

## THE REFORMS AS A NEED OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, ONE OF THE CONDITIONS FOR EU INTEGRATION

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### Abstract

Reforms in the public administration occupy an important role among other priorities of a country aspiring for membership and EU integration. Not that integration depends on public administration reforms, but it's the quality of reforms that accelerate the pace and strengthen a country's road towards EU integration. The basic idea is to prove that there is a connection between these two elements or procedures on one hand, and on the other the process of integration of Republic of North Macedonia into EU depending on the public administration reform. This means that the more effective reformation of public administration the RNM has made, the shorter term of meeting the conditions for EU integration it will take.

From the very beginnings of the independence of the Republic of North Macedonia a lot of importance and value has been given to adjusting reforms in accordance to the new pluralist democratic conditions and those of the economy. Up to 1999, when the process of reforms was incited, a very small part of the specific engagements was accomplished in terms of improving the functionality of the public administration. The main goal to be reached through the implementation of the reforms in the RNM is the development of a democratic society and the development of the economy. The reforms in the public administration take a very important role among other priorities of a country that aspires to become a member and integrate in the EU. The integration does not depend on public administration reforms, but the quality of reforms does accelerate the tempo and strengthens the road of a country towards EU integration. The basic idea is to prove that there is a correlation between these two elements or procedures. The process of integration of RNM into the EU is very much dependable, among other things, also from the public administration reforms and if the Republic of North Macedonia manages to conduct an efficient reformation of the public administration, it will comply with EU integration criteria faster.

*Keywords:* administration, reform, European Union, integration.

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### 1. Introduction

It is believed that the paradigm of values in the public sector developed by the authors from the leaderships in the public sector<sup>1</sup> is the matrix for development of the public sector because of its capacity to comprise both the criteria for governance and principles of management.

Management refers to the interaction between the public sector and civil society towards collective decision-making.<sup>2</sup> In the concept of values in the public sector, public intervention should be aimed at meeting the needs of citizens in a fair, effective and responsible manner.

The concept of values in the public sector emphasizes the need to achieve a balance between the demands of the democratic political processes and those of the effective management of public resources. Concentrating on the importance of focusing on citizens to deliver public values, this paradigm is useful for guiding civil servants towards achieving economic and social

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<sup>1</sup> Moore, M. (1995), *Creating public value*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press., Stoker, G. (2006), *Public Value Management: A New Narrative for Networked Governance?* In *The American Review of Public Administration*, Sage, Volume 36 Number 1, pp. 41-57

<sup>2</sup> Castro, S. X., and Mlikota, K. (2002), *Overview on E-governance*. Working Paper prepared in the framework of the ICT cross-cutting project ICTs as Tools for Improving Local Governance, UNESCO

results. In the perspective of public values, public interest comes in the center of civil servants' activities; the role of managers in the public sector is highlighted and it contributes to the democratic processes.

This requires open access to procurement in the civil service (assessment of the benefits of public and private sector) as well as dedication to the credo of the civil service, as defined by Aldridge and Stoker, with five criteria:

- Culture of work: dedication to services for individuals and the community;
- Capacity for support of a universal approach: special responsibility of the public sector;
- Responsible practices for employment: well trained and motivated personnel which acts professionally and is fairly rewarded;
- Contribution to the wellbeing of the community: recognizing the need to work in partnership with others.

## **2. The values in the public sector as a leading principle for administrative reforms**

The approach of managing values in the public sector opens an alternative way for running the public sector outside the traditional Weberian Bureaucracy and the new theories for management of the public sector.

In circumstances where complexity and uncertainty are permanent characteristics, the concept of values in the public sector requires adaptability and flexibility as key factors which are best concretized through constant evaluation and learning, as creation of policies based on proofs. In this sense, efficiency should be assessed against higher goals, as are social wellness, sustainability and responsibility.

The theory of management in the public sector is inspired from the experience of practitioners and managers in the public sector who had felt the need of adjusting the concepts to theories and practices and harmonizing conflict values. Democracy and management should be considered as partners in the process of creation of policies to close the gap between policies and management and convert ideology into reality.<sup>3</sup>

Managers in the public sector should manage the processes, people and resources, so that they shall think wider and improve leadership, communication and evaluation.

