The best positive annual assessments are the necessary prerequisite. The appraisal procedure is based on the civil servant's results shown as the relationship between his/her planned duties and actual quantity and quality of results and timelines in task

¹² The main differences are connected with the rules which apply (labour law to employees and civil service law to civil servants) and many issues which are regulated for civil servants and not regulated for employees (the principles of civil service, civil service integrity system including conflict of interests, system of legal protection of servants' rights, special HRM procedures, appraisal system, wide range of special rights, duties and responsibilities, such as those connected with salaries, advancement, in-service training, working conditions, relations with superiors, political rights, whistleblowing, respecting official secrets and data protection, disciplinary responsibility, etc.).

accomplishment. His/her respect of public duties and personal behaviour are also taken into account. The assessment needs to be justified. The immediate superior proposes the assessment which has to be shown to the assessed civil servant, who may object. Finally, the Minister or other head of a body issues an administrative act on the assessment, thus opening a possibility for the assessed civil servant to instigate an appellate procedure and demand court protection. The new appraisal system has been in place from the beginning of 2012 and is based on a five-grade scale, the last grade being negative. The criteria are regulated by a Government decree in a detailed and precise manner. About 30% of civil servants achieve the highest assessments, about 45% of them gain the second-best assessment and about 20% gain the third best. Some 5% of civil servants are exempted. The share of those with the lowest positive assessment and those with a negative assessment is extremely low (below 1%) (Bakula 2016).

The implementation of in-service training is only partially centralised. Even now, more than ten years after the emergence of the new system in 2004, when the Civil Servants' Training Centre was established as the main training institution, more than ten state bodies organise in-service training in their particular fields (tax administration, diplomacy, etc.). For eight years (2007-2014), this Centre and its successor, the State School of Public Administration, performed 1 075 training programmes with 46 758 civil servants participating (Bošnjaković, 2015). Various training courses are still provided by other state bodies. The Strategy of Public Administration Development for the period 2015-2020 identified serious problems with administrative education and called for the development of new university programmes prepared in close cooperation with the Government and other actors from the demand side. There are more than a dozen programmes at the supply side for now, but all of them are conceptualised within the vocational stream, except several postgraduate university programmes (Strategija 2015).

3.3.3. Senior civil service

The Civil Servants Act contains a closed list of senior civil servants and some provisions applying to them. There are eight categories of senior civil servants.¹³ The Registry of Senior Civil Servants currently contains data about 66 of them. They are appointed by the Government at the proposal of the responsible minister or head of other state administrative body for a four-year term following an open public competition. No appellate procedure is provided for their rights, but they are entitled to instigate an administrative court procedure. Their request may be revoked on the basis of a serious disciplinary offence if they gain the lowest positive mark in their assessment, if the body they work for has been abolished, and in other cases of civil service termination regulated by law. Once their term of office has expired, they may be re-appointed, appointed to another working position on a merit basis without competition or, if an appropriate position does not exist, they may undergo the exit procedure. In many other aspects, their status is harmonised with the status of other civil servants.

Political appointees and civil servants are mainly separated, and there is a tendency to appoint people with a strong political background to the positions of state officials.

¹³ They are: the Main Secretary of the Ministry, the Main Secretary of the Central State Office, the Deputy Head of State Office, the Deputy Head of the State Administrative Organisation, the Head of the Government's Office, the Head of the Office of Deputy Prime Minister, the Head of Office, Agency, Directorate and other Government's services established by the Government, and the Head of the Office of the State Administration in a county.

However, there is also a tendency of undermining the sharpness of the political-professional divide as a proportion of appointees come from professional public administration and some of the former political appointees tend to continue their service applying for professional positions in public administration.

3.3.4. Social dialogue and the role of trade unions

Aside from the Union of State and Local Civil Servants and Employees, there are many sectoral trade unions, several of them very influential. It is possible to have several trade unions in the same sector. Trade unions in the police, health, and education sectors are among the strongest trade unions in the public sector. The role of trade unions in negotiating various elements of civil servants' status is prominent and they have succeeded in signing about 150 collective agreements at the central level and 650-700 at the subnational level (Marčetić 2015). There is the Collective Agreement for Civil Servants and Civil Service Employees, the Basic Collective Agreements for Public Services, sectoral collective agreements, and those signed with a particular county or local government. Some analyses show that they are not able to negotiate much better employment conditions or salaries in public administration but are efficient in blocking radical 'normalisation' reforms. For example, 17 trade unions managed to prevent a big reform intended to outsource about 26 500 jobs from public administration to the private sector in 2014 by collecting 624 000 citizens' signatures. That was much more than necessary for instigating a referendum on the complete outsourcing ban in the public sector at the central level. After that, the Government was forced to withdraw its proposal since it was probable that the referendum would have successfully blocked it (Đulabić 2014).

3.3.5. Remuneration

Since the Civil Servants Act of 2005 does not contain the salary system regulation, the part of the Act on State Servants and Employees of 2001 which regulates the salary system still applies (Art. 108-112). The civil service salary depends on the working positions' coefficients that are decided by the Government Decree of 2001 (with many later amendments). The second input for salary calculation is the base for salary calculation which needs to be negotiated between trade unions and the Government. If the agreement about this base cannot be achieved before the adoption of the annual budget, the Government decides about the base. The third element of the salary system is an increase of the previously established amount for 0.5% for each year of a civil servant's work experience. The fourth element of the salary calculation is the various additions and bonuses for the elements set out mostly by the collective agreements. Although a bonus for work efficiency is provided for in the civil service salary system, it has never been applied because a budget item for it has never been planned.

