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Public Administration in the Republic of Serbia – an attempt to adapt the European Union requirements

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*Republic of Serbia, European Union, public administration,
reform, Europeanization*

In the analysis of literature regarding the subject of public administration, many definitions of it may be found. Jan Boć distinguishes the meanings of public administration embedded in context: sociological, linguistic, legal and – significant from the perspective of this paper's topic – political. J. Boć claims that it is very easy to distinguish between politics and public administration, since it is sufficient to carry out politics in a proper manner and administration in a wrong manner, or to administer properly, leaving politics an inactive sphere¹.

At least ten fields may be identified in which administration may be studied in terms of political analysis, yet, in this analysis, it is crucial to pay attention to two of them. The first one is the wide range of procedures of reconstructing comprehensive and partial goals, which are considered as significant in creating the idea of the progress of functioning of a country. Moreover, it is a large number of legal provisions in terms of short- and long-term reforms in a country². Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a change in the attitudes of the authorities towards the functioning of public administration in modern societies. A tendency to gradually move away from normative approach towards administrative activity, that is administration based solely on legal standards and gradually

¹ A. Błaś, J. Boć, J. Jeżewski, *Administracja publiczna*, Poznań 2004, pp. 7–16.

² Ibidem, pp. 12–13.

embrace the idea of treating administration in a more pragmatic way³. „Good administration” is understood as effective management⁴.

In this paper I will attempt to analyse the long-term reform of public administration in the Republic of Serbia which was officially commenced in 2004; however, it started a little earlier. I want to answer the following research questions:

- Is the perspective of accession to the European Union the main reason for introducing reforms of public administration?
- What attitude towards the reforms planned in public administration were seen on the Serbian political scene?

In the light of the questions listed above, the following hypotheses will be verified:

- The possibility of future accession to the European Union was the main motivation for intensifying activities in order to reform the public administration.
- Originally, the attitude of Serbian politicians towards reforms of public administration was normative; however, with time, a positive change occurred, which consists in a gradual move away from approaching reforms only in the context of new legal acts towards a dynamic implementation and changes based on good practices.

The main method used in this article is the systems analysis. Based on it I will try to identify the functional and dysfunctional elements that affect the implementation of public administration reform strategy. Moreover, historical method was useful in order to briefly describe the main changes in the Serbian public administration. Among the research techniques that have proven to be helpful I can single out the legal acts analysis and the analysis of sources and monographs.

Internal situation in Serbia before Public Administration Reform adoption

In 1918, the creation of the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenians was proclaimed (SHS). The Serbian population inhabited sizeable terrains of the Kingdom, and outnumbered the remaining national groups and minorities⁵. This advantage manifested itself in the political and administrative areas and resulted

³ S. Lilić, *Strategy of Administrative Reform in Serbia in the Context of European Integration*, «Croatian and Comparative Public Administration» 2011, No. 4, p. 1108.

⁴ N.R. Urosoiu, *Good Administration Quo Vadis. Legality or Efficiency?*, <http://www.jur.uu.se/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=56P1HCkplIE%3D&tabid=5502&language=sv-SE>, 2011, p. 15 (accessed: 21.12.2017).

⁵ M. Babić, *Modernizacja. Demokratyzacja. Konsolidacja. Problemy demokracji w Serbii na przestrzeni wieków*, [in:] A. Kosecki, J. Wojnicki (eds.), *Przemiany w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 20 lat doświadczeń*, 2011, p. 241.

in conflicts between the communities inhabiting this country⁶. The Kingdom was characterised by national unitarisation and centralism⁷.

After World War II Yugoslavia managed to break from the soviet Cominform and economic sanctions were put on the country⁸. During Tito's era, a guerrilla movement, having power over the country, made the communist Yugoslavia a federal state, in which Serbia still played a dominant role⁹.

The breakdown of Yugoslavia into independent republics did upset the seemingly stable internal situation. Many factors accounted for the failure of previous reforms. One of those factors was the fact that after the break-up, when almost each federal republic managed to create states in a desired shape, only Serbia was divided, partially due to the fact that its citizens found themselves in the territories of all of the newly created entities and constituted minorities there¹⁰. Spurious presidential elections, in which Slobodan Milošević was to be elected, added fuel to the fire. Under his rule, the Serbian and Albanian conflict regarding Kosovo inflamed. It led to NATO raids on the territory of Serbia, leaving the country in ruin. Reforms of any kind regarding public administration were not on the political agenda in this period, since administration fulfilled its role effectively: it was an instrument of power in the hands of president Milošević¹¹.

