

**ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SERVANTS'
PERCEPTION ON LOCAL PUBLIC
SERVICES IN ROMANIA**

Abstract

The aim of this study is to disclose civil servants' perception on local public services in Romania. In this respect, the article exposes the conceptual framework regarding the local public services and their role in the sustainable development of the society. Furthermore, the study reveals the analysis of the responses of the civil servants regarding the local public services in Romania.

Keywords: public services, civil servants, public administration, sustainable development.

JEL CODES: H70, L80, L88.

**ANALIZA PERCEPȚIEI
FUNCȚIONARILOR
PUBLICI ASUPRA
SERVICIILOR PUBLICE
LOCALE DIN ROMÂNIA**

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Rezumat

Obiectivul acestui studiu este acela de a analiza percepția funcționarilor publici asupra serviciilor publice locale din România. În acest sens, articolul reliefează cadrul conceptual al serviciilor publice locale și evidențiază rolul acestora la dezvoltarea durabilă a societății. În continuare, studiul prezintă analiza răspunsurilor funcționarilor publici referitor la serviciile publice locale din România.

Cuvinte cheie: servicii publice, funcționari publici, administrație publică, dezvoltare durabilă



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1. INTRODUCTION

Local public services meet the specific needs of local and regional communities. The normal operation of any community may be achieved if there are ensured some specific activities of general interest, such as, for example, water, heat, gas distribution, sanitation, etc. These activities which meet the general interest must be provided by the local authorities on the basis that they respond to the citizens who have elected them to represent their interests.

Today, there is a strong need of efficient and effective local public services both for businesses and for citizens. The civil servants are the ones who may improve the way in which public services are delivered to the clients. Hence, this study explores civil servants' perception on local public services in Romania, derived from the analysis of empirical data collected through a questionnaire created and applied by the author. First of all, the article exposes the conceptual framework regarding the local public services and their role in the sustainable development of the society. Furthermore, the study reveals the analysis of the responses of the civil servants regarding the local public services in Romania.

2. BACKGROUND

Developments in contemporary society reveal that the performance and the success of the economy are depending on the extent to which the variety of modern methods and techniques specific to management science is put into practice.

Local communities in Romania and other European Union Member States have the mission to ensure local public services to meet the permanent and temporary needs of residents. The character of these needs has proven to be over time unlimited. Therefore, the development of public services and their diversification have been favoured by the general progress of the society, which led to new needs of the population. The public power has tried to satisfy these needs due to reasons related to general interest.

The social pillar within the sustainable development concept has gained more recognition in the recent years. A shift was observed from the so-called traditional social themes such as education, employment, toward emerging themes such as governance, sense of place, social capital and networks. In light of this change the sustainability debate is often linked to urban environments and communities (Neamțu, 2012, p.125). Local authorities have the difficult task of managing sensitive and complex issues of local communities. The public authority ensures the management of financial resources and their use based on electoral programs, as well as on surveys, so as to create a convergence of the

strategic objectives with the immediate or future needs of local communities. Ensuring local government capacity to develop economic and social reform measures and to meet the requirements of citizens mainly depends on the development of local public services consistent with similar structures in the European Union countries.

There is a confrontation between the financial resources which are typically deep limited, and the needs for public services, whose character is unlimited. The local communities are often put in a position to look for financial resources, using loans, when necessary, as an alternative to financing public services and local development. Public policy considerations are becoming more relevant especially in time of financial crisis, thus making of decisions should manage the balance between short-term financial tasks and medium ones. In Romania, even it is created a institutional framework for support effective policy management, their execution is limited (Nicolescu et al., 2011, pp. 157).

The existence of the democratic state has generated profound changes for Romania in the organization of public administration, at both central and local level. Local communities have increasingly strengthened local autonomy. Nevertheless, the need of a good management practice to meet the general interest of the citizens requires efforts to identify concrete ways to improve the management of local government.

The expansion of public tasks and a larger degree of complexity augments the significance of *good* management (i.e. the concept of good administration, good governance, sound governance, co-governance, collaborative governance) in the public administration (Pečarič, 2013, p. 126).

