

## THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR IN ROMANIA

### **Abstract**

The decrease of the trust level in the public institutions and authorities, as well as the increasing pressures on the public finances determined the governments to take different measures which aim to improve the efficiency and transparency in the public sector.

The introducing the public administrator position in the Romanian local public administration aims to professionalization of the public sector, contributing to the improvement and efficiency of the service delivery to the citizens.

The public administrator proved to have an important role in professionalization of the local administrative bureaucratic apparatus from Romania.

An important factor to the development of the public administrator institution is the promotion of the results achieved so far by them. In the first six years of existence in Romania, the public administrator was perceived not only as a public servant, but a promotor of the change within the reform process within the local public administrator system.

**Keywords:** local public administration, public administrator, public administration modernization

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## ROLUL ADMINISTRATORULUI PUBLIC ÎN ROMÂNIA

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### **Rezumat**

Scăderea nivelului de încredere a cetățenilor în instituțiile și în autoritățile publice, precum și creșterea gradului de presiune asupra finanțelor publice determină guvernele să întreprindă diferite măsuri pentru eficientizarea și transparentizarea acțiunilor în sectorul public.

Introducerea poziției de administrator public în administrația publică locală din România vizează profesionalizarea sectorului public, contribuind la îmbunătățirea și eficientizarea oferirii serviciilor publice către cetățeni.

Administratorul public a demonstrat că are un rol important în profesionalizarea aparatului birocratic din cadrul administrației publice locale din România.

Un factor important în dezvoltarea instituției administratorului public îl reprezintă promovarea rezultatelor obținute până în prezent. În primii șase ani de existență administratorul public a fost perceput nu doar un funcționar public, dar și un promotor al schimbării în cadrul procesului de reformă din sistemul administrației publice locale.

**Cuvinte cheie:** administrație publică locală, administrator public, modernizare administrație publică



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The decrease of the trust level in the public institutions and authorities as well as the increasing pressures on the public finances determined the governments to take different measures which aim to improve the efficiency and transparency in the public sector. The need of the state reforming and of the public management reform is based on three reasons: (1) Governments have to be connected to the society developments, therefore it should have an increased capacity to identify and to respond to the citizens' need and to be able to provide a larger range of services at the superior quality; (2) The trust of people in governance should be regained; 3. The government role is continuously changing, facing new pressures: the state does not have monopol on certain services, while globalization and competition is creating important pressures (OECD, 2000).

Therefore, it is considered that political interventions are not longer sufficient for a proper function of the public administration. Also, incompetency, corruption or displacement of the civil servants is not the only causes that determine inefficiency.

Many of the common problems were generated by the traditional Weberian bureaucratic system. The Neo-Weberian model which includes performance elements and citizens' participation has the aim to create an European social model. The strategies to reform public sector could be grouped into four categories (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Pollitt, 2008):

- Maintaining – strengthening the traditional management mechanisms. The existing system aims a linear limitation of the expenditure, without the decreasing the expected results. The maintaining strategy proposes a more thorough control of the expenditures.
- Modernization – propose that public authorities should organize differently the structures and procedures. Equally important, this modernization should comprise the traditional values of the public services. Reforms should consider the characteristics of the public sector: improvement of the management instruments (managerial modernization) and increasing the degree of participation of citizens and other stakeholders to the public act (participatory modernization).
- Marketing – aims to orient the public sector and its values towards the private sector. Marketing does not necessarily mean the privatizing, nor diminishing the public sector, but reforming it. This means that the applied techniques in the private sector should be introduced taking into account its particularities.

- Minimization – requires the reducing of the public domain, which requires subcontracting of the services that traditionally were offered by the public sector.

While the Neo-Weberian model of public administration is preserving the features of the Weberian bureaucratic model, there are some new defintory elements that should be considered( Pollit, 2008).

