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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF SERVICE QUALITY

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***Abstract:** The worldwide trend in the last twenty years is that one of globalization and intense development of the social systems. In this new context, the national states are put in a whole new position in which institutions and administrative systems must be flexible to accommodate to those changes. In the new geopolitical context, the local and central public administration has become a defining factor in the economic competitiveness of one country or economic region.*

*For Romania the transformation process of the public administration acquires new dimensions. Thus, these have respond to new changes in the global economy, but equally to the new requirements of integration into EU structures, either. Public administration reform involves outstanding modifications of its major components, both at the central public administration level and at the local public administration and public services in general. On the other hand, the democracy development requires the establishment of a new relationship between citizens and administration, increasing and strengthening of the authority role and reconsideration of the partnership with the civil society and the local officials. **Key words:** administration, reform, service quality, administrative systems.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Often, discussions about reform of public administration in Romania give rise to confusion about the meaning of this expression.

Specifically, the reform means more than improving the administrative capacity. In short, the answer is that these are two different concepts of public sector organization. However, they are functionally related.

Public administration reform is a wide concept, that includes all aspects of public sector organization, including: the general "architecture" of ministries and agencies, local organizations and institutions, systems, structures, processes, motivations, and the means of surveillance of those and of periodic accommodation of the system.

On the one hand, the administration refers to how the activities coordination of the public sector is formally authorized, ordered and organized, and on the other hand, the administrative capacity is an assessment of the functioning of the hierarchical structure of

public service personnel, so it only one of the elements of the public administration reform.

However, the administrative capacity is essential for reform and for the state function, but as noted, it is only a part of this complex vision and cannot provide the results expected from a modern administration.

In fact, the simple increasing of the administrative capacity may be an impediment to getting results, because it partly depends on how it is organized and conducted, but also how staffing and their attitude on their duties completion.

To support the transformation of public administration in line with the requirements of the reform process from this area requires a coherent set of measures that ought to be taken in a well defined period in the civil service, which aims to create a professional corps of public officials, stable and politically neutral, in local government by continuing the process of decentralization/devolution of public services and the central government by improving the public policy formulation process [1].

In order to combine the classical administrative hierarchy with modern, creative and results-oriented management into one unified organization of public sector must change the general "architecture" of the system, various forms of labor contract in the public sector, the roles and functions of agencies, systems redesigning and internal decisional processes, modes and levels of participation and social inclusion in decision-making and policy implementation, targeting systems, performance measurement, resource allocation, accountability, supervision and control, etc.

Public administration reform includes all aspects of state organization and each of them should be checked, tested and, if necessary, adjusted to obtain the best combination of the hierarchical structure and administrative capacity with management effectiveness and efficiency and the ability to achieve results and performance.

But the management issue is an essential one, represents a key-test and covers all the other aspects because it changes the whole potential of the state and, in a competitive world, countries should follow the global trend as soon as possible so as not to leave the competition.

To support a consistent and coherent reform process in the system, we believe that the existence of a stable network promotion of the change made by the main actors of the process is necessary.

In practice, the reform network may launch the work by trying to develop management skills and find the solution for inserting these capabilities into existing hierarchies of the state.

Step by step, this process identifies the type of problems that other countries have had to deal with and at each level they will become the new concerns of public administration reform. In this way, the reform will develop over time, driven by the need of hierarchical combining and management in a single system.

Understanding the types of problems encountered and solved it the other countries in this process will shorten the learning cycle for Romania.

2. USE OF STATISTICAL SAMPLING IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

To analyze the process characteristics and behavior of key actors a research-based on statistical sampling in the central and local government was organized during the months of July and August 2011. There were set up three representative samples:

- Sample at the primary level of localities;
- Sample at the level of upgrading the national network (monitoring groups of the reform formed at the ministries and counties levels);
- Sample at the level of the pre-accession advisors at the ministries and agencies (only the pilot phase has been carried out for this sample; the questionnaire will be applied during the next period).

For the first two samples, a two-stage sampling technique was used, their volume being 9% of the total population studied.

The parameter estimation error in the reference population is 1.2% for the first sample, and 1.8% for the second sample.

In the carrying out of the questionnaires for the first two applications the next two aspects were taken into consideration:

- The opinion measuring of the important players of the process, on current issues of public administration reform: civil service management, training of civil servants, local government reform by continuing the decentralization process, providing training for the local elected officials on specific issues of local government, corruption, changes in the technical unit of administration under the political factor pressure, the quality of communication in the carrying out of the reform process, etc.;
- Measuring the opinion convergence on issues of reform between technical unit represented by civil servants, members of the national network of modernizers and political level represented by mayors.

