

CROATIAN DECISION AGENDA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ACTS PUBLISHED IN THE NATIONAL GAZETTE SINCE 1990

*Assist. Prof. Dr. Ana Petek**

UDK: 340.13.01(497.5)

Prethodno znanstveno priopćenje

Primljeno: srpanj 2017.

This exploratory paper has the purpose of describing the Croatian decision agenda and its issues. Data analysis is based on the dataset of the research project POLIPTIH that contains all acts published in the official gazette Narodne novine since Croatian independence. More than 30 thousand units of analysis were coded by the international CAP codebook of policy content and by the rules of quantitative content analysis and then analyzed with descriptive statistics. The analysis compares the diversity of legislative and executive – presidential and governmental – decision agendas by the total number of agenda items and by the concentration of attention across policy sectors and issues. The results show that the presidential decision agenda is the least diverse, and the parliamentary decision agenda is more diverse than the presidential but still less diverse than the decision agenda of the cabinet government. Analysis also shows that core functions of government, defence, international affairs, economy, government operations and rule of law are the most present on all Croatian decision agendas, and social policies and human rights policies are heavily underrepresented.

Keywords: legislative decision agenda, executive decision agenda, political attention, agenda diversity, policy issues

* Ana Petek, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Lepušićeva 6, Zagreb; ana.petek@fpzg.hr;
ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-9553-8334

I. INTRODUCTION

“An agenda is a collection of problems, understandings of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their governmental officials”.¹ An agenda is an indicator of many important features of the political phenomenon. Every government has limited capacities to handle public problems and is challenged in making choices and priorities. One of the most challenging limitations for any government is the vast amount of information that needs to be processed, which makes governmental issue attention scarce.² So, agenda and policy issues that get governmental attention are among the best indicators of government priorities. Putting something on the agenda and, furthermore, obstructing others’ issues from becoming an agenda item are both supreme signs of power.³ Therefore, conflicts for control over the limited agenda are crucial struggles within political systems.

The agenda also shows how different interests and actors are represented within governmental decision-making. “A diverse agenda implies more opportunities for the representation of interests”.⁴ “Who Gets What, When, and How”, the title of a book almost a century old⁵, is often used as a standard lay definition of politics because it summarizes its nature in simple terms. Gaining some value or fulfilling interests by using state power are common motivations for participating in political processes of decision-making. This is closely connected to the basic understanding of democracy as governing in favour of the people. Who benefits and who loses from government action is a prime political science and social science intrigue, and agenda analysis is one of the most important ways of solving the question.

¹ Birkland, T., *Agenda Setting in the Public Policy*, in: Fischer, F.; Miller, G. J.; Sidney M. S. (ed.), *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, Taylor and Francis CRC Press, London, 2006, p. 63.

² Jennings, W.; Bevan, S.; Timmermans, A.; Breeman, G.; Brouard, S.; Chaqués-Bonafont, L.; Green-Pedersen, C.; John, P.; Mortensen, P. B.; Palau, A. M., *Effects of the Core Functions of Government on the Diversity of Executive Agendas*, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 10, 2011, pp. 1 – 30.

³ Bachrach, P.; Baratz, M. S., *Two faces of Power*, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 1962, pp. 947 – 952; Grdešić, I., *Političko odlučivanje*, Alinea, Zagreb, 1995.

⁴ Jennings *et al.*, *op. cit.* in footnote 2, p. 2.

⁵ Lasswell, H., *Who gets What, When, and How?*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1936.

The analysis of agenda can reveal relations among elite decision-making and mass participation in politics. It can especially exploit the gap between election campaign political promises and real effects of policy-making. Research questions connected to agenda are often focused on the determinants of the agenda setting process, on how topics and issues get access to the agenda and what actors participate in that process. Agenda research is highly developed in political science around the world. As founding fathers of the agenda theory, surely Cobb and Elder⁶, John Kingdon⁷ and Baumgartner and Jones⁸ should be mentioned. Empirical research of agenda setting involves one of the most developed political science research communities in the world. *Comparative Agendas Project* (CAP)⁹, founded by Baumgartner and Jones, is an informal international network of projects devoted to the analysis of political priorities, issue attention and agenda setting. Today, 20 national projects, two US state projects and an EU project are coordinated through the CAP network.

In Croatia, systematic agenda research is at its beginning. Therefore, this paper has an exploratory purpose of preparing a first description of the Croatian political agenda and its issues. The paper will focus on the decision agenda, as the narrowest and most influential agenda level, with the following descriptive research question: what issues are present on the Croatian decision agenda from 1990? Data analysis is based on the datasets of the research project *Political Priorities in Croatia*¹⁰ (POLIPTIH), the endeavour of several scholars from the Center for Empirical Research in Political Science (CEPIS) at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb. The analyzed dataset contains all acts published in *Narodne novine* since Croatian independence.¹¹ In

⁶ Cobb, R. W.; Elder, C. D., *Participation in American Politics. The Dynamics of Agenda Building*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1983.

⁷ Kingdon, J. W., *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1984.

⁸ Baumgartner, F. R.; Jones, B. D., *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1993.; Jones, B. D.; Baumgartner, F. R., *The Politics of Attention. How Government Prioritizes Problems*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005.

⁹ *Comparative Agendas Project*, <http://www.comparativeagendas.net/> (19th May 2017).

¹⁰ Project was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and implemented from July 2015 to September 2016.

¹¹ The same project also produced several other datasets on political priorities. Those datasets are: parliamentary sessions' agenda items from parliamentary minutes, executive government meetings' agenda items, MP's questions, party manifestos of parliamentary parties and media headlines of daily newspapers *Večernji list*, all from 1990 to 2015.

total, 31,480 units of analysis were coded by the international CAP codebook of policy content and by the rules of quantitative content analysis and then analyzed with basic descriptive statistics. The paper starts with defining the decision agenda. Then, it continues with a detailed explanation of the methodology and the empirical material. In the main empirical part, legislative and executive decision agendas are described and analyzed: first, a general distribution of policy sectors or main coding categories over the 25 years is explored; next, policy issues or subcategories attracting the most attention are listed and investigated within the perspective of the policy sectors that they belong to; and then a change of the attention dedicated to specific sectors through time is scrutinized. The final part of the paper is devoted to the comparison of different decision agendas in Croatia.