Serbia became an independent republic only in 2006 after Montenegro had separated¹². As the only federal republic possessing two autonomous districts,

⁶ It is worth mentioning that Belgrade, the capital of the Kingdom, was not only the main political centre but also a city with flourishing and developing cultural life. See: M. Podolak, *System polityczny Serbii*, [in:] T. Bichta, M. Podolak (eds.), *Systemy polityczne państw bałkańskich*, Lublin 2012, p. 355.

⁷ Till the end of the second decade of the 20th century SHS was divided into 33 župas (administrative units) governed by župans (governors) appointed by the king. In 1929, the country's name was changed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the previous administrative system was strengthened by liquidation of župas and a division of the territory of the Kingdom into ten banovinas with one capital district in Belgrade.

⁸ P.S. Ramet, *Serbia i Czarnogóra po 1989 roku*, [in:] P. Ramet (ed.), *Polityka Europy środkowej i południowo-wschodniej po 1989 roku*, Warszawa 2012, p. 320.

⁹ The financial situation of common citizens improved significantly mainly due to the construction of new factories which employed almost 1.5 million of the unemployed. The 1970s also abounded in generosity of the authorities, which, between 1974 and 1977, provided the society with 580.000 free flats. An optimistic social atmosphere was a priority for the political elite. This could be achieved only by raising salaries and improving the standard of living. Significantly, Yugoslavia's foreign debt amounted to 16.4 billion dollars then.

¹⁰ M. Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska, *Serbia pod rządami Slobodana Miloševicia*, Kraków 2008, pp. 190–192.

¹¹ J. Džinić, *Public Administration Reform in Serbia*, «Croatian and Comparative Public Administration» 2011, No. 04, p. 1078.

¹² Between 2003 and 2006, Serbia and Montenegro made up a dualistic structure. It was a loose federation of two republics with a common federal parliament.

Serbia faced a challenge of one of its districts, Kosovo, declaring independence¹³. The most important test for the Balkan countries was equaling the EU member states by consequently creating democratic political systems, which will influence the political, economical and social situation in a positive way¹⁴.

The Republic of Serbia started its way to access the EU in 2005, when negotiations for adopting the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) began. In 2012, Serbia gained an official status of the candidate to access the EU. The condition of membership of the Western Balkans in the EU is not only the fulfilment of Copenhagen's criteria, but also of those included in the arrangements over stabilisation and association¹⁵. Although reports of the European Commission do not contain a blatant number of limitations concerning Serbian modernisation, the undertaken activities require intensification. This related to the topic of the present paper that a well organised and competent public administration plays a key role in the process of integration. This relationship may be called mutual, since the integration appears as a catalyst of taking another steps with the aim of adjusting the Serbian administrative practice to *acquis communautaire*¹⁶.

Adoption of PAR Strategy in the Republic of Serbia

The government, elected in March 2004, presented a strategic approach to reforms and discussed the adoption of the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR) and Action Plan 2004–2008 already in November of the same year¹⁷. The main goal of the PAR was the creation of a democratic state of law in which the functioning public administration would be oriented first and foremost on its citizens and the growing private sector offering high quality services¹⁸. Moreover, as the reason for the adoption of the PAR the legislator states, on the one hand, the need to raise qualifications of administration workers, and, on the other

¹³ The other autonomic district inhabited in majority by a Hungarian minority is Vojvodina.

¹⁴ B. Jagusiak, *Korzyści i ryzyka państw bałkańskich w Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] M. Babić, I. Jakimowicz-Ostrowska (ed.), *Balkany w XXI wieku. Problemy konsolidacji i integracji*, Warszawa 2014, p. 131.

¹⁵ *Balkany Zachodnie*, Dokumenty informacyjne o Unii Europejskiej Parlamentu Europejskiego, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/pl/FTU_6.5.2.pdf, p. 1–3 (accessed: 21.06.2017).

¹⁶ Action Plan for Serbian Public Administration Reform Implementation 2004–2008. Government of the Republic of Serbia 2004, p. 3.

¹⁷ J. Džinić, *Public Administration Reform in Serbia...*, p. 1078.