In this sense similar questions were included in the two types of questionnaires.

Based on the model of integrated development organizations, four blocking

factors of the reform implementation can be identified:

- Strategic - the complexity of decision-making;
- Structural - any specific system bureaucracy, limited human and financial resources, size and complexity;
- Culture - the fear of risk, the tradition of "continuity", mentality changing;
- Behavioral – lack of the individual incentives, misunderstanding of the final goals, lack of motivation, frustration, and waiting behaviors.

The public administration reform process, both in the technical apparatus and at the level of the local elects is seen as a process not yet brought the expected changes.

Thus, half of the mayors have a bad opinion about changes in government, while 36.4% of modernizers believe that public administration is subject to a reform process at a lesser extent.

Moreover, between these two important players in the reform process, the modernizers from prefectures and county councils and mayors, there are significant differences in its perception.

Network representative modernizers have more positive perception of the process in relation to the mayors taking into consideration their intense involvement in taking actions of the reform. (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

Table 1. Do you think that government is subjected to a comprehensive reform process?

Answer variant	Mayors		Modernizers		Rock (%)
	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative relative frequency (%)	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative relative frequency (%)	
1	2	3	4	5	6=4-2
no	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	3.6
Lesser extent	46.6	50.2	36.4	36.4	10.2
Big extent	41.9	92.1	54.5	90.9	-12.6
Radical changes	7.1	99.2	9.1	100.0	-2.0
No answer	0.8	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.8
Total	100.0	-	100.0	-	-

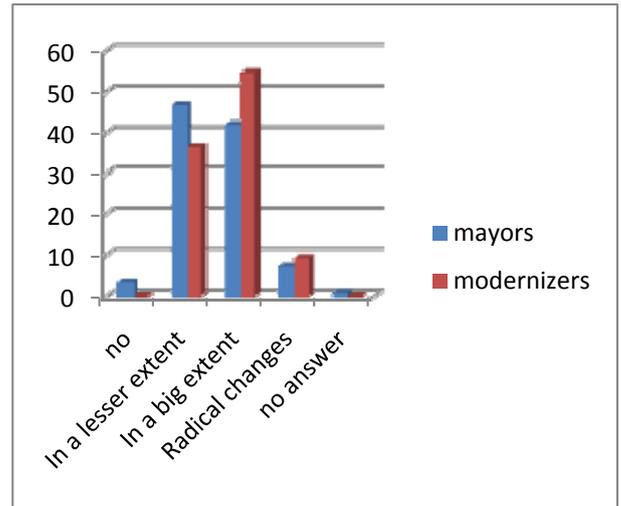


Fig. 1. Do you think that government is subjected to a comprehensive reform process?

Possible explanations for this situation can be (Table 2):

- Lack of communication between groups of county modernizers and mayors on concrete reform issues;
- A series of reform measures being implemented have not yet significant effects in the localities, the reform process being a lasting one;
- Political message from the government is not accompanied by a company information and training for local elected officials on specific components of the reform etc.

Moreover, the lack of a campaign to promote the reform that will be undertaken in the near future at local government level explains a small line between aspirations and perceived changes of the mayors.

Table 2. At what extent current changes coincide with your aspirations?

Answer variant	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative relative frequency (%)
1	2	3
Not coincide at all	5.5	5.5
At a small extent	48.6	54.2
Big extent	39.1	93.3
Totally coincide	6.3	99.6
No answer	0.4	100.0
Total	100.0	-

3. INNOVATIVE TOOLS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

To support the reform of public administration, the Central Unit for Public Administration Reform initiated the introduction process both at the central administration, and the prefectures and county councils of two innovative tools specific to the governments in developed countries: Modernization Multi-annual Programs (MMP) and The Self-evaluation of the public administration institutions functioning (Common Assessment Framework - CAF).

A. Modernization multi-annual programs (lasting 3 years) are defined by three documents:

- The strategy of each institution's own modernization that describes the internal context, the identified sector priorities, modernization activities and procedures for implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- The Action Plan includes measures to be taken, expected results, indicators of progress, deadlines, responsible and funding sources;
- Annual monitoring report which quantifies the proposed objectives, reprogramming the outstanding actions and introducing new priorities in the action plan for the next year.