2. DEFINING DECISION AGENDA

Agenda could be systematized into different levels.¹² Levels of the agenda are differentiated from lower to higher: agenda universe, systemic agenda, institutional agenda and decision agenda. Higher levels of agenda are narrower, have fewer issues that are more specialized, and get greater attention from the public and policy makers.¹³ Agenda universe and systemic agenda constitute the informal agenda. They are broader and have a greater number of issues, a more vague approach to issues, and a lower level of attention attached to each topic. The agenda-setting process proceeds with issues travelling to the formal agenda – the institutional agenda and the decision agenda. Limited capacities, resources and available time make the formal agenda much narrower, as quite a limited number of issues become items of governmental meetings. Those items are in a much more specialized form than issues on the informal agenda. The smallest number of topics reaches the highest level of the agenda – the decision agenda. This agenda is a list of issues that governmental bodies will act upon, which are prepared for the policy implementation phase and are well developed in detail.¹⁴

The whole process of agenda setting is shifting issues into narrower, higher, and more specialized levels of the policy agenda. It is a “funnel process” of

¹² Birkland, *op. cit.* in footnote 1, pp. 63 – 79.

¹³ Cobb, Elder, *op. cit.* in footnote 6.

¹⁴ Birkland, T., *An Introduction to the Policy Process. Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk and New York, 2001.

selecting issues that get the highest attention of the political elite and citizens. It could also be illustrated as a “bottleneck of attention” process.¹⁵ Political attention is, as Green-Pedersen and Walgrave emphasize, scarce and consequential.¹⁶ It is a precondition for any political change, but the endless array of issues from society that seek political change run against the extremely limited possibilities of political systems. Still, if the gap between the systemic and institutional agenda is too great, the legitimacy of the political system is endangered.¹⁷ Therefore, the intriguing question is what issues and how many issues capture political attention and “make it through” all the agenda levels to become formal governmental decisions. Those constitute a decision agenda, on which the most important decisions are produced by parliament (legislative decision agenda) and by the cabinet government and president (executive decision agenda).

Each agenda can be more or less diverse. Diversity of agenda tells us how political attention is distributed across issues, as diversity is a dispersion of attention between different agenda items. It helps us to measure variations of agendas.¹⁸ An agenda is considered diverse when it contains a broad range of issues, in two aspects. First, diversity grows with a total number of issues. Second, diversity is greater with less concentration of the agenda across issues, when the attention assigned to each issue is lower.¹⁹ By the issue-based theory of agenda diversity, issues on the agenda can be classified into core and selective issues, and they differ by the relevance of their position on the agenda. Some issues are on the agenda all the time, and some only at times when the agenda is more diverse. Previous research shows that when core functions of the government – defence, international affairs, economy, government operations and rule of law²⁰ – are on the agenda with high attention attached, the agenda is generally less diverse. When core government functions are not so salient on the agenda, the agenda becomes more diverse. Obviously, “certain

¹⁵ Green-Pederson, C.; Walgrave, S., *Agenda Setting, Policies, and Political Systems: A Comparative Approach*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2014, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Cobb, Elder, *op. cit.* in footnote 6.

¹⁸ Jennings *et al.*, *op. cit.* in footnote 2, pp. 1 – 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁰ The analysis of executive speeches in 6 countries showed that for the rule of law this assumption is not valid, and that could be connected to specific distribution of jurisdiction in the questions of the rule of law (*Ibid.*).

issues receive attention at the expense of others”.²¹ Core issues do not get attention at the expense of other core issues. Selective issues get attention only when core functions are less salient. This paper will examine the diversity of different decision agendas in Croatia since 1990.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The decision agenda in Croatia, the formal decisions of the government, is situated in the published acts in the official gazette *Narodne novine* (NN). The first issue of *Narodne novine* was published in Zagreb in 1835, under the title *Novine Horvatzke*. It had an important literary supplement that published many crucial works for the development of Croatian national identity, such as the lyrics of the national anthem. The newspaper changed its name several times, but it became the official gazette in 1850 and has held that status throughout all system changes until today. *Narodne novine* today has a record of more than 180 years of regular continuous publishing.²² Within the research project POLIPTIH, we produced a dataset of all acts published in *Narodne novine* since Croatian independence.

The NN dataset was formed using its online public record. We collected the titles of every formal governmental act published in *Narodne novine* from 1990 to the end of 2015. This list was filtered by the institution that was the origin of specific act. We found more than 700 different origin institutions of gathered documents. We filtered many of them that were not of interest, as we focused on legislative and executive agendas on the national level. Therefore, many decisions of institutions such as municipalities, agencies, ombudsmen and constitutional court were omitted. The NN dataset was formed from acts by Sabor, the Croatian parliament, and by the President and the Government of the Republic of Croatia (including acts of ministries and specialized governmental offices²³).

All different types of acts and documents were included in the dataset. It consists of laws, regulations, decisions, rules of procedure, orders, ordinances, conclusions, declarations, resolutions, instructions, strategies, programmes,

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²² *181 godina Narodnih novina*, <https://www.nn.hr/hr/o-nama/iz-povijesti/> (22nd May 2017).

²³ The Government of the Republic of Croatia operates throughout several specialized offices such as, for example, the Office for Cooperation with NGOs or the Legislative Office.

plans, and reports, i.e., everything that has been produced either by the President, by the Parliament or by the Government and its ministries. The title of each selected document was entered in a spreadsheet as an individual unit of analysis with additional variables relating to the publishing date, publishing volume, type of document and html link between a document's headline and its external source. The dataset consists of more than 31,000 documents published in *Narodne novine*, almost 18,000 acts produced by the Government and individual ministries, more than 5,000 documents published by the President and almost 9,000 documents published by the Parliament (see Table 1). The whole dataset is available in open access on the webpage of the Center for Empirical Research in Political Science (CEPIS).²⁴

Table 1. Units of analysis in the *Narodne novine* dataset²⁵

Origin institution	Units of analysis
Parliament	8,467
President	5,136
Government	17,877
TOTAL	31,480

All units of analysis within the *Narodne novine* dataset were coded by the international codebook of policy content of *Comparative Agendas Project* (CAP). The standardized CAP codebook contains 21 major categories that represent fundamental national policy sectors. Those include the following: Domestic Macroeconomic Issues; Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties; Health; Agriculture; Labour and Employment; Education; Environment; Energy; Immigration and Refugee Issues; Transportation; Law, Crime, and Family Issues; Social Welfare; Community Development and Housing Issues; Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce; Defence; Space, Science, Technology, and Communications; Foreign Trade; International Affairs and Foreign Aid; Government Operations; Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues; and Cultural Policy Issues. Each category is divided into subcategories that represent issues that constitute activities in each policy sector. The whole coding scheme is composed of 214 subcategories.