A similar system applies to local civil servants and civil servants in public services. Although there have been public claims that bonuses and employment conditions in public administration are better than in the private sector, a recent analysis has shown that such claims are not well founded. This was the main subject of an interpellation submitted to the Croatian Parliament in 2015. In its reply of 11 June 2015, the Government reported that an official analysis of the salary system in the public sector did not give grounds for the claims presented in the interpellation.

However, it also admitted that there were many inconsistencies in the salary system and divergence between core public administration and public services, caused by the

existence of many collective agreements that are not harmonised, some outdated legislation, and the Government's urgent interventions in response to the long-lasting recession. The Government announced the preparation of a harmonised salary system for the whole public administration, but later political changes and instability prevented the planned legislative innovation.

It is evident that high-ranking senior civil servants have lower salaries than their counterparts in the private sector, while the salaries in the lower echelons of public administration are higher than the lowest salaries in the private sector.

3.3.6. Degree of patronage and politicisation

In the period 2011-2016, the Government appointed more than a hundred political advisors to the ministers, but in 2016 the Constitutional Court declared the relevant law provision unconstitutional. Although the subsequent Government (with a rather short mandate) tried to prepare a new legal basis for appointing political advisors in early 2016, the attempt failed. The new Government, which took office in the second part of 2016, has been using a vague legal base from the Government Act for appointing special political advisors to ministers, about 20 of them so far.

Politicisation is a continuous feature and one of the main problems in the Croatian civil service. The problem has usually been approached in a formal manner, through law amendments and attempts to reshape the appointment procedure for managerial positions in public administration. The politics of depoliticisation formed an important part of the EU accession efforts. Unfortunately, this policy was interpreted as a policy of reducing the number of political appointees in the system of state administration. One of the attempts was based on the Civil Servants Act of 2005. It provided for the 'depoliticisation' of the positions of 'assistant ministers', ministries' secretaries, deputy heads (who can deputise) and assistant heads of state administrative organisations, and some other positions in the central administration. Political appointments in the period 2008-2011 for the aforementioned positions were replaced with the public competition procedure. However, by retaining the procedure completely in the Government's hands, diminishing the professional and educational standards, and by putting the greatest emphasis on the interviews rather than on the elements of merit, the real situation was not significantly changed. A large number of previously politically-appointed 'assistant ministers' were again appointed based on the competitive procedure, indicating that this type of 'depoliticisation' failed.

In 2011, legal regulation changed once again, introducing a stronger influence of politics on the appointments to managerial posts in state administration. Moreover, amendments to the Civil Servants Act in early 2012 introduced political advisors to the ministers for the first time. In the period 2012-2016, the Government appointed more than a hundred political advisors to the ministers. Although the Constitutional Court proclaimed these amendments unconstitutional at the end of 2015, a similar regulation enabling the employment of political advisors was once again proposed in spring 2016. Only political instability prevented the reintroduction of this category to the Croatian state administration. The new Government, which took office in the second part of 2016, has been using a vague legal basis from the Government Act for appointing special political advisors to ministers, about 20 of them so far.

The introduction of the direct election of mayors in 2009 triggered legal innovations in the local self-government system, which introduced the politicisation of hitherto

professional positions in local bureaucracy. However, the appointment procedure for managerial positions is only the pinnacle of the politicisation problem in public administration. There is public distrust in recruitment taking place in a fair and fully merit-based manner at the lower echelons as well.

However, surprisingly, post-election turnover is not high or, at least, the data basis does not allow a conclusion contradicting this. For example, data from the registry of civil servants show 52 changes at the positions of senior civil servants (appointed on the basis of public competition for a four-year term) after the last election, 19 October 2016 – 10 April 2017.

Informal politicisation at the subnational level may be estimated as very high. The appointment procedure for political appointees at all levels is highly politicised, but this is fully in line with expectations.

HR system (Career vs position based)	Employment status (civil servant as standard; dual; employee as standard)	Differences between civil servants and public employees (high, medium, low)	Turnover (high, medium, low)
Predominantly career	Civil servant as standard	High	Low

Coherence between different government levels (high, medium, low)	Remuneration level vs private sector (much higher, higher, same, lower, much lower)	Formal politicisation through appointments (high, medium, low)	Functional politicisation (high, medium, low)
Medium	Lower for high levels; higher for low levels	High	Medium

4 POLITICAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

4.1 Policy-making, coordination and implementation

4.1.1 State system

Croatia is a unitary centralised state. The role of counties is far less important than the role of regions in regionally decentralised countries. It is similar to the role of supplementary second-tier local governments. Croatian counties therefore have more in common with the German counties (Landkreise) than with Italian regions or Spanish comunidades autónomas (Koprić et al. 2016). Central and local tasks are separately managed and implemented.

According to the Croatian Constitution, the President of the Republic is directly elected for a five-year term of office and 'shall ensure the regular and balanced functioning and stability of government' (Art. 94/2). The President and the Government 'co-operate in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy' (Art. 99/1). He or she is 'the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia' (Art. 100/1). The President 'may propose to the Government to hold a session and consider specific issues' and 'may attend any session of the Government and participate in deliberations' (Art. 102).