¹⁸ O. Lukashenko, *Towards Effective Public Administration. Methodology for Functional Analysis*, UNDP Paper, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/serbia/Publications%20and%20reports/English/UNDP_SRB_Towards_Effective_Public_Administration_-_Methodology_for_Functional_Analysis.pdf, 2009, p. 8 (accessed: 21.12.2017).

hand, to limit the costs of keeping public administration by a substantial reduction of the employed in this sector. The legislator stresses that the changes will first and foremost regard decentralization, professionalisation and depoliticisation, rationalisation, coordination of public policies, control mechanisms and modernisation of public administration. Six main scopes of reforms may be distinguished: decentralisation; fiscal decentralisation; building a professional civil service; new organisational and management framework as a basis for rationalisation of public administration; introduction of information technology, and control mechanisms of public administration¹⁹. Based on the prepared strategy, the Law on State Administration (LSA), including 94 articles, was adopted in September 2005.

Decentralization

In accordance with the Constitution, the citizens have a right to the autonomy of *pocrainas* (administrative units) and of local government, which they can execute by agencies of representatives elected in free elections²⁰. Moreover, the legislator divided competences into *pocrainas* and the units of local government and added that the government of the Republic of Serbia may cede its particular tasks by an act of law²¹. According to the highest legal act, enterprises, institutions, organisations and units may be entrusted with particular public competences in order to rationally execute law and citizens' obligations through the act²². The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and The Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija are, in accordance with the Constitution of 2006, included in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The situation of Kosovo seems to be particularly problematic. In 2008, it unilaterally declared independence, although Serbian politicians considers the declaration of independence unlawful.

The basic question that should be asked is whether Serbia is really a strongly centralised state. What kind of criteria may measure the level of decentralisation and centralisation? Veran Stančetić indicates that one of the factors which determine decentralisation is the amount of funds allocated from the state budget for entrusting lower levels of authority with central competences²³. Analysing

¹⁹ J. Džinić, *Public Administration Reform in Serbia...*, p. 1079.

²⁰ Art. 176 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia no. 98/2006.

²¹ E. Bujwid-Kurek, *Konstytucyjne uwarunkowania integralności terytorialnej Republiki Serbii w początkach XXI wieku*, [in:] M. Babić, I. Jakimowicz-Ostrowska (eds.), *Balkany w XXI wieku. Problemy konsolidacji i integracji*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 176–177.

²² Art. 137 of the Constitution...

²³ V. Stančetić, *Decentralization as an Aspect of Governance Reform in Serbia*, «Croatian and Comparative Public Administration» 2012, no. 3, pp. 772–773.

European countries, it may be stated that Serbia belongs to the group of the most centralised ones²⁴. The income of Serbian municipalities comes from four sources: income tax on the central level, money transfers from the central level, taxes and other local fees²⁵ (Serbia: Municipal, 2013, p. 4). Between 2007 and 2009, the government allocated only 1.7% of Serbian GDP for the development of local authorities. However, experts notice that in the following years, the amount of central funds dropped to 1% of GDP²⁶. In 2009, 10% of the central budget was transferred to lower levels, and gminas (communes) and towns received only 6% of the budget²⁷.

In order to ensure an effective mechanism for coordination of the decentralisation process, the government appointed the National Council for Decentralization²⁸, which, together with the Ministry for State Administration and Self-Government, is responsible for the process. However, it should be noted that the success is dependent not only on good functioning of the two above mentioned institutions, but also on other ministries and all the politicians, since the transfer of entitlements should be done in every area which is subordinate to the central government.

Rationalisation

According to the State Administration Act, the State Administration shall consist of ministries, administrative authorities within ministries and special organization²⁹. Rationalisation of public administration was a crucial point in the PAR Strategy. The reform focuses on liquidating redundant vacancies, thus limiting the number of public employees. Also, the importance of rationalisation should be stressed as it directly affects another reform – depolitisation of public administration³⁰. As a result, the government of the Republic of Serbia undertook activities

²⁴ A given country may be classified into one of four groups. This division is presented from the most centralised states (group 1) to states characterised by far-reaching decentralisation (group 4). According to the data of 2011, Serbia was in group 1 together with Croatia, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Romania and Portugal.

²⁵ *Serbia: Municipal Finance and Expenditure Review*, Document of the World Bank, <http://www-wds.worldbank.org> (accessed: 21.12.2017).

²⁶ *Serbia: Municipal Finance and Expenditure Review*, Document of the World Bank, <http://www-wds.worldbank.org/>, p. 17, (2013).

²⁷ V. Stančetić, *Decentralization...*, p. 775.

²⁸ *Action Plan for Serbian Public Administration...*

²⁹ Art. 1 of the State Administration Act, Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia 2005.