²⁴ See www.cepis.hr.

²⁵ Širinić, D.; Nikić Čakar, D.; Petek, A.; Šipić, J.; Raos, V.; Kekez, A., *Political Priorities in Croatia: Promulgations of Croatian Parliament, Government of the Republic of Croatia and the President of the Republic of Croatia in Official Gazette (v.1.0 – September 2015) (data base)*, Center for Empirical Research in Political Science at Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, 2016.

The coding protocol is guided by principles of quantitative content analysis.²⁶ Coding was conducted by combining manual coding and automated topic classification by means of machine learning techniques. Manual coding was done by a group of coders, using a thorough double-blind coding procedure, in several stages and with multiple check-points to enhance coding consistency. The final phase of manual coding was characterized by 83 percent of inter-coder agreement on the subcategory level and by 89.5 percent of inter-coder agreement at the category level. A sample of 10 percent was manually coded for the development of the machine learning software. Then, a trained supervised classification module coded the remainder of the dataset. At the end of the process, units with a low prediction of accuracy by the software were again manually coded.

This paper will examine each of the decision agendas separately – the legislative or parliamentary decision agenda and the executive decision agenda that contains the presidential and governmental agendas – using basic descriptive statistics. For each actor, the general distribution of main topics or policy sectors will be described to detect the most salient ones. Then, for each decision agenda, 10 subtopics receiving the most attention will be extracted for details on the most important issues in Croatian political decision-making. A change in the distribution of attention dedicated to the main categories or policy sectors over 25 years will also be scrutinized. In the end, different decision agendas will be compared by categories and subcategories to analyze their diversity.

4. LEGISLATIVE DECISION AGENDA

Sabor, the Croatian Parliament, has in its jurisdiction forming and voting in the following types of documents: constitution, laws, state budget, rules of procedure, ordinances, decisions, declarations, resolutions, charters, recommendations, conclusions, recognitions and authoritative interpretation of acts.²⁷ From 1990 to 2015, the Croatian parliament discussed more than 12,000 agenda items at the plenary sessions²⁸ and ended with voting in and

²⁶ Krippendorff, K., *Content Analysis. An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2004; Weber, R., *Basic Content Analysis*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, London and New Delhi, 1990.

²⁷ Article 81. *Ustava Republike Hrvatske*, Narodne novine, No. 56/1990, 135/1997, 8/1998, 113/2000, 124/2000, 28/2001, 41/2001, 55/2001, 76/2010, 85/2010, 05/2014; Article 159. *Poslovnika Hrvatskog sabora*, Narodne novine, No. 81/2013, 113/2016, 69/2017.

²⁸ Širinić, D.; Nikić Čakar, D.; Petek, A.; Šipić, J.; Raos, V.; Kekez, A., *Political Priorities in Croatia: Minutes of Croatian Parliament (v.1.0 – September 2015) (data base)*,

publishing in the official gazette more than 8,000 different sorts of documents. The following distribution of major categories is present in the legislative decision agenda (see Table 2). In the documents that were voted in and published, it is not surprising that the major topic of Government Operations stands out. It dominates the legislative decision agenda with a share of almost 30 percent.²⁹ This is a broad code that covers constitutional reforms and other transformations of the political system, all acts connected to democratic transition and regulating political activity, relations among governmental bodies and branches, etc.

Table 2. Distribution of major categories in the legislative decision agenda

Code	Major category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Domestic Macroeconomic Issues	436	0,05
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	176	0,02
3	Health	209	0,02
4	Agriculture	217	0,03
5	Labour and Employment	159	0,02
6	Education	166	0,02
7	Environment	113	0,01
8	Energy	117	0,01
9	Immigration and Refugee Issues	8	0,00
10	Transportation	251	0,03
12	Law, Crime, and Family Issues	1934	0,23
13	Social Welfare	196	0,02
14	Community Development and Housing Issues	176	0,02
15	Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	739	0,09
16	Defence	282	0,03
17	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	314	0,04
18	Foreign Trade	61	0,01
19	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	285	0,03
20	Government Operations	2395	0,28
21	Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues	205	0,02
23	Cultural Policy Issues	28	0,00
	TOTAL	8467	

Center for Empirical Research in Political Science at Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, 2016.

²⁹ Government Operations is the most present major topic in almost all POLIPTIH datasets.

The second policy sector receiving a high level of attention on the legislative decision agenda is Law, Crime and Family Issues with a share slightly above 20 percent. Central issues in this major category are regulating the justice system and creating civil and criminal codes, which are core duties in parliamentary jurisdiction. The next two most salient major categories are economic ones. Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce and Domestic Macroeconomic Issues together occupy approximately 15 percent of all acts on the legislative decision agenda. Economic policies are almost always a high priority in decision-making around the world, so Croatia is not an exception. Not so evident and expected is the fifth major category on the list of those with the highest attention. This is the policy sector dedicated to Space, Science, Technology and Communication that receives more attention than, for example, codes on Civil Rights, Education and Defence. For better understanding, the issues within this major category must be further investigated, and I will do this below. The most neglected policy sector on the legislative agenda is energy policy, with only 8 documents produced in 25 years, which shows that Parliament has almost no influence on policy-making in this domain, and Cultural Policy receives just slightly more attention than energy.

A closer look at the subcategory level and the policy issues that constitute analyzed policy sectors will give us a better understanding of the distribution of legislative decision agenda content. The 10 subcategories receiving the most attention on the legislative decision agenda are presented in Table 3. They represent almost half of the whole set of parliamentary acts on the decision agenda. Five of them are subtopics within Government Operations, the most salient category overall. Those five codes are connected to nominations and appointments, regulating elections, impeachment, government property management and governmental business in general. Two economic major categories are represented with two issues on the list of most salient subcategories. One is, of course, voting on the national budget. The other highly present economic issue on the legislative decision agenda is regulation of the financial system.