Implementation of PMMs in the ministries, prefectures and county councils started in July 2003, with the requirement formulation for local and central public authorities to frame the proper Strategies to accelerate the administration reform in its activity domain [3].

In the questionnaire applied to representatives of the national network of modernizers, two questions that focused on measuring opinion on the application and the generated results by the application of this instrument were inserted. The main conclusions are formulated as follows:

- The general opinion is favorable to the application of PMMs in the institutions. It should be noted that no interviewees did not consider the implementation of PMMs as a mere bureaucratic activity;
- More than half of modernizers consider implementing of this tool an effective factor

in the modernization process of public administration;

- The other half is also favorable to the application, but indicates major difficulties of applying the process in the current stage of reform.

Major difficulties are related to the lack of a special fund to support measures to modernize carried in the Action Plans contained within PMMs developed at institutional level (fig. 2 and tab. 3):

- Implementation of PMMs has resulted in positive results in communication and information technology;
- Less notable results were achieved in the domains which aimed the human resource management. Thus, more than half of the interviewed subjects reported insignificant results in this area from the application of PMMs.

Table 3. Please indicate at what extent the following elements have contributed to improvements:

Answer variant	Internal organization (%)	Human resources management (%)	Public administration tools (%)	Communication and information technology (%)
At all	0.0	4.5	0.0	4.5
Insignificantly	9.1	13.6	13.6	0.0
Moderate	27.3	36.4	36.4	36.4
Not a little	27.3	22.7	36.4	22.7
Greatly	27.3	13.6	4.5	31.8
No answer	9.1	9.1	9.1	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

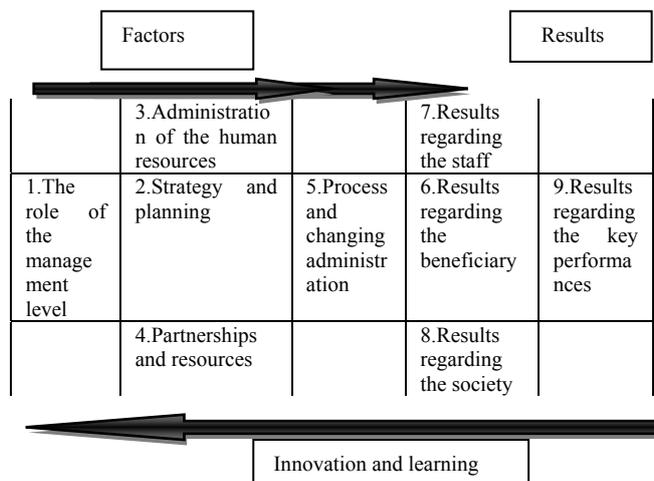


Fig. 2. CAF showcase

B. The self-assessment of the functioning of public administration institutions (Common Assessment Framework - CAF) is a tool for measuring the performance of an organization by establishing a diagnostic analysis.

This tool, designed in 2000 for Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG) from the European Commission, has four main objectives: to identify specific features of the public sector organizations, improving the organizational performance, providing a "bridge" between different models used in quality management, comparative performance study (benchmarking system) between public sector organizations.

CAF's second generation is applied both to the central and local governments and private companies in all EU countries [1].

This tool was applied in pilot phase in 2004, in nine units of the Ministry of Interior Administration and ANFP. With the support of the national network of modernizers, it had been wanted the extension of this instrument in the ministries, county councils, prefectures, and other interested public institutions.

Based on the obtained results from the network, one may conclude that the extension of this tool application is very slow. Thus, almost three quarters of ministries, prefectures and county councils have not yet applied it in the pilot phase (Table 4).

Table 4. Have you applied CAF in your institution?

Answer variant	Relative frequency (%)
No	72.7
Yes	18.2
No answer	9.1
Total	100

4. THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION FROM THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERSPECTIVE

Representatives of municipalities consider the integration into the European Union particularly beneficial for local development in an immediate prospect. More than 80% of Mayors believe that in the upcoming five years,

the integration will have positive influence in the towns they represent, while the skeptics proportion is only 17.8% (fig. 3 and tab. 5).

Table 5. How do you consider the influence of the Romania's integration into EU on the development of your city over the next 5 years?