Human resources have a key role in the implementation of administrative reforms. Civil servants are responsible for designing laws, organizational development, administrative restructuring, and creation of policies and implementation of laws. To accomplish these crucial tasks, they should be well prepared.

In order to ensure sustainability of reforms, a quality policy for human resources is necessary and this requires investing in human capital, knowledge, competences and trust.

Major priorities mentioned in the research of administrative reforms in the Balkan countries are de-politicization and professionalization of the civil service. The modernization of administrative personnel should concentrate on improving ethic standards in the public sector. This presupposes a major change in individual and social relations from the former political regimes which leads to a "cultural gap" between old and new generations. Governance should implement the changes in relations and mentality by addressing resistance and fears while new values are consolidated and by persuading people to accept the new standards.

Balkan countries have numerous consequences in harmonizing procedures in civil service. In this process Balkan countries need to overcome major barriers, such as poor management of changes, poor skills, lack of experience in project management, standing behind the laws and lack of focus on customers.

<sup>3</sup> Joly, J. (2011), *The execution of public budget: A politics and management deals*, Presentation made in Dijon, <http://www.epractice.eu/en/events/2011-meeting-interest-group-shared-services>

National laws should be accorded with the principles of the European administrative space. Professionalization of administrative personnel presupposes strengthening the local capacities and structures for training when a meritorious system for human resources is established.

Lessons learned from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the preparation of the accession process are important for the situation of the Balkan transition:

- Reasons for changes have to be explicit and felt;
- Goals have to be clearly defined and accepted;
- Partnerships for reforms have to be built;
- Local ownership has to be matured;
- Specific models cannot be transplanted.
- Legal approach has to be an entry point of the reforms in the civil service;
- Proper alignment of reform steps in order to ensure sustainability.

An example of relevant reform steps is that of Croatia in March 2008 when the country developed a whole strategy for reforms in the public administration for 2008-2011 which was called “Strategy for Reforms in Public Administration” and served as strategic frame towards modernization of the country. The plan of the reforms included the following goals:<sup>4</sup>

- Strengthening the competences and effectiveness of public administration;
- Enhancing expertise, professionalism, knowledge and transparency;
- Developing electronic administration;
- Reducing the operational costs and simplification of regulations.

The management paradigm of the public sector emphasizes the need to find out new ways of cooperation towards collective decision-making.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, interdependence of many actors which involve individuals and organizations is constantly increasing. It is believed that policy is crucial for coordination of social demands. Many reports in the Balkan countries underline the importance of political will in achieving real reforms. Real progress in anti-corruptive policies cannot be achieved unless there is political will and apathy among the citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the above, coordination of social actors has the greatest importance in the implementation of changes. In order to overpass the lack of citizens’ trust in political institutions, it is necessary to show greater transparency of political decisions and administrative procedures, as well as stronger and independent media and judicial authorities.

To deal with corruption and ensure democratic political processes, civil society has a key role in achieving political changes, since it is the key factor in the implementation of reforms. Civil society has two major functions in implementing democratization of the society:<sup>7</sup>

- To follow the steps of the governments in their reforms towards new standards;
- To motivate support and participation in the European accession processes.

<sup>4</sup> Kandžija, V. Mance, D. and Godec, Z. (2010) *A Review of the Croatian Public Administration Reform in Public Administration in the Balkans from Weberian Bureaucracy to New Public Management*, L. Matei, S. Flogaitis (Eds.), pp. 105-118

<sup>5</sup> Stoker, G. (2006), *Public Value Management: A New Narrative for Networked Governance?* In *The American Review of Public Administration*, Sage, Volume 36 Number 1, pp. 41-57

<sup>6</sup> Igric, G. (2010), *Lack of Political Will Thwarts Anti-corruption Efforts*, in *Accession of the Western Balkans to the EU: Evaluating a process*, pp. 18- 28

<sup>7</sup> Miljenko, D. (2010), *The European Union and Civil Society: what interactions?* in *Accession of the Western Balkans to the EU: Evaluating a process*, pp. 29-31

Wide participation of interested parties from the civil society may be accomplished only if people engage themselves in a practical manner and at the same time keep ownership over the process of changes.