Table 3. Subcategories receiving the most attention on the legislative decision agenda

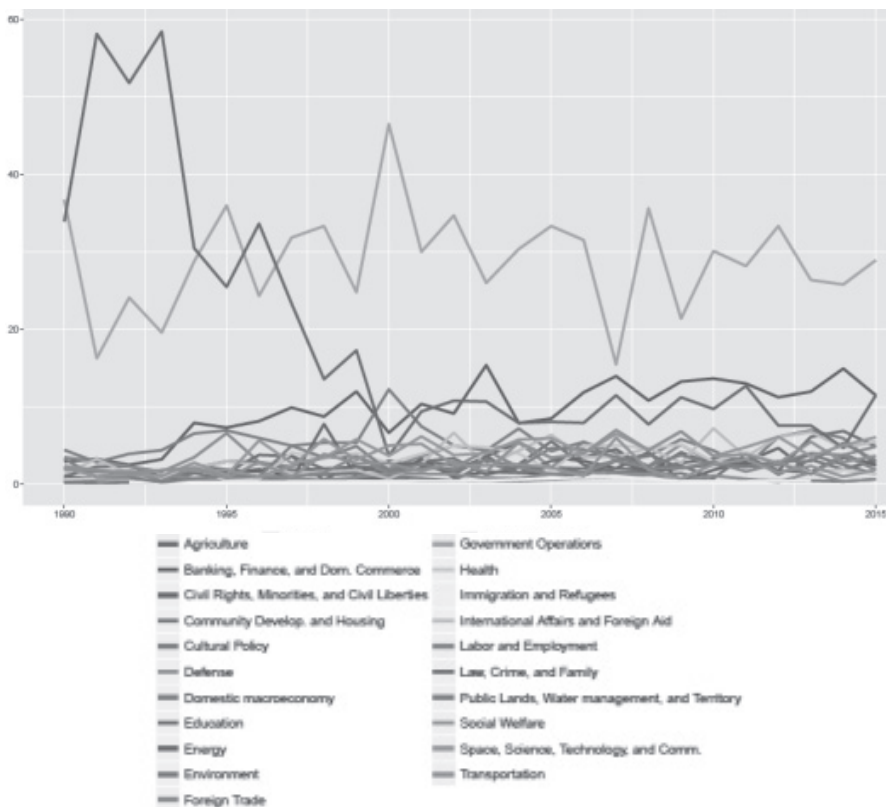
Code	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
1204	Court Administration	1517	0,18
2005	Nominations and Appointments Not Codable Elsewhere	746	0,09
2012	Regulation of Political Activity, Elections and Political Campaigns	470	0,06
105	National Budget and Debt	185	0,02
1210	Criminal and Civil Code	179	0,02
2010	Impeachment and Scandals	174	0,02
2008	Government Property Management	169	0,02
2000	General Government Operations	164	0,02
1501	Banking System and Financial Institution Regulation	158	0,02
1707	Newspaper, Publishing, and Broadcast Industry Regulation	158	0,02
	TOTAL	3920	0,47

The subcategory level gives some insight explaining the importance of the major category Space, Science, Technology and Communication, which is due to the subcategory of media regulation. Newspaper, publishing, and broadcast industry regulation gets 10th place within the list of issues with the highest attention on the legislative decision agenda over the last 25 years. This is partly because Croatia has a public service media system that is directly regulated by the Parliament. Still, this high score is surprising. The rest of the highly present topics belong to the subcategory of Law, Crime and Family Issues. The subcategory of Criminal and Civil Code is expected on this list. However, the subcategory of Court Administration gets first place on the list, with a score double that of the second highest subcategory. It represents almost 20 percent of the whole parliamentary decision agenda dataset. This code contains issues such as court structure and conduct, courts' rules of procedure, regulations of state attorney, state ombudsman and public notary systems, and cooperation with international courts. On the legislative decision agenda, this code includes laws on the structure and conduct of the court system or some of its parts. However, almost exclusively, documents with this code in the parliamentary agenda are decisions on judges', state attorneys' and state ombudsmen's appointments and suspensions, especially in the early 1990s. This is because the State Judiciary Council that appoints judges was not formed until 1994.³⁰

³⁰ Uzelac, A., *Hrvatsko pravosuđe u devedesetima: od državne nezavisnosti do institucionalne krize*, Politička misao, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2001, pp. 3 – 41.

Now we will consider how the distribution of the most salient major categories in the legislative decision agenda changes over time (see Figure 1). The greatest variation is evident in the change of the distribution of the major category Law, Crime and Family Issues. This was just explained with the change of judges' appointment procedure. This sector receives the highest attention in the early 1990s, almost 60 percent; its attention significantly decreases in the second part of the 1990s and then remains at approximately 15 percent after 2000. Government Operations is the dominant major category throughout the entire period, varying between 20 and 40 percent. Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce is a major category that shows a slight upward trend. It starts at approximately 5 percent in the early 1990s and then rises to above 10 percent of all acts on the legislative decision agenda. Domestic Macroeconomic Issues shows a peak above 10 percent in 2000, but in all other periods, this major category represents approximately 5 percent. Space, Science, Technology and Communication is also situated at approximately 5 percent, with the exception of the beginning of the 1990s, when this major category had an even lower level of representation.

Figure 1. Distribution of major categories in the legislative decision agenda: percentage shares per year



5. EXECUTIVE DECISION AGENDA

5.1. Presidential decision agenda

The Croatian president does not have a broad jurisdiction, as Croatia has had a parliamentary system of government since the beginning of the 21st century. Presidential powers are limited to procedural duties in the elections, referendums and government change; the President proposes appointments and suspensions of the Supreme Court president, is commander-in-chief of armed forces, co-creates foreign policy with the Government, appoints diplomats and military commanders, and grants honors, medals, and pardons.³¹ Acts produced by the President are primarily decisions, regulations, orders and decrees. Therefore, in 25 years, the President has produced the smallest number of acts in the formal Croatian decision-making agenda – only a few more than 5,000.