The Romanian local public administration is rather centralized and more under the control of central authorities (Androniceanu, 2011, p. 64). The legislation has created the appropriate framework to ensure the stability of employment in the public administration regardless of political changes. However, unfortunately, regardless of legal guarantees, the political changes led to many changes among civil servants, especially in the case of leadership positions (Andrei et al., 2012, p.5).

The aim in the European Union is that by 2015 European public administrations to be "recognised for being open, flexible and collaborative in their relations with citizens and businesses. They use e-government to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and to constantly improve public services in a way that caters for user's different needs and maximises public value, thus supporting the transition of Europe to a leading knowledge-based economy" (European Commission, 2010, p. 4).

Focus of development of efficient and high quality IT technologies, is the most significant strength, assuring sustainability to the organization, and focuses on obtaining high revenue and profit will be the

most powerful methods to handle the crisis. In time of crisis it is marked that the Government establishes commitments of realistic and accessible policies in a sure macro environment, to ensure an adequate budgeting, assure a frame of measures which include efficient targets, but in Romania there is no formal process for establishing the priorities, which could be linked to the macroeconomic environment, the annual legislative plan is not comprehensive or prioritized effectively (Nicolescu et al., 2011, pp. 75)

There are many challenges of public administration's management, related to the problems of urbanization, industrialization, sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness of the public services delivered to the citizens (Teșu, 2012a, p. 61).

The recent measures undertaken in the aftermath of the economic crisis by most European governments have shown that equal access to and affordability of public services are no longer considered as untouchable rights. The economic crisis has clearly exposed the weaknesses of European welfare states and the need for reforms, but the direction most European governments are going is utterly short-sighted. Not only does it call the universality of public services, one of the underlying foundations of the European social model, into question, but it is also likely to significantly affect the future of Europeans' well-being (Dhéret, 2011).

Local governments can improve not only decision intelligence to locate and tackle social problems, but also democratic responsiveness by designing public services customized to citizens' needs and demands (Lim, 2010, p. 29).

Invested by citizens with public authority through democratic voting, local authorities must provide public services of the highest quality and utility in order to ensure the sustainability of local government which they have assumed with responsibility to the voters.

Improving public administration's management is possible if it is based on a coherent strategy, which may take into account the economic, social, and environmental problems that need to be solved in the near future (Teșu, 2012b, p. 61).

3. CIVIL SERVANTS' PERCEPTION ON LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES

In order to examine civil servants' perceptions regarding the local public services within District 2 of Bucharest a questionnaire was developed and applied. The questionnaire used was construed based on a five-level Likert scale of increasing intensity where 1 indicates very dissatisfied and 5 designates very satisfied. The questionnaire was applied during November 2011 on a sample of 175 subjects,

obtaining valid responses from 150 subjects. The sample was based on a population made up of employees from District 2 of Bucharest (331 persons). The sample is representative in terms of its structure, which was established in view of official statistics on the structure of the civil service in Romania.

Regarding the civil servants' view on the extent to which they are satisfied with the services provided to citizens by the institution in which they work, the results show that most of them are satisfied. According to their responses, 23% of civil servants are very satisfied with the services provided to citizens by the institution in which they work, 52% were satisfied, 14% are indifferent, 6% are dissatisfied and 5% very dissatisfied (Figure 1).

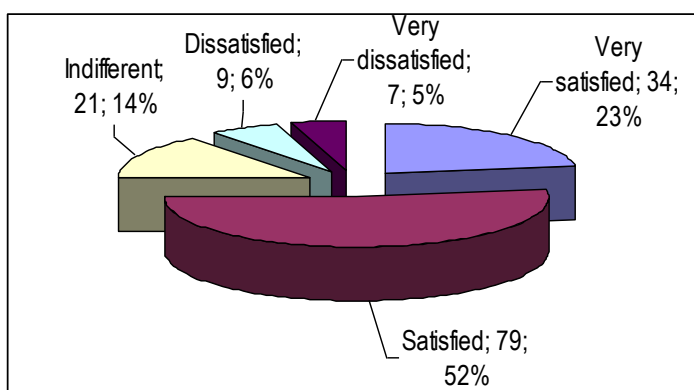


FIGURE 1. CIVIL SERVANTS' VIEW ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED TO CITIZENS BY THE PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN WHICH THEY WORK

Source: Authors' calculations.

