




Weekly Briefing

**Croatia Social briefing:
Think tanks in Croatia
Marina Funduk**

China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.
 +36 1 5858 690
 office@china-cee.eu
 china-cee.eu

Think tanks in Croatia

Summary

A quick snapshot of think-tanks in Croatia shows that the situation in Croatia reflects think-tank situation in most other Eastern European countries. Traditionally, there are hardly any private think-tanks as is frequently the case in the West. Perhaps unlike other Eastern European countries, in Croatia there are very few government think-tanks whose task is to inform policy making and facilitate policy implementation. Croatia basically has academic think-tanks linked to universities or public research institutes which are funded by the Ministry of Science on provision that academic freedom is guaranteed. Croatia also has civil society organisations which, over years, have developed their expertise and manner of operation to conduct research and successfully influence policy making.

Definition, framework, policy fields

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a think tank as “an institute, corporation, or group organized to study a particular subject (such as a policy issue or a scientific problem) and provide information, ideas, and advice.”¹

Think tank organisations are modern organisations that conduct independent, publicly available policy research, focused on a specific research area, which are backed by expert and professional team of researchers. McGann and Weaver (2000) identify four generations of think tank organisations. The first generation of think tank organisations are characterized by academic centres, the form of contractual institutions is characteristic for the second generation. The third generation are organisations focused on advocacy, while the fourth is characterized by interest organisations.

There are different institutional forms of think-thanks – academic think tank organisations, profit and non-profit organisations. Academic think tank organisations, produce interdisciplinary research with a policy component. They most often use the state and various other funds as the sources of funding, and they are often called "universities without students" (McGann and Weaver, 2000), because founders consist mainly of professors and academics.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/think%20tank>

For-profit think tank organisations exclusively conduct research commissioned by clients and also provide lobbying and advocacy services to their clients. Non-profit think tank organisations are characterized by independent research, multitude of various donors, and autonomy in the work of organisations².

Think tank organizations in Croatia are mostly academic institutions that, as the name suggests, are mainly active in the field of academia. However, some of them are also substantially engaged in analysing and advising in different policy areas: economy, foreign affairs, security, education, environment, energy, youth, migration and other policy areas. Some non-governmental organizations focus on elections, non-violence, migration and human rights.

NIRA's World Directory of Think Tanks (NWDTT), published by NIRA's Centre for Policy Research provides a systematic introduction to the world's most prominent and innovative public policy research institutes, known as think tanks. It lists Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO, formerly IMO) as the only think tank from Croatia on their list.

James G. McGann from University of Pennsylvania conducts a research on the role policy institutes play in governments and in civil societies around the world. McGann's *2017 The Global Go To Think Tank Index*³ ranks on its *Top Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe* two institutes from Croatia - Institute of Economics (EIZ) (rank 56) and Institute of Public Finance (IJF) (rank 62). On McGann's *Top Education Policy Think Tanks* it ranks the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), part of the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (IDIZ) as one of three education policy think tanks from Croatia, but the only public scientific institute (rank 42).

An overview of selected think-tanks

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), established in 1963, is a public, scientific, and policy research institute that contributes to the understanding of foreign and security policies, public policies of the European Union, cultural, communication and media policies, policies of regional, local, urban and rural development, environmental

² Delić, Anamarija; Singer, Slavica; Alpeza, Mirela: The Role of Think Tanks in Shaping SME Business Environment in Croatia - The Case of CEPOR" // Challenges of Europe: Growth and Competitiveness - Reversing the Trends / Reić, Zlatan ; Šimić, Vladimir (ed.) Split: Faculty of Economics, University of Split, 2011. p 243-261 Available at: http://www.cepor.hr/Delic_Singer_Alpeza_EIT2011_full%20paper_final.pdf

³ Available at: https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=think_tanks

policies, migration, energy and climate policies, economic policies (competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation) through interdisciplinary scientific and policy research.

IRMO often organizes conferences and public discussions on topics of public relevance, most frequently in the areas of foreign affairs and security. Its researchers often appear in media commenting on Croatia's foreign policy and global affairs.

Institute of Economics Zagreb (EIZ), established in 1939, is a public scientific institute whose research areas include macroeconomics and international economics, business economics and business sector, regional development, social policy and labour markets.

Experts from the Institute of Economics Zagreb and Croatian National Bank helped the creation of an economic stabilization program in the early 1990s and introduction of the Croatian national currency *kuna* (*HRK*) in 1994. In late 2000 EIZ was again contracted by the government to contribute to economic policy making. Prime minister Jadranka Kosor hired the team of EIZ (with several associate experts) to prepare a state recovery programme. Despite being assessed as a good recovery programme by experts, the programme did not demonstrate its full potential because the mandate of Kosor government ended before the programme could be fully implemented.