Despite these constitutional powers of the President of Republic, the real political power lies mainly with the Government. Since 1990, there was only one elected Government,

during the Homeland War (the Croatian War of Independence), in office between 17 July 1991 and 12 August 1992. The current Government is the fourteenth since Croatia gained independence. The average term of office of the previous 13 governments was 712 days or almost two full years. Seven governments in the period 2000-2016, following a significant constitutional change from semi-presidential to parliamentary system, were a little more stable than those in the period 1990-2000, as their average term of office was 872 days or 2.4 years. This indicates a relative instability of governments.

One political party, the Croatian Democratic Community (CDC), was the dominant party in all 14 governments except three, two in 2000-2003 and one in 2011-2016. In 2016, the CDC was not able to get the majority alone. In some other governments, the CDC accepted several minor political parties to pre-election or post-election coalitions. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) led three governments, in 2000-2003 and in 2011-2016, all three elected in the Parliament by broad political coalitions of the SDP with several minor political parties. It may be concluded that there are two dominant political blocks in Croatia, with a much more successful right-wing block in politics at the central level. The executive of central government has been majoritarian although in the newest stage the two largest political parties need political partners in order to establish a stable government. It is hard to expect any consensus between the two political blocks in almost any public issue. The EU accession was one of the rare counter-examples.

There is a relatively clear formal separation of political and professional positions in the ministries. Ministers respect the rights and position of professionals. However, the category of senior civil servants is a sort of buffer zone in which the political sphere wishes to have not only loyal people but also those who are connected to their political party or group.

Although revolving-door political advisors existed only during the 2011-2016 government, it seems that this category may survive. The current government is cautious with its appointments, but it remains to be seen what the future will bring. The third category ('assistant ministers'), which functions at the interface between politicians and professionals, was only for a short period (2006-2011) appointed through a special kind of public competition, but with a strong political influence. Such influence is presupposed by the legal regulation as of 2011.

It may be concluded that after a brief pre-accession period (2006-2011), politics has been penetrating deeper into the body of professionals, even more keenly than during previous times. Not only the positions of 'assistant ministers' and similar positions in other central bodies are now formally re-regulated as political positions, but also political advisors widen the scope for political considerations in the ministerial machinery.

4.1.2 Consultation for decision-making

Formal consultations with citizens and other interested parties were introduced in 2009. The 2011 Regulatory Impact Assessment Act introduced obligatory public consultations on new regulations. This duty was expanded in 2013 by the Public Information Access Act to all public bodies when preparing regulations and decisions, strategic documents and planning documents that relate to citizens' interests. The central internet portal for public consultation has been functioning since the spring of 2015. Although the number of regulations open to public consultation and the number of comments are continually increasing, the situation is far from good.

Agenda setting is in the hands of the Government, but it is well known that many informal networks influence this early and very important phase in which problems are identified and basic solutions are analysed. The influence of large companies and business in general – mainly through various business associations – seems to be high, but there is no empirical research to confirm this hypothesis. What is observable is that a number of people move between large private companies and the government.

The influence of civil society is relatively weak, except in some cases and in certain types of situations. Civil society organisations are more influential in environmental protection, human rights, health, children and youth policies, and policies promoting transparency and the fight against corruption (Bežovan et al. 2016). Considerable influence is exercised by war veterans' associations, which, for example, organised a 555-day protest in Zagreb between 20 October 2014 and 26 April 2016 requesting the resignation or replacement of the then minister of war veterans, his deputy, and an 'assistant minister' and the fulfilment of 48 other claims connected with their status and rights. The influence of the Catholic Church is limited to certain issues and areas and is generally perceived as important. It is widely recognised that the Catholic Church is behind the associations that instigated the only successful referendum on the constitutional amendments (a referendum on the definition of marriage held on 1 December 2013). A large number of trade unions, their fragmentation, intra-sectoral conflicts, and limited interests curtail their influence.

Citizen participation is limited mainly to local levels and is relatively weak despite the existence of some participatory channels and institutions (Koprić & Klarić 2015). Innovations such as co-production, cooperative budgeting and similar are the rare exceptions. The participatory culture is fairly weak.

4.1.3 Policy advice

There are some possibilities of engaging think tanks and experts outside public administration, but there are also barriers to their influence. Firstly, they are rarely invited to assist the government and ministries due to unfavourable legal regulations and limited possibilities to pay fair remuneration. Secondly, their advice is usually used only as one of the inputs in policy formulation. The Parliament regularly appoints external experts as parliamentary committee members but even there their influence is fairly weak.

Policy advice is therefore concentrated in the ministries, with some formal and informal channels of expert and public participation. The main formal forms are various working groups or task forces, usually comprising external experts including those from universities, stakeholders including civil society organisations, and ministerial civil servants. However, informal contacts are more important than working groups in many cases. Ministries are more willing to engage external policy advice when goals are only vaguely determined or non-existent, when they prepare so-called quick-win decisions or regulations, and when ministries seek legitimacy (Giljević 2015). Neither the role nor the level of political advisors' influence on policies, decisions and draft laws prepared by the ministries have been researched yet.

The political sphere has considerable influence over policy directions, which may cause considerable policy changes after elections. One of the recent examples is the school curricula modernisation. The SDP-led government appointed an Expert Group led by Boris Jokić in February 2015. The group consisted of seven members, but it developed a

network of 53 professional groups with more than 430 experts, mostly primary and secondary schoolteachers, who were selected based on open public call. New policy and curricula documents were presented to the public and consultations were opened. In the course of the public consultations, as many as 2 759 comments and 1 846 recommendations from expert meetings were collected. A total of 913 experts and institutions participated in centrally-organised public consultations, while 64 847 professionals participated in the meetings of professionals' councils at the county level. The public, schoolteachers and pupils were in favour of the proposed comprehensive education reform. However, the new Government dissolved the Expert Group in June 2016, the whole network was abolished, and policy and curricula documents have not been accepted.

