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CEPOR, CROATIA

How to position a think tank in economic policymaking process consistent with the RIGHTS-BASED approach?

Case of CEPOR, Croatia

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Think tanks – in general

- modern type of non profit and non partisan organisation
- generate and contribute with new ideas and policies
- influence on public debate and process of decision making
- transfer of knowledge – know how from diferent sources to government

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Problems of think tanks

- Political changes (need time for gaining public trust and connections within government)
- Financial uncertainty (how to stay independent and to be financially sustainable)

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Croatia and think tanks

Typical questions:

On government and academia sides:

- Why think tanks are needed if there are research institutes and governments – all of them deal with policymaking issues!

On civil society side:

- Who is dealing with rights-based approach to economic policymaking?

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Reality check for research institutes?

- University based and institutes' based research is:
 - Dominantly academically based,
 - Usually without policy content,
 - Never promoting rights-based approach to policymaking

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Reality check for the government?

- Government policymaking capacity is quite low:
 - Too many operational programs, no policies, or now consistent policies
 - Government policies evaluated through GEM project are identified as the worst, (after education) supporting factors in developing entrepreneurial capacity of the country
 - Governments live their own life, thinking about rights-based approach to policymaking usually around election times

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Reality check for the civil society?

- Economic rights – usually missing link
- Activism disconnected to policymaking activities

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Think tanks exist in Croatia

- CEPOR, SME Policy Think Tank, established in 2000 – rights-based approach to policymaking
- National Council for Competitiveness, established in 2002 – rights-based approach (employers, unions, academia, government)

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CEPOR – how it all started? (1)

- Economic rights – a part of overall human rights
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article #23:
 - (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
 - (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
 - (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
 - (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

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CEPOR – how it all started? (2)

- Open Society Institute-Croatia initiated in 1996 an economic program, in order to stimulate rights-based approach to economic policymaking
- CEPOR – an SME think tank, founded as a part of the agreement between the OSI Croatia and the Government of Croatia, in year 2002

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CEPOR – founders (1)

- CEPOR – a think tank registered as an NGO
- Ten institutional founders (institutions/associations dealing with SME's)
 - Croatian Chamber of Commerce
 - Croatian Chamber of Crafts
 - Association of SME supporting institutions
 - J.J.Strossmayer University in Osijek, Faculty of Economics
 - Center for Entrepreneurship, Osijek

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CEPOR – founders (2)

- Medjmurje Center for Entrepreneurship, Čakovec
- Istrian Development Agency, Pula
- Economic Institute, Zagreb
- Institute for International Relations, Zagreb
- Open Society Institute-Croatia

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CEPOR - mission

- advance the development of SME in Croatia through support for favourable policy environment and to provide the voice for SME's interest

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CEPOR - activities

- Research - independent policy relevant research on SME sector to provide objective assessment of its problems
- Recommend instruments of policies to the Government
- Lobbying for the interests of SMEs

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CEPOR – key projects

- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor project – Croatian entrepreneurial potential in international perspective, from 2002 – www.gemhrvatska.com
- Annual report – structural changes and trends in Croatian SME sector, from 2004
- Business Confidence Index – quartal qualitative assessment of expected changes in business climate, from 2004

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CEPOR – other projects

- Designing an SME Training Model for Croatia
- Round tables (alternative methods of financing start-up and growth activities of SMEs, consulting and counseling for SME's, policies relevant to SMEs...)
- Senior and junior fellowship program in SME development
- Cooperation with NCC

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CEPOR – lessons learned (1)

Difficulties in cooperation with the Government:

- suspicion of CEPOR's ability to value add to the Government's activities: "you will again just to suggest something"
- Competing with the CEPOR: "we have loan programs for SMEs, we do not need anything else"
- if they pay for some projects, they expect to get confirmation of their ideas

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CEPOR – lessons learned (2)

Difficulties in cooperation with the Civil Society:

- suspicion of CEPOR's ability to value add to the activism: "you work for/with the government"
- NGO sector is not very much involved in economic rights issues
- Other institutions of the Civil Society (like Chambers of Commerce) are closer to the Government than to the Civil Society

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CEPOR – future projects

- To continue with started yearly meetings on policy issues (Skopje November 2003; Zagreb November 2004; Sarajevo 2005...)
- To intensify cooperation with the Civil Society institutions (NGOs, associations...) interested in economic policymaking processes consistent with rights-based approach
- To start public discussions on differences between traditional economic policymaking and socially responsible economic policymaking processes (RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH)

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CEPOR - future

- To become regional think tank in dealing with entrepreneurship capacity in economic policymaking processes consistent with the RIGHTS-BASED approach
- To maintain its financial sustainability through projects financed by international donors (primarily EU...)

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Major message

- Collaborations with Governments and Civil Society organizations in promoting RIGHTS-BASED Approach to Policymaking:
 - Not easy with the government,
 - Not easy with the civil society
- But it is better to start with the civil society,
 - governments should learn its own lessons, by themselves

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Internet Explorer browser window showing the CEPOR website. The address bar displays <http://www.ceporg.hr/index.htm>. The website header includes the CEPOR logo and the text "centar za politiku razvoja malih poduzeća". Below the header is a navigation menu with links: "news - projects - about us - usefull links - contact - hrvatski". The main content area includes an "ABOUT US" section, a "MAIN" sidebar with links for "news", "mission", "overall objective", and "about us", and a "contact" section with an email address "ceporg@zg.htnet.hr". The footer mentions the date "on May 17, 2001 agreed to establish the SME Policy Center - CEPOR."

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