In this context, the role of the guards, that is non-government organizations and media, should be strengthened and supplied with capacity for revision of the reforms by enhancing their expertise and further encourage debates for strategic decisions.<sup>8</sup>

The reports of the European Commission on the Balkan accession countries emphasize the importance of civil society in the reform process. The Croatian Progress Report 2010 confirmed the role of civil organizations in promoting and protecting human rights and democracy, but regretted its exclusion from the political process, and their weak capacity to monitor the political development. As far as Serbia is concerned, the Commission informs about the active role of the civil society in social, political and economic life, but for insufficient operational capacity and uneven cooperation with the state, too.

### **3. Management of changes and the public administration**

The changes in the public administration must be permanent. They provide quality of services, efficiency and effectiveness in working and achieving goals. Public administration does not have to stick to the past, not even to the current situation nor routine works which are being implemented now, procedures that functioned sufficiently in the last year do not imply that they will be good enough for this or next year. Today changes happen everywhere. Public administration cannot afford itself to be static. If we want to be successful we should embrace the changes as an opportunity to advance and reach results. We should all the time consider ideas and findings in order to identify the areas that need changes and prepare for the future. Changes in the public administration are inevitable. The only safe thing in every organization is changes.

Institutions that are part of the public administration have to be sure that they have established processes to prevent failure of the factor of changes. These processes include assessment of the needs of the organization and awareness of all members of the organization about the foreseen changes. The employees have to recognize the reason for changes and be involved in their implementation. The assessment and interaction of employees are of vital importance since they will reduce the level of resistance and contribute to successful transformation.

When implementing changes in the public administration we should have in mind the effects of changes over the behavior of employees in the organization and the delivery of services provided for the citizens. The governance of the organization should create a vision of the future of the organization in a way that will make the plight in the process of changes be worth the efforts. The vision is of essential importance for long-lasting success.

Each programme for changes requires a strategic plan. The process of four steps developed by Kurt Levin and Edgar Shane has proved to be an efficient method for changes:

- The employees in the public administration have to accept the changes. This can be achieved upon the creation of discontent with the old way of working.
- This undesired behavior must be abandoned (defrosting), the members of organizations must quit the old way of behaving and replace it with the desired one and motivate themselves for changes.
- The members of organizations must be presented a feasible model of the new behavior (changing). Employees in organizations should be aware of what benefits change

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/2693-corruption-in-serbia-2007.pdf>

will bring along; in addition, changing requires communication and time for people in organizations to understand the change.

- The new behavior should be strengthened (freezing back), and the employees will accept the new way of working and behaving.

One of the objectives of changes in public administration is creation of a system of public administration which shall work under the principles of equal treatment in exercising and protecting citizens' rights, or public administration - service to citizens. Thus, in the Republic of Macedonia, the relation between the public administration and the work of administrators who believe that they are above the system, and not service to the citizens, should be changed.

Through proper use of the resources and offering quality services to citizens, public administration increases the efficiency and quality of services, but, also the trust of citizens.

Goal of any organizational change is allow the organization to work more efficiently, which means:

- Efficient - the degree of utilization of resources against results,
- Effective - whether products and services meet the needs of the client,
- Legitimate – accepted and recognized in areas where it acts,
- Flexible- ability to adapt to changes, and
- Sustainable - ability to conduct activities for a longer term.

Efficiency of public administration is objective of every democratic country. Efficiency of public administration is an indicator of successfulness of the country, and society, too. The work of the public administration and the services it provides to citizens results in the need to increase efficiency. Employees in the public administration are the main resource and the efficiency of public administration might be determined through employees' performances, i.e. through their way of working, the knowledge they have, their motivation, interpersonal communication, cooperation, governance, coordination.