Following the presidential powers, five major categories stand out in the presidential decision-making agenda (see Table 4). Almost half of the total number of presidential acts, more than 40 percent, are decisions within the International Affairs and Foreign Aid category. This is the only dataset of all POLIPTIH datasets in which Government Operations is not the most present major category but rather the second one. Government Operations represents almost 30 percent of all presidential acts in the national gazette. Defence's third place and share of 16 percent is also expected, as the Croatian president is the state's military commander-in-chief. Law, Crime and Family Issues and Space, Science, Technology, and Communications are the last two major categories that have any relevance in presidential decision-making agenda; all other categories are almost completely non-existent. This shows the extremely small overall effect of the President on policy-making in Croatia. We will now examine the most represented major categories on the presidential decision agenda in detail by looking into the most salient subcategories.

³¹ Articles 94.-107. *Ustava Republike Hrvatske*, Narodne novine, No. 56/1990, 135/1997, 8/1998, 113/2000, 124/2000, 28/2001, 41/2001, 55/2001, 76/2010, 85/2010, 05/2014; *Role and Responsibilities. The President of the Republic of Croatia*, <http://predsjednica.hr/stranica/4/> (23rd May 2017).

Table 4. Distribution of major categories in the presidential decision agenda

Code	Major category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Domestic Macroeconomic Issues	61	0,01
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	18	0,00
3	Health	23	0,00
4	Agriculture	26	0,01
5	Labour and Employment	4	0,00
6	Education	17	0,00
7	Environment	4	0,00
8	Energy	0	0,00
9	Immigration and Refugee Issues	0	0,00
10	Transportation	16	0,00
12	Law, Crime, and Family Issues	208	0,04
13	Social Welfare	15	0,00
14	Community Development and Housing Issues	12	0,00
15	Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	76	0,01
16	Defence	843	0,16
17	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	98	0,02
18	Foreign Trade	2	0,00
19	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	2207	0,43
20	Government Operations	1483	0,29
21	Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues	10	0,00
23	Cultural Policy Issues	13	0,00
	TOTAL	5136	

A list of the 10 most common subtopics on the presidential decision agenda, which represents almost 90% of all presidential acts, is presented in Table 5. Presidential decision-making power is highly limited and concentrated in just a few topics. International Affairs, as the most present major category in the presidential decision agenda, is represented by two subcategories: codes on diplomatic service and on international relations in general. The subcategory on diplomacy mostly involves decisions on appointments of diplomats and represents almost 40 percent of the whole presidential decision agenda. Government Operations, the second largest major category, also includes nominations and appointments that are not codable elsewhere, and it contains the subcategory on intergovernmental relations. The largest code in this major category contains awarding medals, as this is almost 15 percent of the whole presidential decision agenda. So, appointing diplomats and awarding medals represent more than half of all presidential decisions in the last 25 years. It is important to emphasize that the code on medals works as a residual and that all awarding is first coded thematically depending on the type of the me-

dal, person and activity awarded, so this presidential decision-making is much broader than shown.

Table 5. Subcategories receiving the most attention on the presidential decision agenda

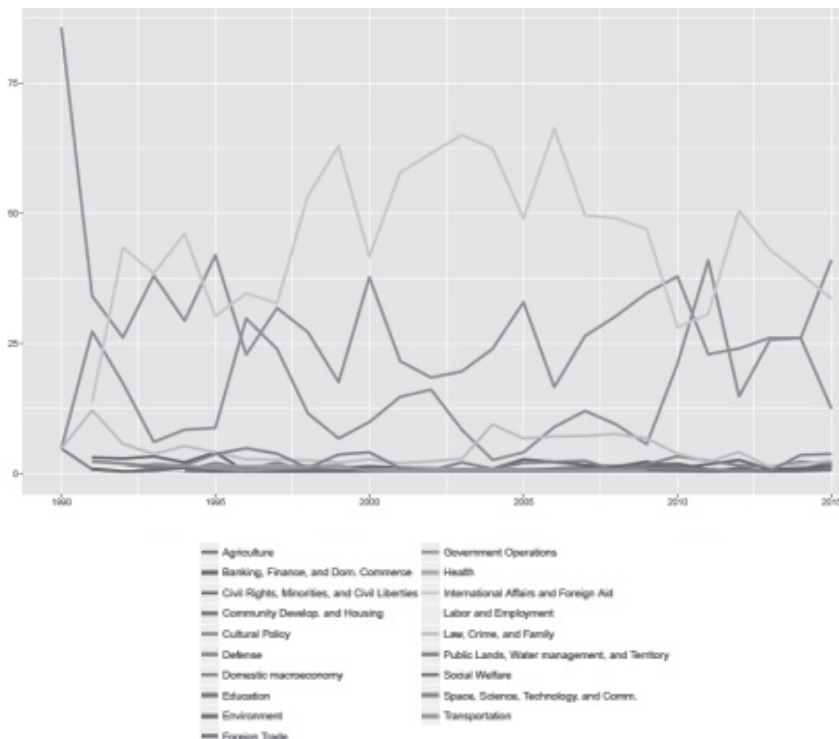
Code	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
1929	Diplomats, Embassies, Citizens Abroad, Foreign Diplomats in Country, Passports and Border Control	1838	0,36
2006	Currency, Commemorative Coins, Medals, and National Mints	717	0,14
1619	Direct War Related Issues	607	0,12
2005	Nominations and Appointments Not Codable Elsewhere	537	0,10
1900	General International Affairs and Foreign Aid	301	0,06
1205	Prisons	94	0,02
1600	General Defence	120	0,02
1700	General Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	85	0,02
2001	Intergovernmental Relations (includes Local Government Issues)	102	0,02
100	General Domestic Macroeconomic Issues	52	0,01
	TOTAL	4453	0,87

Code referring generally to defence and issues directly related to war is also highly ranked, which is no surprise as defence has already been seen in the analysis of major categories. The subcategory Prisons contains pardons, which are exclusively within presidential jurisdiction, and this is the reason for the high score of the major category Law, Crime and Family Issues. Code on Space, Science, Technology and Communication in general is surprisingly also a part of this list. This is because awarding medals to scientists and for scientific achievements is coded here. General Macroeconomic Issues is on this list for the same reason. This code contains the awarding of medals for special merits for the economy. Mostly, appointments of ministers (in the 1990s) and medals awarded are coded within the subcategory of international relations and defence in general. This detailed analysis on the sub-categorical level further emphasizes the small scope of presidential policy-making powers and decision agenda.

