

Schwab | Bouckaert | Kuhlmann [eds.]

The Future of Local Government in Europe

Lessons from Research and Practice
in 31 Countries



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Modernisierung des öffentlichen Sektors

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Christian Schwab | Geert Bouckaert
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Preface

This policy brochure is an outcome of the COST Action IS1207 ‘Local Public Sector Reforms (LocRef¹)’, which ran for four years from March 2013 to March 2017 within the EU/Horizon 2020 framework. The main objective of this project was to identify approaches and effects of local public sector reforms from an international, comparative perspective, to explain these approaches/effects and to draw lessons for future policy-making. LocRef embraced more than 300 senior and early stage researchers in 31 countries from about 60 academic institutions. Based on a shared European perspective, it brought together academics and practitioners in order to jointly assess the hitherto scattered and dispersed information bases on local public sector reforms, to generate new comparative knowledge, and to develop policy-relevant frameworks in order to design future modernization processes in Europe. The overarching questions addressed by LocRef were:

“Which approaches and effects of local public sector reform can be identified from an international comparative perspective? How can these be explained? What lessons can be drawn for policymaking?”

The output of LocRef includes more than 200 individual articles, 10 English language books and seven special issues in international journals (published or in preparation). To achieve this output, 32 conferences, workshops, meetings and PhD Training Schools were conducted within the four year term of LocRef. What has been missing so far, however, is an overview of the major conclusions and recommendations to practitioners to guide future reforms of local governments in Europe. This policy brochure is meant to fill this gap. The policy brochure project would not have been feasible without the support of many colleagues, friends and institutions. First and foremost, the main resource for making this network project possible came from the COST Association (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), which funded LocRef as COST Action IS1207. The editors had the honour of serving LocRef as Academic Coordinator, Vice Chair and Chair. We are very grateful and owe many thanks to the senior and early stage researchers within LocRef who contributed to our common research, be it as working group chairs/members, authors, commenters, discussants, local organizers of conferences/workshops or participants in periods of research at partner institu-

1 Refer to: <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/cost-locref/>

tions (so-called Short Term Scientific Missions). A complete list of LocRef participants is provided in the appendix. Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude to the main authors of the chapters as well as to those colleagues who contributed valuable input and empirical information to the various chapters of this policy brochure. Without their contributions, this book would not have been possible. Our thanks also goes to the research team in Potsdam, particularly Marcel Blank, Justine Marienfeldt and Constanze Arnold, for their support in preparing the final manuscript. Lastly, yet importantly, we would like to thank the reviewers of the book manuscript for their helpful comments on an earlier version of the brochure, and our publisher, Nomos edition sigma, for its interest in our project and the support we received.

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