

# **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS PART OF THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY 2020**

**PhD. Ioana Florina MINZU,**  
“Athenaeum” University of Bucharest  
[ioana\\_minzu@yahoo.com](mailto:ioana_minzu@yahoo.com)

## ***Abstract:***

*Public administration, through its own activities and way of functioning, is important for economic competitiveness and societal well-being. This is the conclusion that the European Commission reached out and the Commission is not the only one that affirms this. That is why in the last documents made by the institutions of European Union, the public administration was mentioned as a target and as a way of improving the economic sector.*

*By reinforcing institutional and administrative capacity, reducing the administrative burden and improving the quality of legislation, the EU Member States sustain structural adjustments and maintain economic growth.*

*Public administration reform strategies made by the Romanian Government, as whole the governments of the Member States, aim to identify measures for reaching out the objectives established by the European Strategy 2020.*

*This article analyzes the public administration new role in the XXI century in the European Union.*

**Keywords:** *quality of public administration; 2020 Europe Strategy; country recommendation; Romanian strategies*

**JEL Classification:** *H11*

## **I. Introduction**

The economic crisis and the new economic realities of the XXI century brought in the front place the public administration role in solving the economic problems facing individual countries, and the European Union as a unitary structure. The European Commission believes that through its activity, public administration can contribute to economic competitiveness and societal well-being.

This is why in EU documents, such as Europe Strategy 2020 and Annual Growth Survey 2014, public administration plays an important role.

At this time, public administration and civil service domain from the EU countries pass through a structural reform and a detailed analysis in order to achieve the standards required and desired for the near future.

## **II. Public administration in EU documents**

The trend of globalization and Europeanization, the dynamic social systems and new global realities determine national states to have a new position, where the systems and administrative authorities must be flexible and able to adapt, even if major changes are required.

Europe Strategy 2020 [1] was elaborated at the beginning of 2010 year, as a partnership between the EU and the Member States, in a context of low economic growth and productivity and serious global financial crisis.

Communication from the Commission: Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth [2], provides that for a successful way out from the crisis, it is necessary to find ways to create new jobs and establish a clear direction of the society, setting out a series of five common objectives [3] to be pursued urgently: employment, research and innovation, climate change and energy, education and combating poverty. In order to achieve these goals by 2020, the strategy is based on two pillars: the thematic approach, combining priorities and main objectives, and writing reports for each country and recommendations for every one of them.

In order to provide the framework for implementation of measures leading to fulfill the main objectives and the Europe 2020 pillars is necessary to carry out several indicators, easily monitored, which quantifies the performances. Public administration is such an indicator, with a fundamental role. It is not an end in itself or one to be achieved, but is a catalyst and a factor of a well-defined set. Only through public administration, because it, by its very nature, is their instrument, states can fulfill the main objectives which they propose, in the general interest of all citizens.

The Commission submits that public administration with poor performance, along with the states budgetary problems, were those that led to the collapse of some structures within national economies. [4] Only an efficient administration, predictable, consistent and transparent, achieved through coordinated efforts and cooperation at European and national level - central and local, makes it possible to address administrative capacity in a unit manner, as a step to support this goal.

The strategy helps to identify and resolve inoperative issues and concerns of each state, to direct their policies, to indicate hotspots in European economies.

In order to fulfill the five objectives of the Strategy, there must be established steps and targets to be pursued in the coming year through the Annual Growth Survey, as well as through specific documents for each Member State.

Communication from the Commission: Annual Growth Survey 2014 [5] takes stock of the economic and social situation in Europe in 2013 and sets out broad policy priorities for the EU as a whole for 2014 year. It confirms signs of a slow economic recovery in the EU, with visible signs of EU economy rebalancing and correction of important macroeconomic imbalances. The Commission considers that the EU and Member States should thus pursue their focus on making progress in five priority areas: pursuing differentiated, growth-friendly fiscal consolidation, restoring lending to the economy, promoting growth and competitiveness for today and tomorrow, tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis, modernizing public administration.