1. The transition from an orientation based on bureaucratic rules to an orientation based on demands and needs of the citizens, by developing a professional culture of the quality and of the services.
2. Supplement (but not replace) the role of representative democracy by direct consulting and a direct representation of citizens in the decision making process.
3. Legislation modernization with the aim on promoting a larger orientation towards results, rather than complying with procedures; this requires a more focus on ex-post evaluation.
4. Professionalization of the public service, which requires the fact that the civil servant is not just a simple expert that applies the legislation, but is a professional manager, which is oriented to achieving the results for the full satisfaction of the citizens.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR POSITION IN ROMANIA

Considering the developments of Neo-Weberian bureaucracy in Europe, the reform of the Romanian public administration aimed to the increasing of the local decisional autonomy, as well as the improvement of the financial and patrimonial management within the local communities. Therefore, the local administration power is reflected in two principal aspects: on one hand is the responsibility, decision power and financial resources; on the other hand is the capacity to exert responsibilities, providing to citizens public services at high quality.

Therefore, for sustaining the modernization process of the public administration in Romania, it was considered that it is important to create an executive layer which should be political neutral. Under these circumstances, the public administrator position was introduced through the Law No. 286/2006, which modifies the Law No. 215/2001 of the Local Public Administration. According to this legislation, at the level of towns and communes, the mayor could propose introducing the public administrator position in the City Hall' organigrame. Hiring of the public administrator is made through public contest, the contract being made on limited time basis. The same procedures for hiring public administrator applies to the county councils. Moreover, based on the same legislation, the public administrator position could be created at the level of the inter-community development associations.

The public administrator concept was inspired through the administrative systems of other European countries, such: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Lethonia, Great Britain, Netherlands and Sweeden. Also, the system was inspired from the City Manager position which is present in the United States of America. The role of managers in local public administration was widely recognized in the literature in the context of the public administration modernization: Banovetz, 1971; Boynton, 1971; Anderson, 1989; French, 2003. Therefore, the public administrator is contributing to organize community services based on principles that apply to the private sector. This concept was tailored on the need of the Romanian administrative system.

During the first six years of this provision (2006 to 2011) there are few local administrative-territorial units where public administrators are hired. The largest share of the local administrative-territorial unit where public administrator is employed is at the county level (36.6%) and municipalities level (19.4%). Table 1 presents the situation of hiring managers by type of administrative units in the year 2011.

TABLE 1 - THE SITUATION OF HIRING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS BY TYPE OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS, IN THE YEAR 2011

	Commune	Town	Municipality	County Council	Total
Number of public administrators	110	27	25	15	177
Percent of public administrators per local territorial unit	62.1	15.3	14.1	8.5	100.0
Number of local territorial units at national level**	2860	217	103	41	3221
Percent of local territorial units that hired public administrators	3.8	12.4	24.3	36.6	5.5

Sources: Ministry of Administration and Interior; Romanian Yearly Statistic Bulletin - 2010, National Institute of Statistics

As it can be noted from above table, only 5.5% of the total local territorial units hired public administrators. Considering the distribution of the total of 177 public administrators, based on the type of the territorial unit that they serve, the highest number (110) are representing communes, followed by towns (27), municipalities (25), and county councils (15). If for the county councils the level of occupation of the public administrators' position is considered to be satisfactory (36.6%), at the level of the communes the hiring process could be considered still in an incipient phase (3.8%). The slow process of hiring public administrators have multiple causes, the most important being the lack of financial resources. Nevertheless, public administrator could have an important contribution in the improvement of the efficiency in utilizing public resources, so it should not necessary be perceived as an additional burdain, but an asset that could bring value added to the system. Moreover,

professionalization of the public administration management is a necessity in the context of differentiation the role of local elected by the technical civil servants; therefore, this contribute to separate politics (which brings the vision and policy options) by administration (which is responsible by the implementation).

### 3. THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR IN ROMANIA

The aim of introducing the position of public administrator is to modernize public administration through professionalization of the local public administration, contributing to the improvement and efficiency of the service delivery to the citizens. Therefore, the public administrator is seen not just as a public servant, but a promotor of the change of the reform process within the local public administrator system. The public administrator is not a manager in the sense of the bureaucratic term, but is a professional that is trained and able to facilitate the interactions and to solve problems that are manifesting at a community level. The public administrator contributes to creating and adequate framework of identifying problems and to propose solutions to solve them, through elaboration and implementation of a local action plans( CUPARa, 2011).