Social partnership was officially supported by the establishment of the Government Office for Social Partnership at the end of 2001. It continued to function as the organisational unit of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System. Similar mechanisms of tripartite dialogue have also been established at county level. The main body is the Economic-Social Council (ESC) that continuously debates the issues of interest to government, business and trade unions. The Council has held 208 meetings to date, indicating that it is an efficient and accepted forum for social dialogue. It covers a very broad range of themes and issues connected with economic policy, ways of promoting private and public interests, and last but not least administrative modernisation and reform. For example, the draft Strategy of Public Administration Development 2015-2020 was discussed twice at the ESC meetings before its adoption. At the first meeting, the Minister of Public Administration heard some recommendations for improving the document and he was expected to accept them and change the document. That expectation was indeed fulfilled.

It may be concluded that policies are the product of party politics enriched with informal influence from various power networks. Administrative autonomy is low and politicians expect only professional support for their policy choices and advice in policy design and implementation from professionals in the ministries. Patronage is high at the top level, and of medium strength at the middle managerial levels. The dominant type of public service bargaining is agency bargaining. Stability is relatively low at higher levels of public administration and it is quite normal that not only politically-appointed personnel (Ministers, State Secretaries, Assistant Ministers, other state officials in public administration, political advisors, etc.) but also senior civil servants are removed from their offices.

Distribution of powers	Coordination quality (high, medium, low)	Fragmentation (high, medium, low)
Centralised	Low to medium	High

Political economy (liberal – coordinated)	Interest intermediation (corporatist – pluralistic)	Citizen participation (strong – weak)	Policy style
Formally liberal, but in practice fairly coordinated	More pluralistic than corporatist	Weak	Incremental with strong top-down influence, strong influence of political parties and informal networks

Sources of policy advice (mandarins, cabinets, external experts)	Administrative autonomy (high – medium – low)	Patronage & politicisation (formal, functional) (merit – patronage) (high – medium – low)	Public service bargaining (Agency – Trustee)	Stability (high – low – no turnover after elections)
Mainly mandarins and cabinets	Low	Patronage at the top and middle levels. Stronger patronage at the local levels. High at the top level, medium at the middle managerial levels	Agency	Low at senior level, high at middle and lower levels

4.2 Administrative tradition and culture

Croatian administrative tradition is based on a *Rechtsstaat* approach (state based on justice and integrity) with lawyers as a traditionally well-represented subcategory of civil servants employed in the influential positions throughout ministries and the centre of government. Administrative functioning is based on various formally-prescribed procedures. The influence of administrative and other courts is strong, with an active role for the Constitutional Court in promoting strict constitutional, European, and international law standards even in policy design. The Ombudsperson and other parliamentary commissioners add to the legalistic way of thinking in public administration. Human rights are highly respected, as is social welfare. In terms of regulation, Croatia relies heavily on complex and detailed legal regulation. There was only one deregulation attempt in 2006-2007, though this ultimately failed.

According to the Constitution 'the Republic of Croatia is a unitary and indivisible democratic welfare state' (Art. 1) in which 'freedom, equal rights, national and gender equality, peace-making, social justice, respect for human rights, inviolability of ownership, conservation of nature and the environment, the rule of law and a democratic multiparty system are the highest values of the constitutional order' (Art. 3). However, the elements of modern managerial approach, such as strategic planning, digitalisation, administrative simplification, or public service quality, have sparkled here and there (cf. Koprić 2017).

Having been part of the Habsburg and later Austro-Hungarian empires since 1527, Croatian public administration developed under the strong influence of the then centres of state. The development within a large and complex empire that had a professional bureaucracy, cameralism as the dominant administrative doctrine, a legalistic orientation in administrative functioning, and weak democratic standards had a deep impact on the development of public administration in Croatia. Later history added many new elements, but it was not able to change the basic characteristics of the Croatian public administration developed decades previously. Equality and egalitarianism are among them, because they were strongly promoted during socialism (Koprić 2017).

However, the actual administrative culture is predominantly of an authoritarian and bureaucratic type (typology and empirical results from Koprić 1999; cf. Koprić 2011). Discipline and loyalty are highly respected in social life and, consequently, in public administration. Rigorous screening took place in the civil service immediately after the

first multi-party elections of 1990, based on political, national, and similar criteria and a subsequent secret clean-up operation changed the picture throughout the public sector.¹⁴ The autonomy of civil servants and their discretion naturally exist but people usually consider these to be unacceptable. There is a tendency to overregulate even unimportant technical issues and insignificant procedural steps. Consequently, red tape is widely present.

Croatian public administration is still based to a significant degree on the climate of formalism, procedures, secrecy, obedience, resistance to changes, evasion of responsibilities, and a top-down approach without much initiative, innovation or result focus. Many changes during the past decade have been mainly oriented towards improvements in relations between government and citizens as well as society relations rather than to changes of internal characteristics of the government machinery. One of the counter-examples is transparency and openness policy, whose importance is high because evasion of rules and corruption are fairly widespread despite legalistic and formalistic orientation.