Both Excellence in public administration for competitiveness in EU Member States report and Comparative Study on the quality of public administration in EU countries have, as their main element, the fact that public administration quality and legal framework stability are pre-condition for economic development, together with well-founded and structured institutional and administrative capacity, absence of corruption, a practical approach in public policies and an effective judicial system.

As it is shown in the documents elaborated and adopted at European level, improving the public administration quality is an objective secondary to the basic targets of Europe Strategy 2020.

### **III. Romanian Public administration – part of the European public administration**

The political, social and economic Romanian system has undergone profound changes since 1990. Together with this was created a modern public administration system, which should follow the organization and execution of the Constitution law, other laws and legal acts issued by the authorities. [6]

Although the Romanian society has evolved, has developed and passed through political, economic and social crisis, a true reform of the public administration failed to be completed in order to be adapted to the new realities facing.

Following the accession of Romania to the European Union, in 2007, the Romanian public administration became part of the European public administration. This way it must fulfill the standards and objectives established at Community level, to join other public administrations of the Member States in the fight against economic crisis, but also to face internal challenges.

By the instrumentality of Europe Strategy 2020, all Member States were advised to reform and modernize their national public administrations.

In the Council Recommendation from July 8<sup>th</sup> 2014 on the National Reform Programme 2014 for Romania and delivering a Council opinion on the Convergence Programme of Romania, 2014 (2014/C 247/21) is pointed out that the Romanian public administration has a “weak capacity to develop and implement policies”, fact that still remains a core challenge for “hampering overall development of the country, the business environment and the capacity for public investment, while not allowing for the provision of public services of sufficient quality.”

This is why it is recommended that in 2014 – 2015 for Romania to “step up efforts to strengthen the capacity of public administration, in particular by improving efficiency, human resource management, the decision-making tools and coordination within and between different levels of government; and by improving transparency, integrity and accountability.” In the same time, Romanian should “accelerate the absorption of EU funds, strengthen management and control systems, and improve capacity of strategic planning, including the multi annual budgetary element; to tackle persisting shortcomings in public procurement; to continue to improve the quality and efficiency of the judicial system, fight corruption at all levels, and ensure the effective implementation of court decisions”. [7]

As an answer to this Recommendation, the Govern of Romania, by Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration adopted, by Government Decision no. 909/2014 [8], The Strategy for Public Administration Consolidation 2014-2020 [9] and also elaborate The Administrative Capacity Operational Programme 2014-2020 (PO-CA) [10]. These documents aim to create a modern transparent, efficient, stable, responsible, credible public administration, in an open relationship with customers, able to facilitate socio-economic development of the country, balanced at national and local level, contributing in this manner to fulfill the objectives established by the Europe Strategy 2020.

By the proposed measures, the reform process becomes an ample plan, which modifies the manner of approaching the central key issues that public administration in Romania is currently facing with.

#### **IV. Public administration modernization - necessary measures**

When talking about reform, we first think to change, to improve a process by updating and adapting it. Therefore, public administration reform involves the reorganization and restructuring in terms of optimizing the activity.

In order to modernize public administration, at European level have been established some series of measures to be implemented in all Member States: implementation of eGovernment services on a wide scale, increased use of information and communication technologies (ICT) at the central, regional and local level of public administration, reducing bureaucracy, business development, public function professionalism, quality of public policies.

Member States shall ensure greater efficiency in terms of organizing their administrations, including by improved cooperation between different levels of government. In this respect, important and helpful are some measures: eGovernment services of individual national desks [11], an efficient tax collection system, with standardized tax return statements and the possibility for citizens to provide public sector only once the necessary data.

Wider implementation of online public services is a procedural solution to many general issues currently public sector is facing with; because they reduce administrative tasks, saving time and money, eliminate bureaucracy, increase transparency, accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of public services.

At the same time, Member States must strengthen their capacity of public investment in order to access European funds allocated for this purpose for 2014-2020.