In order to identify civil servants' opinion on the extent to which they are satisfied with the current state of public services the subjects were asked to evaluate 30 public services (Figure 2).

According to the performed study, the civil servants are *very satisfied* with the current state of the following public services: civil (marital) status (33; 22%), civil protection (23; 15%), cadastre and land resources (23; 15%), security service provided by community police (21; 14%), and personal data records public service (20; 13%). The last in the rankings of public services of which the subjects are very satisfied are the following public services: traffic management (10; 7%), public passenger transport service (7; 5%), and maintenance, repair and operation of roads (7; 5%).

The civil servants surveyed are *satisfied* with the current state of the following public services: advertising permissions public service (69; 46%), civil (marital) status public service (67; 45%), civil protection (65; 43%), personal data records public service (59; 39%), authorizing the entrepreneurship and SME support (57; 38%). The last in the rankings of public services of which the subjects are

satisfied are the following: public passenger transport service (23; 15%), heat distribution public service (22; 15%), maintenance, repair and operation of roads (22, 15%).

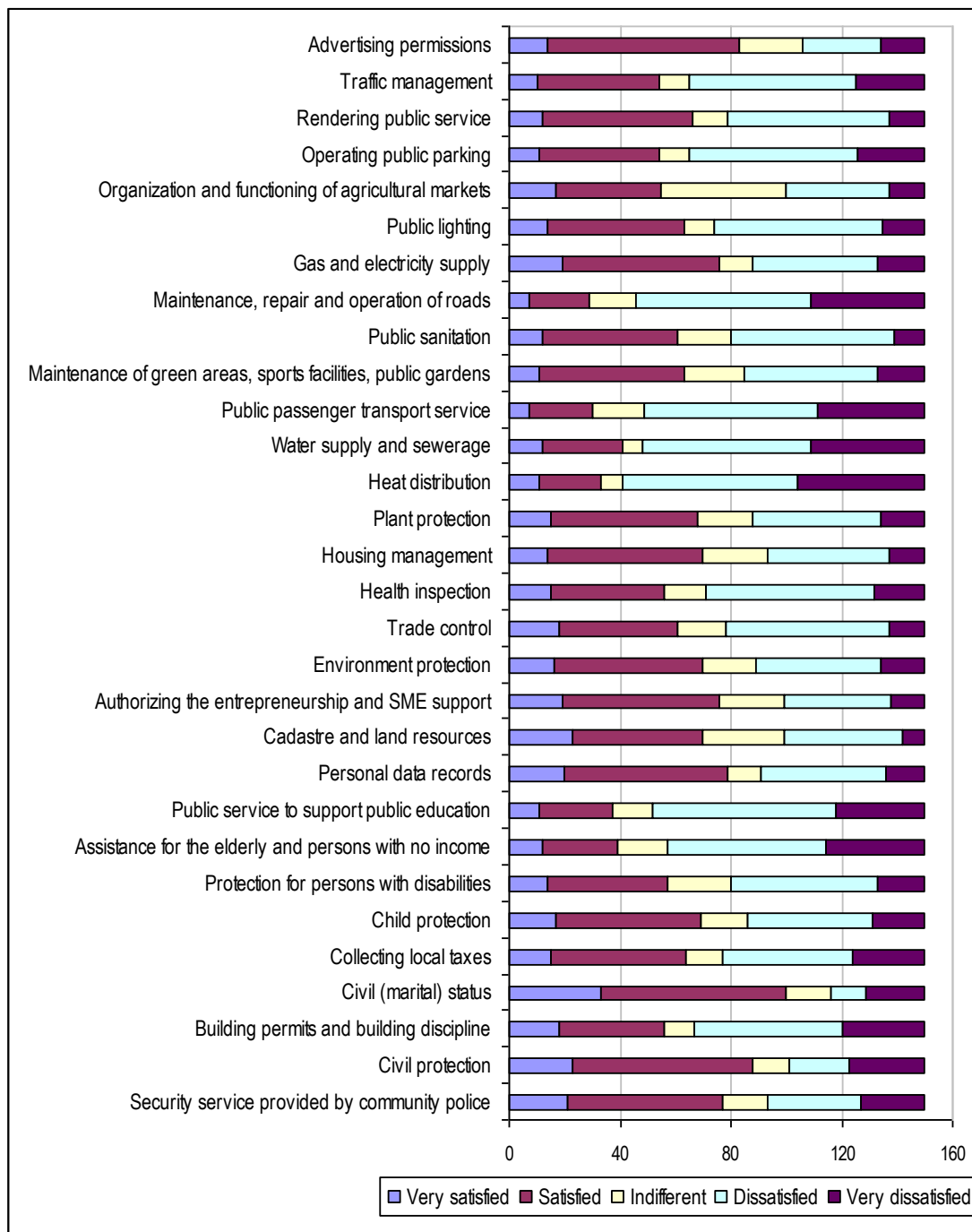


FIGURE 2. CIVIL SERVANTS' OPINION ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY ARE SATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT STATE OF 30 PUBLIC SERVICES

Source: Authors' calculations.

Analysing the responses received we may disclose that the civil servants interviewed are *indifferent* (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) about the current state of the following public services: the organization and functioning of agricultural markets (45; 30%), cadastre and land resources (29; 19%), advertising permissions public service (23; 15%), authorizing the entrepreneurship and SME support (23; 15%), housing management (23; 15%), protection for persons with disabilities (23; 15%). Last but not least, the civil servants interviewed are indifferent about the current state of the following public services: building permits and building discipline public service (11; 7%), heat distribution (8; 5%), water supply and sewerage (7; 5%).

The subjects surveyed are *dissatisfied* with the current state of the following public services: public service to support public education (66; 44%), maintenance, repair and operation of roads (63; 42%), heat distribution (63; 42%), public passenger transport service (62; 41%), public health inspection service (61; 41%), public lighting (61; 41%), operating public parking (61; 41%), and water supply and sewerage (61; 41%). The last in the rankings of public services of which the subjects are dissatisfied are the following public services: advertising permissions public service (28; 19%), civil protection (22; 15%), and civil (marital) status public service (13; 9%).