The Croatian model of a welfare state is a kind of welfare mix model with social democratic and conservative elements. The previous state monopoly in providing social services has been replaced by the government's cooperation with civil society and the private and informal sectors (Puljiz et al. 2008; Koprić et al. 2016b). Croatia has a relatively large public administration which may be partly explained by transition and war.

Croatia's public administration is quite a closed system with great stability in positions except at the highest level. Staff turnover is modest, especially at the middle and lower echelons. During the war, post-war reconstruction, and recent recession even highly-educated people tended to obtain or retain their positions in the public sector. Only a small share of high-ranking people from public administration moved between positions in the private sector, international organisations and, in the latest phase, the European Union.

The tradition of strong public health, education, social care, culture, science and some other public services is complemented by high taxes and a reliance on government. The role of professionals in these services is still socially respected and the quality of services is good, despite several serious problems, including their fair remuneration.

In the early 1990s, social culture was based on authoritarian values and a radical break with the previously promoted egalitarian culture (Pusić 1992: XIV-XV; Kasapović 1996: 153-178). That is probably why Croatia has a very high score (73; the EU average is 52) on Hofstede's cultural dimension 'Power Distance'.¹⁵ Acceptance of hierarchy and an unequal distribution of power is fairly high in society; at least that has been reported in a survey serving as a basis for Hofstede's ranking. Another side of this syndrome may include a shadow economy, tax evasion, legal evasion, corruption, nepotism, and similar methods by which people with less power wish to improve their position in social stratification.

¹⁴ Approximately 20% of state civil servants were replaced with newcomers, as well as about 10% of the people in public services (Koprić & Marčetić 2000). It may be hypothesized that patronage was fairly strong when selecting the newcomers.

¹⁵ <https://geert-hofstede.com/croatia.html>

The low score for 'Individualism/Collectivism' scale (33; the EU average is 57) reflects the well-known reliance on various groups, such as families, villages and other old local and regional communities, ancient 'tribes', religious groups, but also firms and political parties. Loyalty to these groups is well documented in older and recent literature (Tomašić 1936/1993; Bićanić 1936/1996; Puljiz 1989). A deep sense of group affiliation with pertinent rules may easily explain many phenomena in the behaviour of the civil servants, from nepotism to corruption.

Croatia scores 40 for the 'Masculinity/Femininity' dimension and is thus considered a relatively feminine society (the EU average is 44). According to Hofstede, that means a focus on solidarity and equality, respect for free time and flexibility as highly-esteemed incentives, and respect for well-being rather than for achievement, competition, entrepreneurship and success. These characteristics are connected with egalitarian reminiscences from previous times but are also well harmonised with scores for Hofstede's other dimensions. Previous research in the Croatian public administration showed that a reactive, passive and inward-office attitude of civil servants is common (Koprić 1999).

Croatia ranked very highly for the dimension 'Uncertainty Avoidance' with a score of 80 (the EU average is 70). Certain characteristics which Hofstede connects with such a high score are certainly part of the Croatian social culture, such as an emotional need for rules and formalism, maintaining rigid codes of belief and behaviour, intolerance of unorthodox ideas and behaviour, respect for security and resistance to innovation. One of the recent examples of how such a culture reflects on public administration may be found in an attempt to modernise the legal regulation of general administrative procedural law and promote administrative simplification in the second half of the 2000s. Although a certain level of modernisation was achieved, especially when speaking in terms of widening legal protection to previously uncovered situations, the majority of initiatives with regard to simplifying the procedure and making it more efficient were blocked despite some pressure from the EU's side (Koprić 2011b).

Croatia's score (58) for 'Long-term Orientation' is very close to the EU average (57), which seems a little strange. If this result reflects the more basic ability of people to adapt to changing circumstances and to translate their old habits and ways of living to new situations it may be close to reality. Another study has obtained an opposite result regarding Long-term Orientation in Croatia. People in Croatia will formally report that they accept modern institutions, education, etc. but they actually follow the old habits and behavioural patterns, including nepotism, favouritism, etc. This means that this dimension needs to be examined further (Podrug et al. 2014).

Croatia's score (33) for the 'Indulgence/Self-restraint' dimension is relatively distant from the EU average (44). This dimension shows 'the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses' (Hofstede). Countries with low score are characterised by a 'tendency to cynicism and pessimism' which seems generally acceptable, but also needs further validation. Some research has taken place into political cynicism and conspiratorial interpretations (Blanuša 2013; Blanuša & Bovan 2015), but for a better understanding of administrative culture they need to be connected to public administration more firmly and with some theoretical refinement.

Hofstede national culture dimensions		
Dimension	Value	Average EU28
Power Distance	73	52
Individualism/Collectivism	33	57
Masculinity/Feminity	40	44
Uncertainty Avoidance	80	70
Long-term Orientation	58	57
Indulgence/Self-restraint	33	44

Source: Geert Hofstede's national culture dimensions, <https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>

Administrative culture <i>Rechtsstaat</i> (state based on justice and integrity), public interest	Welfare state (liberal, conservative, social-democratic)	Public sector openness (open, medium, closed)
<i>Rechtsstaat</i>	Welfare mix model with social democratic and conservative elements	Closed

Key PA Values	Managerial vs Procedural (Managerial, Mixed, Procedural)	Red tape (regulatory density) (very high to very low)	Discretion/autonomy (high, low, medium)
Legality is dominant value. Additionally: transparency, openness, integrity, efficiency.	Procedural with elements of managerial	Very high	Low to medium

5 GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE

5.1 Transparency and accountability

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Access to government information (1-10)	6.00	23	7.00	16	+1.00	+7
Transparency of government (0-100)	Value 2013	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
	40.14	17	48.14	18	+8.00	-1
Voice and accountability (-2.5,+2.5)	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
	0.43	27	0.50	26	+0.07	+1
Control of corruption (-2.5,+2.5)	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
	-0.03	25	0.20	22	+0.23	+3
TI perception of corruption (0-100)	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
	41.00	24	51.00	22	+10.00	+2
Gallup perception of corruption (%)	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
	89.00	23	87.00	26	-2.00	-3

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, European Commission, World Bank Group, Transparency International, Gallup World Poll.