Changes of the major categories' distribution on the presidential decision agenda over the 25 years is presented in Figure 2. The expected break in the pattern of the presidential decision agenda should occur around the year 2000

with the regime type change, as Croatia transformed from a semi-presidential system into a parliamentary one. This formally narrowed presidential powers and jurisdiction. Still, this is not so evident in the data. First, the number of highly present major categories does not vary significantly over time. The same 5 major categories constitute the presidential decision agenda before and after 2000. Second, these five most present major categories do not show different patterns or a great rise or fall in the number of decisions before and after 2000. Government Operations varies from 15 to 40 percent in both periods. Only in the early 1990s is there a big peak in Government Operations up to 80 percent, as transition issues are coded here. International Affairs shows higher levels of attention in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They rise from 30-40 percent up to approximately 60 percent. This is coherent with the changes in Croatian foreign policy, opening to the international community and beginning of the Europeanization process and not with system change. The major category of Defence also does not show 2000 as a marker of pattern change. Defence received higher levels of attention in early 1990s because of the war on Croatian territory and then after 2010 when Croatia gained official membership in NATO.

Figure 2. Distribution of major categories in the presidential decision agenda: percentage shares per year



5.2. Governmental decision agenda

The cabinet government is expected to be the most important actor in policy-making, as classically “public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do”.³² One of the most important ways the Croatian Government exercises its policy-making powers is proposing new laws to the Parliament. This aspect is not present in the formal governmental decision agenda but within the parliamentary acts. Additional mechanisms for the Croatian Government, its ministries and specialized governmental offices to design and implement public policies include voting on the following types of acts: regulations, rules of procedures, decisions and conclusions.³³ Of more than 45,000 of agenda items on the weekly governmental meetings³⁴, fewer than 18,000 of them became governmental acts published in the national gazette. Even though this is not the main way for Government to affect policy-making, as only approximately 40 percent of agenda items result in formal governmental acts published in national gazette, this is still a small indicator of the cabinet government’s dominance in policy-making. It is more important to examine the topics and issues present in the governmental decision agenda to determine what policy sectors are most prioritized.

The distribution of attention to major categories in the governmental decision agenda is less concentrated. A large majority of major categories are represented with a share of more than 3 percent (see Table 6). Government Operations is, of course, the dominant major category, representing more than 30 percent of the total number of decisions. The major category with the second highest level of attention on the governmental decision agenda is governing Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues, with a share of 10 percent of all decisions. Health and Banking follow with a similar share of 7 percent. The last major category in the top five with the highest attention is International Affairs and Foreign Aid. Let us see how this list reveals itself on the subcategory level.

³² Dye, T. R., *Understanding Public Policy*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1987, p. 3.

³³ Articles 30.-31. *Zakona o Vladi Republike Hrvatske*, Narodne novine, No. 150/11, 119/14, 93/16.

³⁴ Širinić, D.; Nikić Čakar, D.; Petek, A.; Šipić, J.; Raos, V.; Kekez, A., *Political Priorities in Croatia: Minutes of Government of the Republic of Croatia (v.1.0 – September 2015) (data base)*, Center for Empirical Research in Political Science at Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, 2016.

Table 6. Distribution of major categories in the governmental decision agenda

Code	Major topic	Frequency	Percentage
1	Domestic Macroeconomic Issues	364	0,02
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	481	0,03
3	Health	1179	0,07
4	Agriculture	632	0,04
5	Labour and Employment	343	0,02
6	Education	373	0,02
7	Environment	498	0,03
8	Energy	515	0,03
9	Immigration and Refugee Issues	10	0,00
10	Transportation	479	0,03
12	Law, Crime, and Family Issues	597	0,03
13	Social Welfare	581	0,03
14	Community Development and Housing Issues	482	0,03
15	Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	1234	0,07
16	Defence	726	0,04
17	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	407	0,02
18	Foreign Trade	547	0,03
19	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	893	0,05
20	Government Operations	5527	0,31
21	Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues	1875	0,10
23	Cultural Policy Issues	134	0,01
	TOTAL	17877	

Table 7 presents the ten subcategories receiving the most attention on the governmental decision agenda. Half of them are, not surprisingly, within the most dominant major category of Government Operations, and those include the following: residual code on Nominations and Appointments; Government Property Management that contains all decisions on the privatization of state property; generally on Government Operations; Intergovernmental Relations, especially with the local government; and Regulation of Political Activity. Two subcategories belong to the second-ranked major category on governing public lands: one on the water governance and one on the resource, lands and forest governance. From the major category Health, the cabinet government made mostly decisions regarding infrastructure and regulating the system of hospitals and ambulances. The tenth subcategory receiving the most attention, the code on Tariff and Import Restrictions, does not belong to any of the most salient major categories. Two major categories among the top five on the governmental decision agenda are not represented in this list with the most

frequent subcategories. This also shows greater diversity of the governmental decision agenda than other agendas examined.

Table 7. Subcategories receiving the most attention on the governmental decision agenda

Code	Subtopic	Frequency	Percentage
2005	Nominations and Appointments Not Codable Elsewhere	2603	0,15
2104	Water Resources Development and Research	1270	0,07
2008	Government Property Management	752	0,04
322	Facilities Construction, Regulation, and Payments (includes Waiting Lists and Ambulance Services)	603	0,03
2000	General Government Operations	488	0,03
2004	Government Employee Benefits and Civil Service Issues	449	0,03
2103	Natural Resources, Public Lands, and Forest Management	410	0,02
2001	Intergovernmental Relations (includes Local Government Issues)	396	0,02
2012	Regulation of Political Activity, Elections and Political Campaigns	357	0,02
1807	Tariff and Import Restrictions (includes Import Regulation)	290	0,02
	TOTAL	2603	0,15

