

Call for participation

5th TED

2-3 February 2012, Budapest, Hungary

The politics of agency governance

Over the past three decades agencification has become part and parcel of the government machine in countries all around the world. Agencification refers to the creation of semi-autonomous agencies. These agencies operate at arms' length of the government and are charged by the government to carry out all kinds of executive and regulatory tasks.

An important motive for agencification is the so-called logic of political credibility (Majone, 2001). By creating an agency at arms' length, politicians show their willingness to refrain from interference; the agency can thus carry out its tasks in an impartial and expert manner. In practice, however, we see that politicians keep on interfering and meddling with agencies (Pollitt, 2005). Moreover, many agency tasks are inherently political because they involve the implementation of policies, decisions about allocation or distribution of scarce resources, and delivery of goods/services to citizens/voters.

There are many other ways in which politics and/or politicians (still) play a role in and around agencies. For example, agencies experience, at street-level, which policies work well and which do not. This information is necessary input for policy makers inside the government. However, this input is not always heard, processed or even appreciated by for example ministries. Therefore, some agencies have developed new ways to influence policy debates and development themselves; they become active participants in the political or policy debate (Verschuere, 2009). See for example the transnational networks of regulatory agencies, in which regulatory policies are shaped, outside of the influence sphere of national governments and politicians.

A third way in which politicians can exert influence on agencies is through their role in the design of agencies. In many countries, the decision to establish an agency requires a political decision, for instance legislation. Politicians can thus decide whether an agency is born, what its task will be, its legal form, governance structure, funding, and so on. Politicians may also decide who is appointed as CEO and/or member(s) of the board; political appointments are of course the ultimate way to influence agency functioning on a daily basis. The latter aspect of the topic has been shown to be especially relevant for new or transitional states where the level of politicization of public administrations tends to be higher than in countries with long-established democracies (see e.g. OECD 2009).

This conference will focus on aspects of politics in and around agencies in CEE, CIS and Western European countries. 'Politicians' include both ministers as members of executive cabinets, as well as the role of parliament and parliamentarians, as political parties. We invite speakers to discuss issues like:

- The appointment of agency CEOs and board members (including issues of patronage and politicization)

- The influence of agencies on the political and/or policy debate
- The role of politics and politicians in the decision to create agencies
- The role of politics and politicians in the governance (steering, control) of agencies
- The merits of agencification for politicians and political parties (incl. shifting of blame and risks, direct influence through appointments, assets in political bargains...)
- The effects of interference by politicians in agency matters for the functioning of agencies.

Participants – including, especially, young researchers – , who are interested to give a presentation on any of these topics or the theme of the conference, are invited to submit a short proposal with an overview how it reflects their own research interests and activities. See below for more details.

Format of the conference:

TED5, like the previous Trans-European Dialogues, is a focused, by-invitation meeting of 40-50 participants from Europe. Rather than formally presenting all attendees' papers the format centers around intense dialogue and discussions between the participants. The discussions will be structured into 2 to 4 sessions, each of which starting with a keynote presentation followed by participants' oral contributions reflecting on the key elements of their research.

By sending this Invitation we ask each invitee to develop and submit **one or both** of the following; i.e., either Option (a) or Option (b) or Option (a)+(b) can be chosen:

- a) One or two brief (100-300 words long) propositions related to the key conference themes, along with an explanation of how the propositions reflect their own research interests and activities. These propositions will be the basis of a brief presentation at the TED5 event.
- b) A proposal (abstract) of a paper to be delivered for the TED5 event. After the TED5 event a selected set of participants will be asked to submit their paper for publication in a special issue of NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy.

Proposals as well as any inquiries should be sent to the following persons:

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Important deadlines:

- September 15 2011: Invitees' acceptance of the invitation by submitting their proposals/abstracts
- October 1 2011: The Organizing Committee notifies invitees about its decision regarding the submitted proposals
- January 15 2012: Submission of papers for the TED event (for those who chose to deliver one)
- January 31 2012: Finalization of program, circulation of attendees' propositions among participants

References:

- Majone, G. (2001). Two logics of delegation: agency and fiduciary relations in EU governance. *European Union Politics*, 2(1), 103-122.
- OECD. 2009. Sustainability of Civil Service Reforms Central and Eastern Europe Five Years after EU Accession. SIGMA Paper No. 44. Paris: OECD/SIGMA.
- Pollitt, C. (2005). Ministries and agencies: steering, meddling, neglect and dependency. In: M. Painter & J. Pierre. (eds.). *Challenges to state capacity: global trends and comparative perspectives*. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. [pp.112-136]
- Verschuere, B. (2009). The role of public agencies in the policy making process: rhetoric versus reality. *Public Policy and Administration*, 24(1), 22-46.