³⁰ Action Plan for Serbian Public Administration...

aiming at limiting the number of people employed in public administration to approximately 24 thousand (the plan was to limit the number by over 11%)³¹.

The Serbian public administration underwent certain rationalisation and it seemed that the reform would become a stable practice. Unfortunately, in 2006, when the dualistic form of Serbia and Montenegro broke, an administrative chaos appeared in the two countries. In 2007, the Law on Ministers was adopted and on its basis the number of ministries increased by 30%. Since then, the number of the employed in public administration systematically grew and in 2009 it amounted to 34 thousand, of which 11% was employed for a fixed term³². In order to prevent further growth of employment, the Act of Defining the Maximum Number of Public Administration Employees (ADMP) was adopted in the same year. It reduced the number of people employed for full time and for an unfixed term to 28 thousand. The number of people employed for a fixed term cannot exceed 10% of the number of people employed for full time³³.

In 2010, the government of Serbia was obliged to immediately dismiss 8.500 public administration employees. This condition was stated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order for Belgrade to receive another tranche of credit in the amount of 380 million Euro³⁴. In the following years, Serbian politicians attempted to limit public administration with no success so far. At the beginning of 2015, the Serbian Minister of Public Administration and Local Government, Kori Udovički, announced that cuts in the public sector will amount from 7.000 to 15.000 employees of civil service, since it is difficult to calculate activities undertaken on such a great scale³⁵. Eventually, Udovički confirmed that, by the end of 2015, about 9.000 people would have been dismissed. In accordance with the agreement between Serbia and IMF, by the end of 2018, public administration will have dismissed 70.000 employees³⁶.

³¹ Z. Lončar, D. Vučetić, *European Standards and Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia*, Conference Proceedings, 16th Toulon-Verona Conference “Excellence in Service”, Slovenia, August 2013.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Art. 2–3 of the Defining the Maximum Number of Public Administration Employees, Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia 2009, no. 104/09.

³⁴ *Serbia musi zwolnić 8,5 tys. urzędników, żeby dostać środki z MFW*, http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,100969,7946723,Serbia_musi_zwolnic_8_5_tys_urzednikow_zeby_dostac.html#ixzz3uDaBIwWY (accessed: 28.05.2010).

³⁵ *Serbia w tym roku zwolni nawet 15 tys. pracowników sektora publicznego!*, <http://wmeritum.pl/serbia-w-tym-roku-zwolni-nawet-15-tys-pracownikow-sektora-publicznego> (accessed: 23.03.2015).

³⁶ S. Dragojlo, *Serbian Parliament Mulls Public Sector Layoffs*, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-adopting-a-law-on-cutting-public-sector> (accessed: 21.12.2017).

Access to Information

Serbia is a country in which free access to public information is one of the issues guaranteed by the Constitution. Besides constitutional records, proper reforms were implemented in order to establish conveniences for the citizens desiring to access public information.

The first draft version of the document on the free access to public information was prepared in 1998 by Belgrade Centre of Human Rights. It was called "Model Law on Public Information". In 2001, a non-governmental organisation, the Center for Advanced Legal Studies, took another legal initiative. The proposal was approved by the government and particularly by the then Deputy Prime Minister Žarko Korać³⁷. In 2003, the National Assembly adopted the Law on Free Access to Information on Public Importance³⁸. This document is a legal foundation of the discussed issue. Thanks to it, a sense of real influence on unlawful behaviour of political officials often concentrating on corruption activity was created. Importantly, in the case of Serbia, the democratic system is still in the process of creation: the lack of transparency of administrative activities constitutes a serious obstacle in creating a democratic state of law.

Since its adoption in 2004, the act in question was amended several times³⁹. This was a consequence of citizen initiatives related to the issue discussed and a growing demand for access to information by the Serbian society⁴⁰. It must be stressed that the Serbian public opinion was dissatisfied with the legislative solutions in 2011. Nevertheless, despite certain doubts about the generality of certain records and a lack of enthusiasm among the society, Serbia's Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance was recognised by a group of international experts as one of the best prepared legal acts in this field already a year later⁴¹. The evaluation criteria included the right to access, sending response procedures, exemptions, rejections, appeals, penalties and promotion of the law⁴². However,

³⁷ V.V. Vodinečić, *Free Access to Information Legislation in Serbia*, Paper prepared for presentation at the Conference Security Sector Reform and the Media, Serbia & Montenegro 2003, p. 2.