Changes in the major categories' distribution over time, presented in Figure 3, do not reveal very different characterizations of the governmental decision agenda. Government Operations is the most prominent major category that develops in the 25 years on two levels. During the political system transformation and institution building in the beginning of the 1990s, it varies between 30 and 50 percent, and then it drops to a 25–35 percent share for the rest of the period. The major category Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues shows an upward trend from 1994 to 2002, from 3–5 percent to a level of 20–25 percent. This is coherent with the increase in the number of decisions within the water management code, which is due to a change in the number of regulations determining the boundaries of maritime demesne. In 1994, the new Maritime Act was voted in to replace the old law from 1974. The new law did not replace the old maritime demesne boundaries and did not proscribe their regular determination but rather proscribed that in the case of doubt, the decision on maritime demesne boundaries is made by the min-

istry.³⁵ This expanded the number of ministerial decisions on the exceptional cases, until the new regulation in 2003 that standardized regular procedure. Health is a third major category distinguished in Figure 3. It varies from 2 to 10 percent over the whole period, with the exception of 2013. Its highest peak of almost 20 percent is a result of the rise of decisions on health facility construction, regulation, and payments that include decisions on the special financial recovery programme for more than 30 facilities, as by the end of 2012, their debt had reached more than 5 billion kunas.³⁶

Figure 3. Distribution of major categories in the governmental decision agenda: percentage shares per year



³⁵ Vladušić, J., *Određivanje granica pomorskog dobra u hrvatskom pravu*, Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2009, pp. 219 – 246.

³⁶ *Sanacija bolnica*, <http://unaprijedimo.zdravlje.hr/index.php/80-zapoceti-projekti/77-sanacija-bolnica> (19th May 2017).

6. COMPARISON OF DECISION AGENDAS

The Croatian decision agenda is set from three constitutive parts, the legislative, executive presidential and executive governmental decision agendas, which differ in their diversity, as the governmental decision agenda is the most diverse. First, the cabinet government produced twice as many acts and documents published in the national gazette than Parliament and three times more than the President. Second, concentration of attention on those agendas differs. The presidential decision agenda is the most limited, as it is concentrated on just a few major categories. The governmental decision agenda is the broadest and most diverse, with attention more equally distributed across all major categories and all fundamental national policy sectors. The parliamentary agenda is in the middle of the two. This can be shown by several indicators (see Table 8).

Table 8. Comparison of three decision agendas – indicators of attention concentration

Decision agenda	Nb of ctg <= 1%	Nb of ctg <3%	5 major ctg	10 subctg
Legislative	5	12	69%	47%
Presidential	16	17	94%	87%
Governmental	2	6	60%	15%

Concentration of attention on the presidential decision agenda is evidenced in that 16 major categories have shares equal to or smaller than 1%, and 17 major categories have shares smaller than 3%. On the governmental decision agenda, attention is more equally distributed, as only 2 major categories have a tiny share equal to or smaller than 1%, and only 6 represent less than 3% of the total number of published acts. The parliamentary agenda is in the middle – 5 major categories have a share equal to or less than 1% and 12 less than 3%. The top 5 major categories together on the presidential decision agenda occupy 94% of the whole agenda. For the cabinet government, this share is 60% and for Parliament, 69%. The top subcategory list also shows significant differences. The 10 subcategories with the highest attention consume 87% of the whole presidential decision agenda, 47% of the parliamentary decision agenda, and only 15% of the governmental decision agenda. The Government's dominance in decision-making is quite evident in this data, which do not even take into account the fact that Government is a crucial actor in the law proposal procedure.

If we take a closer look into the most prioritized sectors in the decision-making in Croatia in the last 25 years, we could compare the lists of the most salient major categories on the decision agendas (see Table 9). Government Operations is the most important one with the highest score on all three agendas, as this is a sector that determines the functioning of the political system. Regulating the justice system, regulating the financial system, foreign policy and science and technology policy are sectors placed twice on the three agendas. Macroeconomic policy, defence, health and water and land policy are placed only once on the decision agendas.

Table 9. Comparison of the three decision agendas – top 5 major categories

Rank	Legislative	Presidential	Governmental
1	Government Operations	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	Government Operations
2	Law, Crime and Family issues	Government Operations	Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues
3	Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce	Defence	Health
4	Domestic Macroeconomic Issues	Law, Crime and Family issues	Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce
5	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	International Affairs and Foreign Aid

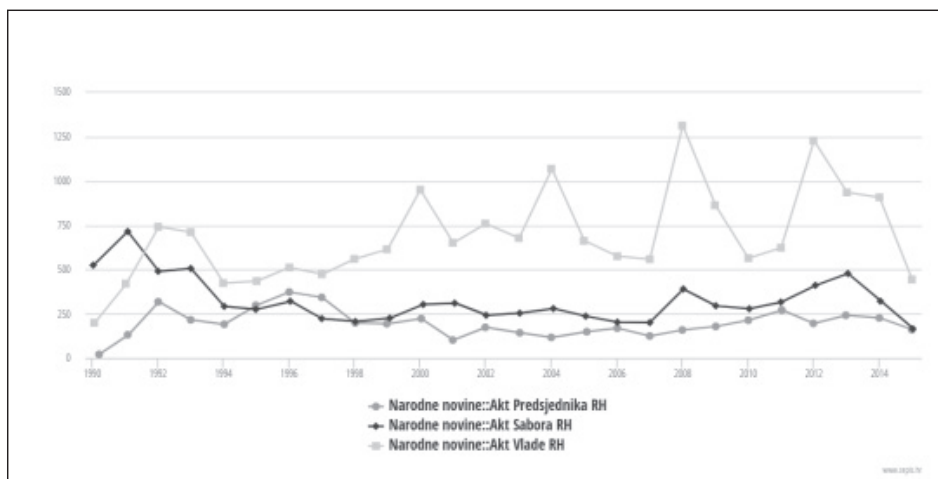
When we compare this to some basic policy taxonomies³⁷, the following features could be emphasized. The most prioritized policy sectors fall predominantly into a policy area of classical state sectors. Those are foreign policy, Government Operations, justice, and defence. Economic sectors as policy areas are represented with two policies: macroeconomic policy and financial and business regulation. Special sectoral policies also have two candidates: science and communication policy and water – management policy. The lowest score is in the set for social policies, which along with health system regulation is on the list of most prioritized sectors on the Croatian decision agenda only once. Therefore, the dominance of core governmental functions is evident in this list. The presidential agenda has 4 core government function issues out of 5,

³⁷ See Compston, H. (ed.), *Handbook of Public Policy in Europe. Britain, France and Germany*, Palgrave, Houndmills, 2004; Petek, A., *Što su hrvatske javne politike?*, Političke analize, Vol. 3, No. 11, 2012, pp. 37 – 45.