Answer variant	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative relative frequency (%)
Negative	2.4	2.4
It will not have a significant influence	15.4	17.8
Positive	81.8	99.6
No answer	0.4	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0

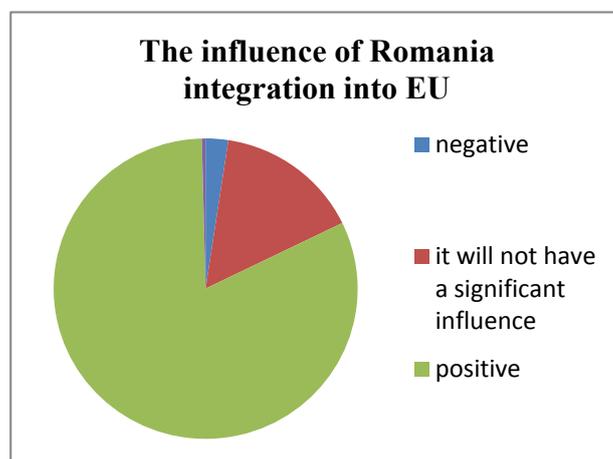


Fig. 3. How do you consider the influence of the Romania's integration into EU on the development of your city over the next 5 years?

Unfortunately, the optimism expressed by the mayors on the positive effects of this process is not doubled by a proper training of the local authorities and economic agents in order to use structural funds.

Moreover, at the local government level there is no concern for the determination of the necessary training of the local elected officials and staff to access and use these funds (15% of the interviewed mayors were unable to formulate an opinion on this subject).

There are a large number of local governments who have not accessed till now the external funds for development of institution or locality they represent. Thus, in this case are more than half of the localities in Romania.

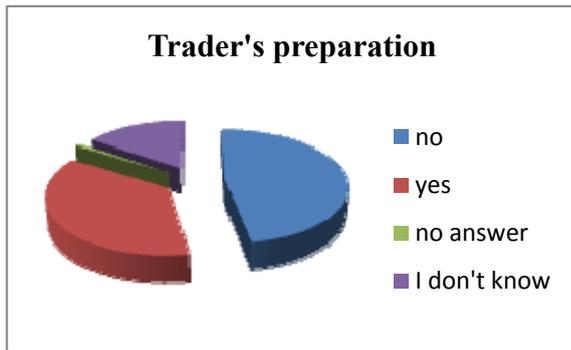


Fig. 4. Preparation of economic agents in the utilization of the structural funds [2]

These are clear signals of low administrative capacity of our country in the use of structural funds in the next period of the integration into European structures (Fig. 4.)

5. CONCLUSION

The public administration cannot be reformed in a short time. Therefore it is necessary to obtain a political consensus regarding the requirements needed for the entire reform process by: • Widely disseminating the information regarding the reform; • Backgrounding the reform based on an analysis of the actual state [2]; • Using the

experience in public administration reform from other states; • The global approach of the reform; • The open approach of the reform; • Establishing the strategic priorities etc.

The state services suffer from a lack of visibility in terms of local needs and also tend to behave with parsimony in assigning the credits, which, however, should automatically fund the new skills. It follows a strong frustration of local elected officials, who can say, rightly, that the stated decentralization in the legal texts is applied to an insufficient extent and ultimately depends on the ability of the local elected officials to negotiate with the state, with the political risk arisen from it.

6. REFERENCES

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REFORMA ADMINISTRAȚIEI PUBLICE ÎN CONTEXTUL CALITĂȚII SERVICIILOR

Rezumat: Pe plan mondial tendința ultimilor douăzeci de ani este cea a globalizării și dezvoltării intense a sistemelor sociale. În acest nou context statele naționale sunt puse într-o poziție cu totul nouă, în care instituțiile și sistemele administrative trebuie să fie flexibile pentru a se adapta acestor transformări. În noul context geopolitic administrația publică centrală și locală au devenit factori definitorii în competitivitatea economică a unei țări sau regiuni economice.

Pentru România procesul de transformări din administrația publică capătă noi dimensiuni. Astfel, acestea trebuie să răspundă noilor schimbări din economia mondială, dar în egală măsură și noilor cerințe ale procesului de integrare în structurile Uniunii Europene. Reforma administrației publice implică modofocări de substanță ale componentelor sale majore, atât la nivelul administrației publice centrale cât și al administrației publice locale și a serviciilor publice în general. Pe de altă parte, dezvoltarea democrației reclamă instituirea unei noi relații între cetățeni și administrație, creșterea și întărirea rolului autorităților și reconsiderarea parteneriatului cu societatea civilă și aleșii locali.

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