³⁸ GRS (2004) Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance.

³⁹ J. Džinić, *Public Administration Reform in Serbia...*, p. 1097.

⁴⁰ Approximately one thousand applications for the access to public information on various levels, from central to local, are submitted in Serbia every day.

⁴¹ Evaluation of Serbian law regarding free access to public information was conducted by experts from Spanish Access Info Organisation in cooperation with members of the American Centre of Law and Democracy Organisation. Serbia achieved 135 of 150 points in the ranking.

⁴² B. Barlovac, *Serbia's Public Information Act Tops Global Ranking*, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-tops-global-ranking-of-public-information-act> (accessed: 22.02.2012).

Marko Milošević from the Belgrade Centre of Security Policy states that not all the state bodies comply with the adopted regulations. He notices a tendency that the lower the level of the administrative body, the more inconsistencies may be found⁴³.

Public Administration Reform evaluated by the European Union

The Republic of Serbia is one of the Balkan countries striving for the integration with the EU. The diplomatic post of the European Commission has been active in Belgrade since 1981⁴⁴. Although the EU presented the Process of Stabilisation and Assembly for five countries of South-Eastern Europe in 1999, official negotiations over the adoption of the document did not start until 2005. Serbia received the status of the candidate state in 2010.

The European Commission systematically makes reports regarding the progress made by countries using European funds (also the pre-accession ones). These reports have been published for Serbia since 2005, the date when the negotiations started. In the document, prepared then for Serbia and Montenegro, evaluators stated that the process of constructing democratic institutions and a state of law started in both of the republics; yet, it was very slow and still had signs of the previous regime. The initiative of conducting a complex administrative reform was assessed positively; yet, it was stressed that it was only in its initial phase. Nevertheless, the European Commission appreciated the activities undertaken by Serbia to further integrate with the EU, stressing the measurable effects of the twinning projects launched in 2003⁴⁵. The adoption of the Constitution in 2006 was a crucial moment for the Serbian political system. Satisfying effects were noted in the field of privatisation and administration. Attention was paid to the implemented reforms and institutional potential of the core of Serbian public administration⁴⁶.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Although the agreement on the cooperation between The European Economic Community and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed in 1980 expired after the break of Yugoslavia, the diplomatic post of the European Commission in Belgrade did not stop functioning, since the expiry of the agreement did not mean the lack of engagement of the Community in activities in the Western Balkans.

⁴⁵ The twinning projects consist in sending groups of experts across member states to countries using the pre-accession aid in order to improve the functioning of administration and public institutions. Between 2003 and 2005 more than 40 such projects were carried out in the Western Balkans – first and foremost in Croatia and Serbia. See: K. Domagała, *Polska polityka zagraniczna wobec staraj...*, p. 85 and *Serbia and Montenegro*, 2005 Progress Report, SEC (2005) 1428.

⁴⁶ Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007, COM (2006) 649, pp. 14–15.

In January 2006, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) was launched. Its aim was to, together with TAIEX⁴⁷, strengthen transformation opportunities by supporting the construction of political institutions and practices of good government. The EU institutions expected the participating countries to help in the development of a conscious citizen society which would have an influence on political processes. The document regarding the development assessed that Belgrade's capabilities in terms of public administration were good. The creation of Ombudsman's office, whose task will be to take care of observance of human rights and close cooperation with the government in this field, was evaluated positively⁴⁸.

The Report on Progress in Serbia of 2009 seems to be unfavourable for the country⁴⁹. Serbian politicians were charged with a lack of consistency in the functioning of the most important institutions such as the parliament. Even earlier, the documents had negative comments indicating the lack of post-election cooperation between political parties, which significantly delayed the start of legislature and executive power activities. The adoption of the Law on Civil Servants in 2008 and obligations stemming from the agreements between Serbia and IMF, which included a requirement of reduction of employment and employment salaries in the public sector, were noted as a partial success. Above all, Serbia needed a strict anti-corruption law, since corruption present on all the levels of government was the main obstacle of the initiated reforms⁵⁰.

In the following years, EU officials held the same position as the above. The reports reveal that public administration reforms were still not conducted dynamically. The creation of other legal acts and strategies was essential; however, practical activities should follow it⁵¹. The lack of effective implementation of legal acts and their execution influenced negatively the evaluation of Serbia by some European institutions⁵².

⁴⁷ TAIEX – Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, an instrument of the European Commission. TAIEX supports public administration with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as facilitation of sharing of EU best practices.