Parliament 3 out of 5, and the cabinet government 2 out of 5. This makes the governmental decision agenda again the most diverse, with the greatest number of selective issues on the agenda.

Figure 4 presents the trends of the time distribution of the total number of acts published by three decision agendas. An expected critical juncture is the year 2000 as a time of political system change and the beginning of the process of Europeanization policy-making within almost all sectors. The presidential and parliamentary agendas show much more stable patterns of development, with no high fluctuations. The governmental decision agenda shows variations that are more pronounced after 2000.

Figure 4. Comparison of the total number of agenda items on three decision agendas: frequencies per year



The presidential decision agenda, which is expected to be most affected by the system change, shows a slightly lower level of total number of decisions after 2000. Before 2000, it includes from 150 to 350 acts per year, and after 2000 it never includes more than 250. The formal decision-making of the President does not show any great discrepancy of the power of President Tuđman in the 1990s and of all his successors, as it would be expected from the difference in constitutional setting of semi-presidential and parliamentary system. The parliamentary decision agenda after the early 1990s also shows a stable trend in the total number of published acts: from 1994 to 2012, it varies from 200 to 350 acts per year. The early 1990s were a peak for the sake of democratic transition and judge appointments, as explained earlier. The years

2012 and 2013 create a peak because of the approaching EU accession and the deadline for the regulation harmonization with the *acquis communautaire*. The governmental decision agenda before 2000 varies in the total number of published acts per year from 450 to 700. The total number of governmental published acts after 2000 rises from 600 to 1200, with 4 distinguished peaks (2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2000 lowest of all four). This is probably due to a set of factors including system change, Europeanization and EU accession process, economic crises and other external influences.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper described the policy content of Croatian decision agendas since 1990. It investigated the diversity of agenda items and issues with the exploratory purpose and preliminary analysis to build up systematic agenda research in Croatia. The analysis compared legislative and executive – presidential and governmental – decision agendas by the total number of agenda items, and by the concentration of attention across fundamental national policy sectors and issues within those sectors. The results show that the presidential decision agenda is the least diverse, which is because of the presidential jurisdictions in Croatia. The parliamentary decision agenda is more diverse than the presidential but still less diverse than the decision agenda of the cabinet government. This is evidenced by the total number of agenda items and the concentration of attention across issues. The governmental decision agenda is characterized by the largest total number of agenda items and the most scattered attention across sectors and issues. Analysis shows that core functions of the government, defence, international affairs, economy, government operations and rule of law are the most present on all Croatian decision agendas. As the most diverse, the governmental decision agenda contains the biggest number of selective agenda items as core functions are the least salient on this agenda. Still, social policies and human rights policies are heavily underrepresented in Croatian decision agendas.

Considering the change of agenda content over time, it seems that the regime change in 2000 was not a critical juncture in the diversity of decision agendas in Croatia, nor did it produce a significant break in the pattern of agenda content. As external pressures such as Europeanization appear to be more influential, further research is necessary to test these assumptions. Additional research efforts should also involve the comparison of different agenda

levels and exploration of similarities and differences of informal agenda content, such as media agenda, and formal agendas. Additionally, an important research endeavour would be to scrutinize actors and different factors that affect specific agenda content formations. As agenda research is underdeveloped in Croatia but revealing and scientifically and socially significant, this paper was written to make one of the first small steps in the field's development.

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Sažetak

Doc. dr. sc. Ana Petek *

HRVATSKA ODLUČIVAČKA AGENDA: ANALIZA AKATA OBJAVLJENIH U NARODNIM NOVINAMA OD 1990.

Ovaj rad ima istraživačku svrhu pripreme opisa dnevnoga reda političkog odlučivanja u Hrvatskoj te javnopolitičkih tema koje se na njemu nalaze. Usmjeren je na razinu odlučivačke agende koja, u usporedbi sa sveobuhvatnom, društvenom i institucionalnom agendom, sadržava najmanji broj tema, koje su najpreciznije formulirane i koje dobivaju najintenzivniju pozornost političkih elita i javnosti. U radu se pozornost posebice posvećuje raznovrsnosti odlučivačke agende. Raznovrsnost političkog dnevnog reda ili agende ovisi o distribuciji političke pozornosti po temama javnih politika. Raznovrsnost je viša kada se na dnevnom redu nalazi veći broj tema i kada je politička pozornost manje koncentrirana na pojedine teme.

Analiza je utemeljena na bazi akata objavljenih u Narodnim novinama, proizvedenoj u sklopu istraživačkog projekta POLIPTIH. Više od 30.000 jedinica analize, naslovi svih akata Sabora, predsjednika, Vlade, ministarstava i Vladinih ureda od 1990. do 2015. kodirani su prema shemi kodiranja CAP, poznatom međunarodnom šifrniku javnopolitičkog sadržaja, s 21 glavnom kategorijom i 214 potkategorija. Materijal je kodiran prema pravilima kvantitativne analize sadržaja te analiziran deskriptivnom statistikom. Komparativna analitička strategija okrenuta je usporedbi raznovrsnosti zakonodavne i egzekutivne odlučivačke agende, odvojeno od predsjednika i Vlade.

Rezultati pokazuju da je odlučivačka agenda predsjednika najmanje raznovrsna, što je u skladu s predsjedničkim ovlastima. Parlamentarna odlučivačka agenda raznovrsnija je od predsjedničke, no ipak manje raznovrsna od odlučivačke agende Vlade. Tako zvane temeljne funkcije vlasti – obrana, vanjski poslovi, ekonomske politike, ustrojstvo političkog sustava i vladavina prava – na hrvatskoj odlučivačkoj agendi su najzastupljenije, a socijalne politike i pitanja ljudskih prava značajno su podzastupljena među javnopolitičkim temama političkog odlučivanja u Hrvatskoj.

Ključne riječi: zakonodavna odlučivačka agenda, egzekutivna odlučivačka agenda, politička pozornost, raznovrsnost dnevnog reda, javnopolitičke teme

* Dr. sc. Ana Petek, docentica Fakulteta političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Lepušićeva 6, Zagreb; ana.petek@fpzg.hr;
ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-9553-8334