Institute of Public Finance (IJF), established in 1970, is a public research institute that performs applied and theoretical research in the field of public sector economics. The Institute researches public sector and its components – tax, pension, health and educational systems, social security system, public administration and state owned enterprises. The Institute's primary goal is to research efficiency, sustainability and accountability of public sector. This includes the analysis of economic trends and the effects of economic policy in public sector. Among the most important topics researched by the Institute are open state budgets, participation of citizens in the budget process, unofficial economy, effects of institutions on economic growth, foreign direct investments, redistributive effects of taxes and social benefits.

In 1991 IJF introduced the idea of the Croatian Dinar (a temporary currency) used to replace the Yugoslavian Dinar. Later, in cooperation with German experts, the IJF provided a draft of the first Croatian tax system. In the early 2000, during the Prime Minister Ivica Račan's government, IJF experts helped develop a reform model for the pension system. At that time, the model of three pillars of pension insurance clearly distinguished private savings from the pillar of generational solidarity.

Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (IDIZ), established in 1964, is the public institute whose scientific research is in the field of sociology and related disciplines. The Institute for Social Research in Zagreb consists of four scientific research centre. One of them is The Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) that carries out fundamental, applied and developmental interdisciplinary research, as well as educational activities which aim to develop the educational sciences and the education system.

Institute for Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, established in 1991, is a public institute for scientific research in the fields of social sciences and humanities: sociology, psychology, political science, history, philosophy, anthropology, demography. Institute has regional centres in Zagreb, Split, Osijek, Pula, Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Varaždin and Gospić and, according to the number of employees, is Croatia's biggest social sciences institute. The Institute has the largest number of sociologists, accounting for about one third of all employed scientists, followed by psychologists and historians, philosophers and political scientists.

The Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, established in 1994, is a state-owned, non-profit scientific institution financed on a per-project basis through the execution of project development contracts won following international and national competitive biddings. It belongs to few state-linked think-tanks, those whose task is to offer analysis and support for policy making in the field of energy. The Institute's areas of activity include strategic planning in the energy sector; development of electric-power, gas, petroleum and heating systems; market, legal framework and restructuring of the energy sector; energy efficiency; renewable energy sources, environmental and climate protection; energy audits and certification of buildings; energy balances and statistics; in-service training and promotional activities. Energy Institute in 2018 produced a Green Paper or analytical materials for the new Energy Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia by 2030 with a view to 2050.

The Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, established in 1984, is a scientific public institute that researches all forms of population migration and mobility, by studying national/ethnic minorities and various aspects of ethnic issues. Scientist from the Institute have been more engaged in ethnic make-up and position of minorities in various national contexts in the past. Current migration trends in regional, European and global environment is a new theme that they are more and more actively pursuing.

Non-governmental organisations

Green Action is a leading non-governmental organization for environmental protection in Croatia. It was founded in 1990 and is well known for its attractive and imaginative public advocacy actions and campaigns. A small team of professionals supports the work of numerous volunteers and activists, who cover a wide range of topics in their work. Green Action is active on local, national and global levels and promotes the protection of nature and the environment, while advocating for sustainable development in Croatian and other communities. It also focuses on activities that foster public participation in decision-making processes with the aim of improving the quality of life in Croatia.

Centre for Peace Studies (CMS) is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation promoting non-violence and social change through education, research and activism. CMS has been very active in the field of migration and integration of migrants in Croatia. Their volunteers work with refugees and asylum seekers, teach them the Croatian language, assist them in dealing with the state bureaucracy and offer other kinds of support aimed at their successful integration into the Croatian society.

CMS activists are publicly visible in explaining broader migration issues and they participate in different European research projects in the field of their expertise.

GONG is a civil society organization focused on enhancing democratic processes and institutions as well as developing democratic political culture and encouraging active and responsible participation of citizens in political processes, particularly in decision-making processes related to good governance of public and collective property, protection and promotion of the rule of law, human rights and solidarity. GONG was founded in 1997 as an initiative of citizens organized to monitor elections, but by today has widened the methodology to conducting research and analysis, education, information sharing and public advocacy.

Conclusion

As this brief sketch of think-tanks in Croatia shows is that the crux of think-tanks are academic. They are public research institutes and universities with few other independent researchers who contribute to policy debate on specific topics. There are also non-governmental organisations that are developing their expertise and are contributing to policy debate on topics of their interest. There is a need for specialized, for example, foreign policy think-tank, one which would work on informing the public on foreign policy issues of national interest. Whether there will be private initiative to establish think-tanks in Croatia remain to be seen.