In the last years, the Republic of North Macedonia and the rest of the countries of Western Balkan and Eastern Europe, which aspire to become EU and NATO members, have been making huge efforts to increase efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. The need of more responsible and quality public administration is high, because of the harmonization of legal frameworks and reforms related to public administration taken over by the candidate countries. The Republic of North Macedonia should show greater flexibility and political understanding towards the issue of public administration reforms, the efficiency of the public service allows the foreign and domestic investors, to easily achieve their goals. Investments in economy positively affect the changes in public administration which should be professional and able to deliver quality services, at the same time requiring better observance of laws and regulations, and institutional stability. It is these standards required by the public administration that represent an opportunity for creation of favorable business climate and possibility to draw foreign investments. To date, expectations of citizens, especially of the business community in the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the private sector, are huge due to the increasing competition both from outside and inside. There must be a consensus that the previous orientation towards administration based on rules has to be replaced by general orientation towards results in which the needs of the users or more precisely citizens, play a significant role.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Responsive Government Service Quality, Initiative, Skopje, 2003, стр.16

#### **4. System of prey and principle of merit**

In the Republic of North Macedonia, contrary to declarations for the establishment of a merit system of employment, the reality is slightly different where still operates the spoils system - a system of prey, which means that the public administration turns into a politicized factory that produces inadequate and incompatible or less compatible products which affect the society very unprofessionally and risky for the public service.<sup>10</sup>

If the merit system involves reward and advancement of professionalism that they receive with their expertise and education, the spoils system is the opposite of the merit system, inaccuracy and inefficiency in operation. System of prey and principle of merit

Unfortunately, in such situations very capable and competent persons do not come to the fore, their knowledge, expertise, experience, simply does not allow them established system.

In order to fulfill that consistent implementation of the above principles of meritocracy, it requires major reforms in the public service in the country. There are significant changes in recruitment of staff in public administration. You have to apply value criteria such as personal values and qualifications, professional competence, should eradicate nepotism and political structure that creates inadequate, inefficient, unproductive and corrupt administration.

The public administration should be the only key player in the creation of conditions for the development of a professional, politically neutral, competent, responsible and stable civil service, as an efficient service to the citizens. It takes true professionals, people who know well the issues to think independently and decide, love the administration, live professionally by it, pleased and happy to be part of the public sector and such a responsible state legal activity.

These professionally trained staff will be ready to realize the social obligations to the benefit of socially useful work, and be a service to the citizens and to the society itself. These officers who have the knowledge, and are willing to respect the criteria of morality and values advocated by our society, can lead to improvement of the public service.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The administrative capacity of the Republic of North Macedonia plays a vital role in integrating itself into the European Union. Scholars and analysts dealing with the study of integration processes, give great commitment and role to the reforms in the public administration of a country and the EU integration. The Balkan countries, including the Republic of North Macedonia also give great importance to this issue, although from a broader perspective, the countries of this region are still preoccupied with the economic and political stability. The development of an effective public administration in other countries, such as those in South-East Europe, was completed prior to their integration into the EU, and the public administration of the Republic of North Macedonia as a basis for democracy, rule of law and free economy is a real challenge in the future. Nowadays it is very clear that an effective public administration sector is a prerequisite for the further development of the Republic of North Macedonia towards EU integration. Including this issue as one of the major priorities, all previous governments of the Republic of North Macedonia put an emphasis on the definition of their involvement in the implementation of reforms in the field of public administration and transform it into a service for citizens and economic entities in the country, since a professional, efficient and modern administration is a necessary predisposition to support the objectives of the government of the Republic of North Macedonia for full membership in the EU structures. Theoretically, since gaining independence of the Republic of Macedonia, all government bodies have recognized the importance of reforming the public administration. The reforms were seen as one aspect of the transition to a democratic society, predisposition to economic

<sup>10</sup> [www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/.../mk\\_rapport\\_2013\\_MK4\\_21\\_10\\_2013.doc](http://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/.../mk_rapport_2013_MK4_21_10_2013.doc)

development and a prerequisite for entry into EU. idat service of citizens and society. These officers have the knowledge, possessing will and who are willing to respect the criteria of morality and values should have in our society, can lead to improved public service..

In addition to the adopted legislation, institutions also have an impact on the process of public administration reform. With the establishment of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, which is responsible for coordination and adoption of reforms in the public administration, although functioning since 2011, it has taken over some of the responsibilities of the Agency of Administration (former Agency of Civil Servants). With the establishment of the Agency of Civil Servants and the Ministry of Local Government as part of the process of reforms, great institutional importance has been given to reforms in both fields - public administration and decentralization. If some institutions implement the reforms better than others, then emphasis and efforts should be put to remove the bad experiences of non-implementation and focus on a public administration that is efficient and modern.

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