According to the performed study, the civil servants are *very dissatisfied* with the current state of the following public services: heat distribution (46; 31%), maintenance, repair and operation of roads (41; 27%), water supply and sewerage (41; 27%), public passenger transport service (39; 26%), assistance for the elderly and persons with no income (36; 24%), public service to support public education (32; 21%). The last in the rankings of public services of which the subjects are very dissatisfied are the following public services: authorizing the entrepreneurship and SME support (12, 8%), public sanitation service (11; 7%), and cadastre and land resources public service (8; 5%).

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study has explored civil servants' perception on local public services in Romania, derived from the analysis of empirical data collected through a questionnaire created and applied by the author.

The main conclusion of this study is that there are many public services of which the civil servants are very satisfied or satisfied, such as: civil (marital) status, civil protection, cadastre and land resources, security service provided by community police, personal data records public service, advertising permissions public service, and authorizing the entrepreneurship and SME support. However, there are also many public services of which the civil servants are very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, such as: heat distribution, maintenance, repair and operation of roads, water supply and sewerage, public passenger

transport service, assistance for the elderly and persons with no income, public service to support public education, public health inspection service, public lighting, operating public parking.

Strengthening the administrative capacity for service quality management, timeliness and evaluation is a key element in improving the efficiency of public services. The analysis of the current state has identified a concern of the citizens regarding both the speed and quality in the provision of public services and the lack of citizen (customer) focus by the local public authorities. The service delivery must be based on standards and measurable targets so as to evaluate the the real performance. Improving customer service policy may be applied to all actors within the local public administration.

In addition, the training and skills development of civil servants involved in the provision of public services and in the management of public institutions may lead to improving administrative transparency. They may provide to the general public more information on the activity of the local public administration.

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