

Call for Papers

Agencies in crisis? States in search of better coordination and rationalization of agencification

EGPA Study Group on Governance of Public Sector Organizations
Conference of the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA)
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The EGPA Study Group on Governance of Public Sector Organizations studies aspects of public sector organizations. The focus is on organizations of different forms, ranging from semi-independent governmental units to different types of ‘agencies’, state-owned companies and government foundations. Central issues under study are: the establishment, change and dissolution of these organizations; different characteristics of different forms of organizations; their design; governance, management and control; and their performance. Furthermore, these organizations interact with a complex (multi-level) network of actors, consisting of for example parliament, ministers and ministries, subnational and international government organizations, regulators, other agencies, interest groups, courts and civil society. The quality, frequency and type of interactions can be studied, as well as the consequences for all parties involved.

Recently, governments have been involved in processes of ‘rationalization’ of the state, leading to massive reshuffling of agencies, forced collaboration between agencies, or the re-strengthening of the control of these agencies. Some organizations are merged, split or they are given another agency status (legal form). In some cases, only some tasks are merged, by establishing shared services for management support tasks, or by merging front-office or back-office tasks of multiple agencies (like shared systems for inspections or subsidies). A related change is the increased emphasis on inter-agency collaborative arrangements in most countries. Besides structural changes, in times of budgetary austerity governments also strengthen the control and supervision of these agencies, by (re)new(ed) financial-budgetary controls or strengthening political accountability (besides managerial accountability). These issues raise the question about the impact of these changes on the autonomy of agencies, as the autonomy of agencies is generally believed to be a precondition for a good performance of agencies.

In part these changes are due to the financial crisis that most countries have had to endure, or still are enduring. A second explanation for these changes is that agencification has led to a fragmentation of the public sector. Governments are confronted with high numbers of agencies, some of which carry out very similar tasks, and some of which carry out only a small part of one policy programme. Merging agencies is then expected to reduce overlap or enable cross-cutting co-operation to deal with so-called wicked issues.

For agencies, the process of rationalization, re-strengthened control and increased collaboration creates both high insecurity about continuation of their existence, as well as new opportunities to obtain new tasks, more autonomy or adopt new ways of working. Moreover, agencies have to invest in the process of transformation, which will undoubtedly affect their performance as well.

We invite papers that present research findings on these processes of rationalization, re-strengthened control and accountability arrangements and inter-agency collaboration, as well as the underlying motives and results thereof for the different actors (government, ministries, agencies, parliament, customers, and so on). Additionally, in line with the previous years, we also accept papers which explain autonomy and control of public sector organizations or use these variables as independent variables.

Papers can be descriptive or explanatory, but they should have a clear conceptual and theoretical basis and meet the normal methodological standards for research. Comparative papers (across time, countries, government levels or policy sectors) are particularly welcomed.

The Study Group aims at expanding its boundaries by inviting researchers from public administration and other disciplines like management research, organisation studies, and public enterprise studies to its meetings.

Practicalities

The permanent Study Group will aim for publication of high-quality papers in special issues of peer-reviewed journals, as well as creating possibilities for the publication of single papers. Study Group website: <http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/egpa/org/index.htm>
Practical information on the EGPA 2011 conference can be found at:
<http://www.egpa-conference2011.org>

Please submit a short abstract (max. one page) outlining the title of the paper; a short description of the contents of the paper; the research method of your contribution, and the empirical material to be used, name, affiliation, and contact information of the author(s). The deadline for abstracts is **May 1st, 2011**. Final acceptance will be notified by June 1st, 2011. Final papers are due by July 31st 2011.

Papers will be made available on the Study Group Website. Paper presenters will be expected to prepare a short presentation and to act as a discussant for at least one other paper.

Please e-mail paper proposals in doc(x), pdf or rtf format to the study group convenors:

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