Croatia has invested significant efforts in the improvement of openness and transparency of government. After the first Act on the Right of Access to Information was adopted in 2003, a constitutional amendment was adopted in 2010 proclaiming that right a constitutional right. The first Public Information Commissioner was elected as a parliamentary commissioner in 2013. In a short space of time, the Commissioner has achieved fairly impressive results. Moreover, Croatia has proactively participated in the

Open Government Partnership initiative since 2011. The OGP Council, which continuously guides and coordinates activities for improving government transparency and openness, has firm political support and is able to impose robust modernisation measures. Such efforts are also recognised by the second OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism technical paper of 2016 (OGP IRM 2016). That is why indicators for access to government information and transparency of government show relatively solid results and improvement over a period of two years from 2014 to 2016. The capacities for further improvements have been strengthened slightly in parallel with better achievements. However, despite being situated around the EU average, Croatia still has a lot to do. The situation is precarious due to the fact that unless the capacities are built further, achievements will deteriorate.

In contrast with this, participation and accountability indicators put Croatia at the bottom of the EU countries ranking, with only a slight improvement. That reflects the real situation in which various institutions that have to hold the executive to account have relatively low capacity and support for doing so. The exceptions are, for example, the State Audit Office and the Public Information Commissioner, but there is no improvement in that regard in the capacities of the Parliament. Furthermore, support for the Ombudsperson is weak and needs to be significantly strengthened if better results are to be achieved. Although there are some new channels for public consultations at the central level, local and county levels have not been covered yet. Other forms of citizen participation are still poorly utilised. Their regulation is traditional, without necessary innovations for attracting participation of youth and educated people. There is a vast space for improvement requiring substantial efforts.

Although corruption perception indexes show a slight improvement in the prevention of corruption, Croatia is still among the worst EU performers in that regard. Several criminal charges of top politicians at the central, regional, and local levels are signs of the fight against corruption. Anti-corruption measures are predominantly of normative and institutional nature. The commitment of high state officials to act impartially and in the long-term public interest is not clear enough. There are constant suspicions of financing political activities despite certain improvements of the legal framework. There is a strong distrust of politicians, especially those at the local and county levels. Little has been done through education and training, although strengthening of professional standards is firmly connected with education and the adoption of proper ethical standards. Numerous local units, overlapping competences, and a very complicated structure of deconcentrated state administration form an open space for unethical behaviour. It seems that ethical problems are even worse at the local level. However, there are many initiatives aimed at curbing corruption, from measures for promoting openness and transparency to electronic service delivery.

5.2 Civil service system and HRM

Indicator	Value 2012	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Impartiality (1-7)	2.98	13	3.58	21	+0.60	-8
	Value 2012	EU26 rank	Value 2015	EU26 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Professionalism (1-7)	4.10	15	3.66	24	-0.44	-9
Closedness (1-7)	5.78	6	5.77	4	-0.01	+2

Sources: *Quality of Government Institute (Gothenburg)*

Indicators from the Quality of Government project about the characteristics of the Croatian civil service in 2012 and 2015 show a significant negative trend in

professionalism, no move forward in making the civil service more open and a positive move with regard to impartiality. Other EU Member States made significant improvement in professionalism and impartiality during the same period, which pushed Croatia significantly lower on the ranking lists. The indicator of making the civil service more open shows that Croatia has remained in the group of the EU countries with a highly closed civil service.

The first indicator from the table shows that impartiality standards have been gaining in strength in recent years. However, it has to be taken into account that Croatia started with a relatively low value for this indicator (2.98). Improving the value may be interpreted in the light of measures for electronic service delivery, including the e-Citizen project started in 2014, electronic health-care waiting lists, an electronic procedure of enrolment for secondary schools and universities, and others. Furthermore, publishing financial data and an improvement of access to public information will probably add to a better perception of impartiality.

There are many reasons for the significant decline of the professionalism indicator. These include stronger political influence in the recruitment of civil servants in core government publicly documented after the 2011 general elections and the 2013 local elections; the expansion of political positions in public administration; the establishment of new public agencies without sticking to the standards of professionalism and merit; the introduction of a host of political advisors; no progress with regard to administrative education for the senior positions in core public administration; barely any observable results of in-service training; and no efforts in promoting the standards of civil servants' stewardship in relations to citizens.

