



Peer reviewed article

## Sub-national levels of government in a Multi-Level Administrative system

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### Abstract

This article examines whether respondents in Norwegian county administrations perceive that key decisions are influenced by external actors – through vertical relations with central administrative bodies and EU/EEA institutions, as well as horizontal relations with other county administrations – and how the variation in such relations can be explained. The article is based on data from a new survey in Norwegian county administrations (N = 893), and shows how the county administrations can, under certain conditions, act with two or more "hats", i.e., that the decisions made are influenced by several external actors at the same time. The majority of respondents cites national central administrative bodies as the most important external actors, while a significant proportion also state that EU/EEA institutions are important when key decisions are made. The patterns uncovered are explained by the organizational specialization and administrative capacity of the county administrations.

**Keywords:** Multi-level Administration, regions, external actors, organization theory