The results of a study published by CUPARb (2011), regarding the implementation of the public administrator position at the Romanian local public administration, demonstrates that the roles of the public administrators are diverse. The study was based on a questionnaire that was distributed to the public administrators, as well as to the mayors and presidents of the county councils. The results of the study indicates that the diversity of these roles is caused by the flexibility of the existing legislation, which gives the freedom to the local political elected to decide on the most important roles that a public administrator can serve. The most common roles that public administrators served so far in the Romanian local public administration are the following:

- Involved in identifying and attracting extra-budgetary resources;
- Project management;
- Coordination of the public procurement;
- Coordination of public services;
- Elaboration and management of the public budget;
- Exercising the role of the main credit responsible (which traditionally was served only by the mayor, respectively by the president of the county council).

Another analysis presented in the CUPAR's study (2011) on the roles and the results of the public administrator from Romania is made through a ten case studies that were performed at the level of ten local public administration units: three at the county councils level (Sibiu, Braşov and Prahova), two at the municipality level (Turda and Slatina), three at the town level (Rovinari, Băile Olăneşti and Eforie) and two at the commune level (Drăgăneşti de Vede – Teleorman and Vlădeşti – Vâlcea).

At the level of the county councils, the public administrators proved to have an important role in coordination of the activities within the institution. It was appreciated that the public administrator was able to impose its vision bringing a new perspectives of initiative and creativity in the public administration work. For example, the public administrator from Braşov implemented an integrate management system of the documents, which contributed to a better work discipline and to an increased work efficiency. The public administrator from Prahova organized working groups, thus facilitating the communications with the superior hierarchical levels, which turned into decreasing the time required for processing certain documents necessary in the operational process and in the decision making process. Therefore, the public administrator succeeded in taking over some managerial responsibilities from the president of the county council, therefore leaving more time to the president to focus on the strategical aspects of the administration.

Also, at the municipality level, the role of the public administrator had important positive results. In Slatina municipality, the budget of the local public administration has tripled in five years (in the period 2004 to 2009), part of this being attributed to the public administrator which was involved in identifying and attracting of external funds. In Turda municipality the public administrator is responsible for coordination of all the administrative apparatus. Also, its role extended to the associative structures where the City Hall is share holder, the most important being the Society Salina Turda.

At the town level, the role of the public administrator is mainly directed to Exercising the role of the main credit responsible (which traditionally was served only by the mayor). The public administrator has a delegate role to represent the mayor in relation with the other stakeholders, therefore contributing to a better response to their requests. Also, the public administrator is involved in projects management as well as in accessing the European funds.

At the commune level, the roles that the public administrator comports a large variety, upon the needs of the specific city hall. In certain cases the public administrator has the role of main credit responsible, while in other cases the public administrator is delegated to perform specific tasks that require urgent attention.

In all three types of local administrations, the role of public administrator is perceived as being important, contributing to achievement of the community needs and objectives, in a more efficient and timely manner. Also, it is considered that the public administrator represents a succes factor in the process of reforming the Romanian public administration and also in the process of compatibilization of the local public administration with the European realm.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The public administrator proved to have an important role in professionalization of the local administrative bureaucratic apparatus. Some of local public administrations that benefited by the existence of public administrators, are fully aware about their positive results and are committed to institutionalize this position. In contrast to its temporar and optional character, the public administrator position was perceived as being a positive long term financial investment which not only brings economy to the city hall, but it could bring important resource returns. Nevertheless, the advantages of hiring public administrators could be better identified in the large institutions of local administrations, such county councils or municipality city halls. Under the actual financial constrains, the city halls from small local administration units (such communes) have difficulties in creating this position.

An important factor to the development of the public administrator institution is the promotion of the results achieved so far by them. Another critical aspect is the selection process of the public administrator, as well as better defining the roles that the public administration could serve. Therefore, the public administrator should be perceived as a neutral profesional, whose competences are certified and demonstrated, with determination to keep abreast to the developments in the public administration, in order to better respond to the citizens' needs.

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