The only document with comments about the size, the competence and other important HR issues is the Strategy of Public Administration Development 2015-2020. It addresses many problems relating to HR and the civil service, such as: (1) a fragmented legal regulation structure; (2) a poor design of working positions based on the level of education and the length of work experience without any expectations regarding knowledge, competencies or skills; (3) new working positions being established arbitrarily, with the influence of politics, without objective analyses of real needs; (4) a large share of civil servants in the state administration system with secondary education or lower (about 70%), while the situation is better in public services (about 50% university/college-educated people); (5) the need for in-service training not being estimated in any objective manner; (6) appraisals not being based on the objective criteria of performance results and quality of work, and evaluations not motivating the civil servants to improve their abilities and performance; (7) an extremely fragmented salary system with many inconsistencies; (8) the many weak points in the system of public ethics and integrity; (9) the lack of university programmes for core civil servants and many deficiencies in current education through the professional stream (Strategija 2015).¹⁶

The Croatian public administration is both sizeable and quite politicised which prevents merit-based performance and a focus on results and the quality of public services. However, due to the poor economic situation, employment in public administration is still attractive, especially for people with lower educational levels. Not only is performance

¹⁶ Croatia has a binary model of higher education, with university and professional/vocational streams. Administrative education was classified within the professional/vocational stream at the start of the new model in the mid-1990s without any analysis.

management poorly developed, there are also no incentives for education and in-service training. Formalism and a legalistic approach do not motivate the civil servants to innovate or work better. The position of the Ministry of Public Administration as a central HRM body is relatively weak. Croatia still has no reliable register of all the people who work for the government at all levels which would be complete and open for inspection by the public. There is no official plan for cooperation with universities and research institutes regarding improvements in administrative education and public administration research.

The only strength of the current HRM system is an ability of the Ministry of Public Administration to objectively evaluate current HRM practices, its proactive attitude and continuous attempts to improve the situation. However, the capacity of the Ministry for doing that is well below the needs. The decisions of the two governments in the period 2011-2016 to delegate a part of HRM competencies to the other government bodies (the Ministry of Labour and Pensions, the Financial Agency, etc.) also harmed the mentioned capacity.

5.3 Service delivery and digitalisation

Indicator	Value 2013	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
E-government users (%)	10.41	23	15.18	23	+4.77	0
Pre-filled forms (%)	3.80	28	20.57	22	+16.77	+6
Online service completion (%)	53.29	24	60.57	24	+7.28	0
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Online services (0-1)	0.42	17	0.75	15	+0.33	+2
	Value 2013	EU27 rank				
Barriers to public sector innovation (%)						
			Value 2015	EU28 rank		
Services to businesses (%)			27.00	25		
	Value 2011	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Ease of Doing business (0-100)	62.98	26	72.99	23	+10.01	+3

Sources: European Commission Digital Economy and Society Index UN e-government Index, EU Scoreboard Public innovation, Eurobarometer no. 417, World Bank Group ease of doing business index.

Certain efforts of the central government and several local governments to apply e-government and digital solutions are still not generally accepted and are faced with serious problems of a lack of inter-governmental cooperation, formalism, siloisation and bureaucratisation. The e-Citizen project is one of the rare counter-examples with good development prospects. Another important project, e-Business, is only in the pilot phase.

Reliance on e-government and e-services is a dominant approach in the modernisation of service delivery in Croatia. At the same time, e-government and digitalisation form one of the rare areas of policy consensus between the dominant political parties in Croatia. Efforts that were initially made a few decades ago have recently started to yield results in terms of more timely services, red tape reduction and impartiality in service delivery, citizens' satisfaction, and other performance and delivery indicators. The breaking point was the start of operation of the e-Citizen platform in 2014. However, in comparison with other EU Member States, these results may still be considered modest.

Although improving the investment and business climate was one of the main motives for the digitalisation policy and despite the fact that overall digitalisation of such services is better than digitalisation of services to citizens, it is lagging behind the standards, the EU average, and the expectation of stakeholders regarding the delivery of public services

to business. Even though the basic e-services such as e-taxation, e-invoicing or e-public procurement have been functional, there are still serious problems with land registries.

There are several problems undermining the capacity of the Croatian public administration to deliver e-services effectively and efficiently. Firstly, efforts are concentrated at the central government level, while the local and county levels are lagging far behind due to their modest financial, personnel and organisational capacities. Local service delivery is fragmented and urgent solutions are required. An attempt to establish one-stop shops for citizens which would deliver a substantial share of public services to citizens failed in 2014 and there have been no further efforts in that regard, except some sectoral attempts.

Secondly, although it seems that lodging responsibility for e-government and digitalisation with the Ministry of Public Administration could be the best organisational solution because it eases coordination and protects from the private sector capture, the responsible body has been mainly situated outside the Ministry. The only period when it was not a separate body was between 2011 and 2016, when observable results in digitalisation were achieved.

The position of the central state office is far too weak for imposing digitalisation policy and, at the same time, sensitive to private sector capture. Various ministries and other state bodies have certain competences and responsibilities which have to be carefully and unyieldingly coordinated. Additional problems are the fragmentation of responsibilities and their allocation to a number of public agencies and myriad public service providers, and the low administrative capacity of many service providers (schools, health institutions, etc.). The re-establishment of a separate body, now called the Central State Office for Development of Digital Society, may easily harm overall government capacities to lead effective digitalisation policy.

One of the problematic components of effective service delivery includes very complex and outdated procedural laws which do not take into account a need for administrative simplification and effective service delivery. There is also a problem with the quality of services. Care for this dimension of public services is limited to certain sectors (for example, education), central bodies or local governments, but generally the situation is far from the lowest acceptable level.

