

## PREFACE

This book is a result of the collective work of a group of international researchers who have co-operated within Working Group 1 (WG1) of the COST<sup>1</sup> Action “Local Public Sector Reforms: An International Comparison LocRef (IS 1207)” which was launched in spring 2013. professor Sabine Kuhlmann of the University of Potsdam, Germany, is the Chair and professor Geert Bouckaert of the University of Leuven, Belgium, Vice-Chair of the mentioned COST Action.

WG1 is chaired by Professor Ivan Koprić from the University of Zagreb, Croatia, and co-chaired by Professor Emeritus Hellmut Wollmann, Humboldt University, Germany, and professor Gérard Marcou, University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France. WG1 studies reforms of local-level public and social services throughout Europe from a cross-country comparative perspective. The work of WG1 has been organised in two phases, focusing on changes in the provision of public and social services especially at the municipal level and on evaluation of reforms of local public and social services in contemporary Europe.

This book follows the theoretical and methodological pattern, the logic and the considerations of the previous book, *Public and Social Services in Europe: From Public and Municipal to Private Sector Provision* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), which was prepared within the same COST Action LocRef (IS 1207) and edited by the same editors (Hellmut Wollmann, Ivan Koprić and Gérard Marcou). The members of WG1 met four times to elaborate, discuss and prepare the concept, structure, approach and chapters of this book. The initial workshop was held in

Dubrovnik, Croatia (5–6 May 2015), and the following meetings were held in Istanbul, Turkey (22–23 October 2015), Bern, Switzerland (30–31 March 2016), and Zagreb, Croatia (27–28 June 2016).

The second phase of WG1 work resulted in accumulated information, data and knowledge about the evaluation of changes in local service provision and evaluation of reforms to local services across Europe organised in 18 chapters. A variety of local services and European countries are covered. We are grateful to the chapter authors for participating in our collective efforts to rekindle research, scientific, practical, policy, professional and educational interest in evaluation studies and to confirm the high value of such studies for policy improvements in the field of local service reforms.

Preparation of the book was technically supported by a team of young researchers from the Chair of Administrative Science, Faculty of Law, in Zagreb. Headed by Assistant Professor Goranka Lalić Novak, they invested considerable effort in technical editing of the manuscripts. In addition, Assistant Professor Teo Giljević from the same Chair prepared the index and additional lists for the book. We owe them particular gratitude.

We especially thank our publisher, Palgrave Macmillan, and the two co-editors, Professors Taco Brandsen and Robert Fouchet, who decided to include this book in the series “Governance and Public Management.” We are also grateful to anonymous reviewers for their support and useful suggestions.

We also wish to thank Christian Schwab, the Academic Project Coordinator and Secretary of the COST Action LocRef (IS 1207) for his timely, efficient and kind support during the second phase of WG1 work.

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## NOTE

1. European Cooperation in Science and Technology, <http://www.cost.eu/>.

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