Another aspect that shouldn't be omitted is the legal framework. Quality of legislation needs to be improved, [12] requiring the establishment of less stringent regulatory systems, particularly for SMEs, by reducing the complexity of the procedure for setting up businesses and the period for issuing permits and licenses, and ensuring solving cases into a reasonable period, in particular insolvency.

In addition, by applying a consistent, simplified and streamlined European legislation, the transition to a common framework will achieve better cooperation between national governments and a simplification of the activities of the single market that will lead to stability regulatory documents.

We can observe at European and global level, the predisposition to make a public administration "reform", through restructuring and reorganization of national institutions in the period following the general

elections. Hence, it is created a new state apparatus, by renaming institutions, redistribution of areas, creating new institutions. Unfortunately, by doing this the so-called reform is not improved, in fact, nothing is. Only is changed the architecture of ministries, agencies, authorities, commissions, institutions at central and, subsequent, local level. After that is also changed the board of all of them, in general, with persons that have no studies and experience in that domain.

The institutions mission remains the same, in fact is missing the essence of their activity: the way of action and the process of reaching targets. In order to justify their existence, most of these structures do not prepare other than reports, studies and strategies without putting them into practice. Thus, they only hamper the existing bureaucracy, creating new filters between performer and recipient. Although strong hierarchical structures must be replaced with decentralized, transparent and dynamic structures, this process cannot be done anyhow, but in a well defined approach, with explicit and coherent stages, concrete and measurable objectives.

What we do not want to understand is the fact that a multidimensional reform cannot be achieved without a concrete assessment and a plan of measures that should include the utility of the institutions, the staff professionalism and the capacity of public services. From time to time, it is required an assessment of the progress in implementing reform measures and their capacity for solving emerging problems.

It is equally true, and we must not forget that the problems in the economic sphere, and not only in this domain, have brought a number of common problems and challenges for public administration and civil service, like reducing public expenditure allocated budget, a need to solve more problems with less resources, external partners pressure in terms of quality, the public services availability and costs, decision making transparency, integrity of public officials, corruption, expansion of information technology.

However, favoritism in public administration creates misallocations of resources and attracts inefficiency of state activity. The services assignation on unfair, inequitable and subjective basis, on single or group interests, attract corruption in awarding public contracts, often leading to poor quality outcomes and long delays in meeting targets if decisions are challenged in the courts.

This significantly deters and reduces the level and quality of investment, obstructs the fair operation of the internal market and has a negative impact on public finances, productivity growth and competitiveness.

Public administration in Romania is currently facing with an overregulated legal system, inefficient cumbersome procedures that affect the business environment activity, investment interest of the country and the state's ability to carry out public investment. All these entail problems in making and coordinating public policies and strategic documents and, also, in creating a medium and long term vision.

In terms of modernizing and fortifying national public administration, Romania strives to strengthen the institutional capacity, the public services efficiency and, in terms of improving access, the use and quality of ICT in this area. However, important steps have been made towards adopting the legal framework for decision-making transparency in public administration and to guarantee free access to public information.

If at strengthening governance level, enhancing the quality of public services and the rate of absorption of EU funds could be seen some progress since 2013, regarding the use of impact assessments in the legislative process we cannot say the same thing. Although the government makes budget projections for its initiated normative acts, at members of parliament level they hardly exist, and adopting some of the legislative initiatives lead to budgetary imbalances and discrimination between categories of citizens.

Current legislation causes confusion, conflicts, blocking the activity, especially in terms of political rivalry. [13] In order to develop measures that modernize and streamline public administration is necessary to harmonize and eliminate confusion of interpretation and application of legislation, by creating a boundary line of the responsibilities, competences and relations of public authorities on different levels.

At the same time, through the decentralization process, the Government must ensure correlation between central public administration reform and the local one and the transfer of competences towards local authorities, including in public finance area. Along with this process, is necessary to establish the responsibility of the authorities.