One of the concerns regards administrative service delivery, because the principle of integrated service provision by applying the one-stop shop principle is substantively neglected. Several attempts to foster this principle have not been particularly successful or have ended in failure. Large towns are forerunners in new, modern service delivery practices. Probably the best example of integral delivery of administrative services may be found in the City of Zagreb where 11 deconcentrated offices of the city administration function in line with the one-stop shop principle. An attempt to use first-line offices of state administration in 111 towns in Croatia was unfortunately halted for political reasons in 2014. Although the public debate about territorial reform, regionalisation and substantive decentralisation started in 2010, there is insufficient political will for such a reform. However, the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020 addressed this issue, prescribing the preparation of analyses and proposal for the reform by 2019 at the latest.

5.4 Organisation and management of government

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Strategic planning capacity (1-10)	6.00	10	7.00	7	+1.00	+3
Interministerial coordination (1-10)	4.17	27	4.33	27	+0.16	0
SGI Implementation capacity (1-10)	4.00	27	4.00	27	0.00	0
	Value 2012	EU26 rank	Value 2015	EU27 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
QOG Implementation capacity (1-7)	4.83	15	5.38	7	+0.55	+8

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Quality of Government Institute (Gothenburg)

Croatia addressed the problem of weak strategic planning capacities and performance in the early 2000s. Some robust initial measures were taken at that time (i.e. project 'Croatia in the 21st century', establishment of a separate Government Office for Strategic Planning, and adoption of 19 strategic documents). New efforts aimed at improving strategic planning were made at the end of the 2000s with obligatory strategic planning for central bodies and counties.

Although the situation has improved in strategic planning, it is not equally good in planning administrative modernisation. Another huge problem is the 'paper strategy' paradox because there are many strategic documents, but political support and capacities for their implementation are lacking. The SGI implementation capacity indicator shows just such a lack of implementation capacity. A similar situation is encountered with the indicator of interministerial coordination – another issue of great concern in Croatia. Both the mentioned indicators (see table) show that Croatia is among the worst performers in the EU.

However, many local governments now perceive the strategic planning as a tool for improving their ability to attract money from EU funds, which gives it new prospects. That, in addition to previous efforts at the central and county levels, is why improvement in the value of strategic planning capacity indicator is not surprising. In this matter, Croatia is above the EU average and needs to continue refining the strategic planning practice at all governmental levels.

On the more general level of quality of governance, Croatia ranks much better with significant improvement in the three-year period from 2012 to 2015. Croatia moved from the middle to the upper positions, achieving seventh place in 2015 among the EU Member States. Further research would be needed to understand the broad difference between the scores from the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Quality of Government indicator on implementation capacity.

5.5 Policy-making, coordination and regulation

Indicator	Value 2014	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Societal consultation (1-10)	4.00	21	4.00	23	0.00	-2
Use of evidence based instruments (1-10)	4.67	13	4.67	14	0.00	-1
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Regulatory quality (-2.5,+2.5)	0.56	28	0.36	28	-0.20	0
Rule of law (-2.5,+2.5)	0.17	26	0.20	26	+0.03	0

Sources: Bertelsmann Stiftung, World Bank Group

Evidence-based policy making is present to a moderate extent in Croatian public administration, mostly at the central level, while local capacities for designing evidence-based local, urban or regional policies are relatively weak. Improvements are to a great extent limited to the legal framework but data and insights regarding practice in public consultations or regulatory impact assessments show numerous deficiencies and an overall lack of political will to support substantive improvements to policy making. The data show that participation of citizens and other stakeholders at the central level is

developing well, while the problems of regulatory impact assessments are persistent. Only scattered data on public consultations at the local and county levels are available, but regulatory impact assessment in this regard is non-existent. There is neither regulation that would require RIA at these levels nor any practice of it on a voluntary basis. Moreover, experts report on many other problems with policy making, particularly those regarding policy coordination and the monitoring of policy implementation (Petak 2013; 2015). The predominant approach in work of government is legalistic, but then again the quality of regulation is not very highly rated.

Although indicators from the table suggest a slightly different situation, it is more likely that the situation with public consultations is better than the one with regulatory impact assessment, especially if we take into account the situation in the whole governance system, local levels included. Similarly, although one may be critical with regard to the rule of law and regulatory quality, it seems that these indicators have been ascribed unjustifiably low values which put Croatia in very last place on the list of the EU Member States. That can be understood only if the indicators have been based on a number of unusual and exceptional cases which have been of special interest to the media and public. For more useful indications, more data about the performance of justice and other forms of law enforcement would be needed.

5.6 Overall government performance

Indicator	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2016	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Trust in government (%)	13.00	25	15.00	24	+2.00	+1
	Value 2011	EU27 rank				
Improvement of PA over last 5 years (%)						
	Value 2010	EU28 rank	Value 2015	EU28 rank	Δ Value	Δ Rank
Public sector performance (1-7)	3.53	26	3.50	24	-0.03	+2
Government effectiveness (-2.5,+2.5)	0.63	24	0.51	23	-0.12	+1

Sources: Eurobarometer 85, Eurobarometer 370, World Bank Group, World Economic Forum.

Indicators in the table show that the levels of trust in government are extremely low with a slight, almost insignificant increase in the six-year period from 2010 to 2016. Such indicators put Croatia at the bottom of the list of EU countries once again. Since no other similar indicators are available, this can be taken as the introductory point for more detailed and thorough analyses of specific public administration modernisation issues.

Indicators of public sector performance and government effectiveness also offer rather general and basic information which need further confirmation and evidence. However, they can be used as a kind of 'nascent state', an analytical point from which the collection of verified information and a real construction of knowledge about the system of public administration can start.

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