⁴⁸ Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament and The Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007–2008, COM (2007) 663.

⁴⁹ Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2009 Progress Report, COM (2009) 1339.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ Importantly, the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection continues his active involvement and his term of office was extended; however, the progress of legislative works is still not satisfactory. This leads to a lack of possibility to continue initiatives taken by him. See: Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2012 Progress Report, COM (2012) 600.

⁵² Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2012 Progress Report, COM (2012) 600 and Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2010 Progress Report, COM (2010) 660.

The year 2015 appeared to be ground-breaking in the process of Serbia's integration with the EU. In the Report published in that year, in the part titled „Public administration reform,” the European Commission states: „Serbia is moderately prepared with the reform of its public administration. However, Serbia now needs to ensure that the ambitious reform plans and the legal framework are implemented. Strong political will remains essential to professionalise and depoliticise the administration and make recruitment and dismissal procedures more transparent, especially for senior management positions”⁵³. At the same time, the assessors stress that this does not mean the end of reforms, since Serbia still faces significant challenges, such as strengthening the role and authority of leading public institutions responsible for shaping politics, implementing a consolidated planning and monitoring system, and guaranteeing continuity, neutrality, and transparency of public administration⁵⁴.

The above mentioned EU's documents indicate that Serbia has gone a long way to equal the European democratic standards. Brussels' agreement to open the accession discussions is a crowning achievement of Serbia's efforts on the one hand, and the beginning of the way to be accepted as an EU member on the other hand.

Conclusions

Serbian politics has significantly changed in terms of organisation and functioning of public administration: it moved from fragmentary and temporary approach to long-term planning. In the Yugoslavian period, politics served mainly for power concentration and was an instrument to execute the authorities' orders. In the Republic of Serbia, the authorities serve mainly the citizens. The new law concerning complex regulation of issues of particular fields of public life started to be created in relation to the adoption of the PAR Strategy in 2004. Unfortunately, the limited scope of the PAR and ineffective execution of its resolutions accounted for the fact that new legal acts were unclear, since the normative aspect of the reform did not harmonise with the politicians' pragmatism. Loopholes in the law created a fertile ground for new agencies and organs and the criteria for their growth were opaque. The Serbian public administration became a complex structure. It was supposed to undergo formalisation in order to be closer to citizens and the number of the employed in public service was to drastically decrease. These demands were executed only partially. The reduction of the number of

⁵³ Commission Staff Working Document, Serbia 2015 Progress Report, COM (2015) 611.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

administrative employees is far from the initial guidelines. Activities not proceeded by a proper analysis and not based on a solid method led to the paradox of dismissing many people and liquidating jobs in institutions where they were needed and leaving an excessive number of employees in many other institutions which should undergo reductions. Many a time, this led to overload of administrative structures and to a failure to expose them to crucial modernisation. Moreover, the formalisation of the administration activity required the adoption of proper control criteria. The Serbian legislator did not pay enough attention to this.

However, the consequences of shortcomings in the reforms are not substantial, and, therefore, they do not block further development of a democratic country. It is noteworthy that the Republic of Serbia is a direct heir of the Yugoslavian legacy. The Yugoslavian political arena had to deal with the remnants of the communist regime first and, additionally, change the awareness of the society which was used to previous practices. Undoubtedly, the possible accession to the EU is an attractive goal motivating the rulers to make the adopted legal acts effective. The success of initiating official accession discussions is satisfactory, since it shows that the promises made by Brussels are not empty.

It is also worth stressing that the reports on Serbia's progress in reforms prepared by the European Commission unambiguously indicate that the approach towards the functioning of public administration has changed. Initially, the focus was on legislative works, which was not followed by pragmatism. It was only the successive leading groups which demonstrated political will to prepare other essential reforms and to simultaneously implement those which were visible only in documents. Although certain acts existed, such as anti-corruption strategies, which were based mostly on the execution of the breach of its regulations, other aspects of administration modernisation, decentralisation, for instance, required activities ceding central competences to lower levels of power.

RÉSUMÉ

The prospect of the membership of the Republic of Serbia in the European Union becomes more real. It would not be possible without the necessary changes made by the ruling parties. One of the key reform was rebuilding public administration. The article is an analysis of the reorganization of the sector mentioned above, with particular emphasis on the process of Europeization, which aims to deepen integration with the EU. The aim is to present the changes that have occurred in the approach of the Serbian political scene to the functioning and organization of public administration.

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