Despite all efforts, because the strategies developed have a rather slow implementing rate, it appears that public administration deficiencies remain a challenge for the Romanian government in the process of increasing competitiveness, by making a low absorption rate of European funds and unstable economic progress.

What Romania must realize is that, simultaneous with the development of public administration, the possibility to defend national interests in Europe and worldwide grows.

## **V. Conclusion**

Public administration, by the multitude of administrative authorities of the State and local authorities, by the functions that it has, determines the effective exercise of state and public affairs management. Only with its help is possible to carry out the policies of national governments and of European bodies.

The role and importance of public administration changes and will continue to change as economic and social problems of a state, defined by political power, will turn into new socio-economic and political realities.

So as a public administration operate within normal parameters and manage to successfully fulfill its tasks and goals, whether national or European, it must take into account some minimum rules: comply with effective legal provisions, apply equal treatment for all citizens, to be consistent, objective and impartial, to be oriented towards satisfying the needs of citizens and to provide them the best possible information.

System and public institutions, European and national, local and central, must continue to adapt to the constant changes of the economic, social and political circumstances.

The quality, efficiency, predictability and credibility of public administration influence and determine decisions of potential foreign investors, but also for the national ones.

Structural reform of the public administration system is a dynamic process and, like any process of this kind, will never be completed, but may be permanently adapted and streamlined.

In the last century, in Europe and worldwide, public administration has become a key element that determines the position of a nation, drawing its advantages and disadvantages in economic competition.

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[1] In preparing this strategy, it was took into account the experience gained in the application of the Lisbon Strategy (Lisbon Agenda), launched in 2000, renewed in 2005, in effect until 2010.

[2]<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>.

[3] Besides this, in order to achieve the objectives set, the Commission has launched seven flagship initiatives: „A Digital Agenda for Europe”, „Innovation Union”, „Youth on the move”, „ Resource efficient Europe”, „ An industrial policy for the globalization era”, „An Agenda for new skills and jobs” and „ European Platform against Poverty”.



[4] [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/europe2020stocktaking\\_ro.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/europe2020stocktaking_ro.pdf).

[5] [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2014/ags2014\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/2014/ags2014_en.pdf).

[6] According to the Constitution of Romania, “Romania is a sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible National State.” and “The State shall be organized based on the principle of the separation and balance of powers - legislative, executive, and judicial - within the framework of constitutional democracy.” (art.1). “Parliament is the supreme representative body of the Romanian people and the sole legislative authority of the country.” (art.61) and “Justice shall be administered by the High Court of Cassation and Justice, and the other courts of law set up by the law.” (art.126). “The Government shall, in accordance with its government programme accepted by Parliament, ensure the implementation of the domestic and foreign policy of the country, and exercise the general management of public administration.” (art.102). Adjacent to the Constitution, the main regulatory documents that govern the Romanian public administration activity, functions and responsibilities are: Law no. 90/2001 on the organization and functioning of the Romanian Government and ministries and Law no. 215/2001 on local public administration.

[7] [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/csr2014\\_council\\_romania\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/csr2014_council_romania_en.pdf).

[8] Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, nr. 834 din 17 noiembrie 2014.

[9] [http://www.mdrap.ro/userfiles/consultari\\_publice/30\\_06\\_14/anexa1.doc](http://www.mdrap.ro/userfiles/consultari_publice/30_06_14/anexa1.doc).

[10] [http://www.fonduriadministratie.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/draft\\_POCA\\_13\\_06\\_2014.pdf](http://www.fonduriadministratie.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/draft_POCA_13_06_2014.pdf). The official version was sent on August 25, 2014 to the European Commission.

[11] This is essential for cross-border cooperation.

[12] At UE level, Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) try to make EU law lighter, simpler and less costly.

[13] On these lines we can give many examples, such as political conflicts created in recent years between the President and the Government in the representations of the country to the European meetings, national public institutions responsibilities and the promulgation of laws.

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