

INNOVATIVE AND EFFICIENT INITIATIVES OF THE LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: *The local public administration of the Republic of Moldova evolves with the political, economic, social changes, implementing new management principles, performing management technologies, thus ensuring the irreversibility of democratic processes in society. In this article we propose to present some reflections on the efficiency of the way of provision of services by the local public administration of the citizens and to identify the theoretical-methodological and applicative content of the process of continuous modernization of the local public administration in the Republic of Moldova in the context of European integrationist processes.*

Keywords: *local public administration, principles of public administration, modernization, innovation, efficiency, citizen.*

JEL Classification: *H70.*

1. Introduction

Public services are in the middle of local and regional development strategies. Therefore, innovative public services can represent the basis for competitiveness, based on investment in education, health and social welfare, citizen's safety and good infrastructure in transport, communications and clean environment.

In the Republic of Moldova a current problem is the quality of public services. The issue of increasing quality and access to public services is topical along with two other major objectives: increasing the autonomy of local communities by transferring new decision-making responsibilities, financial and patrimonial resources, respecting the principle of subsidiarity and restructuring of local public administration through measures to increase institutional efficiency, administrative simplification and increased transparency in relation to citizens. For this reason, local public authorities need to modernize in order to be able to improve the services they offer.

The modernization of public services becomes a matter of particular importance in the perspective of European integration. All the treaties of establishment the European Union, as well as the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union (Acordul de Asociere între Republica Moldova, pe de o parte, și Uniunea Europeană și Comunitatea Europeană a Energiei Atomice și statele membre ale acestora, pe de altă parte, ratificat prin Legea Republicii Moldova nr.112 din 02.07.2014), include provisions on public services. It is clear from the text itself that the Agreement will directly affect various services that currently fall under the notion of "public services" in the Republic of Moldova - expressly in the Agreement are included provisions regarding transport and communications, health services, educational services, licensing, etc. Obviously, European integration will generate some changes in their existing situation. As a result, we can develop various scenarios for the evolution of public services - from maintaining the existing situation in some of them to demonopolizing others or delegating them to entities in the European Union. Therefore, we consider that at least the text of the Agreement results in certain changes in both the public service mission and the final user's interest.

2. Promotion and strengthening good governance at local level

Local public authorities are the most important pillars, because they represent the closest level to the citizens. In the Republic of Moldova, Local Public Authorities are even more important as they contribute to the promotion of democracy. Mayors are the ones who have to come up with initiatives to promote and consolidate democratic matters at the local level.

Good governance at local level not only involves implementing the legal, political and institutional adopted framework. There is also the issue of strengthening the capacity of local public administration actively - including understanding, competence, as well as capacity and willingness to learn. The framework and the capacity are two inseparable elements.

Good local administration provides a common set of priorities, ensures the coordination of actions and resources to maximize efficacy, stimulates activities and arouses the accountability of authorities to citizens. To come up with creative and innovative solutions in the Local Public Authorities, is needed (Legea Republicii Moldova privind descentralizarea administrativă nr. 435-XVI din 28.12.2006):

- to strengthen administrative capacities by identifying and recognizing practices initiated and implemented by Local Public Authorities;
- to improve public services and to encourage the application of quality standards in the delivery of public services, including the implementation of means of technological modernization of the public sector;
- to strengthen local autonomy and to encourage local initiative;
- to promote the territorial cooperation and consolidation of the administrative-territorial units;
- to achieve the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices between Local Public Authorities, as well as creating a national network of local leaders;
- to strengthen the relationship with the Central Public Administration to support initiatives at local level.

3. Improvement of the public services through quality standards

Improving public services and encouraging the implementation of quality standards in the delivery of public services, including the implementation of technological modernization tools for Local Public Authorities in the Republic of Moldova, is achieved by applying e-government to local public administration in the Republic of Moldova and has a legal basis.

One of the basic principles of local public administration, stipulated in the Local Public Administration Act (Legea Republicii Moldova privind administrația publică locală, nr. 436-XVI din 28.12.2006), provides for citizens to be consulted on matters of local interest. These consultations may be conducted through a local referendum organized under the Electoral Code on issues of major concern. In matters of local interest which concern only a part of the population of the administrative-territorial unit or when examining the draft decisions of the local council, the Local Public Authority may organize, with this part, various forms of public consultations, public hearings and talks, according to the law.

Electronic governance of localities involves multiple stages of development, the final stage meaning integration of services across administrative boundaries. Namely, an effective operation of transforming local governance to better respond to citizens' needs and to contribute to community welfare.

Electronic governance fits perfectly into the concept of a contemporary local public administration. It is represented by the so - called *convenience of efficiency* and focuses on

the resource and time economy for both public institutions and citizens who do not have to move from one institution to another to solve their problems (Taranu and Clipa, 2019).

Among the advantages of e-Governance in the local public administration we can mention the improvement of access to public information and services of the central public administration authorities, the removal of bureaucratic procedures and the simplification of working methodologies, the improvement of the information exchange and services between the central public administration authorities and the improvement of the public services quality.

However, the application of e-Governance also involves a number of risks. To be successful, e-Governance projects need to gain the trust of authorities, public associations and citizens.

4. Promotion of the territorial cooperation and consolidation of the administrative-territorial units

Making local economic development means raising the economic competitiveness of a community in order to improve its economic future.

The success of local economic development depends on the collective effort of the public, business and non-governmental sectors. This would move from the stage when policy decisions are often adopted without taking into account the implementation or the economic, social and environmental consequences or accurate population data in that evidence-based policy-making.

For this purpose, a community begins the process of strategic planning by identifying individuals, public institutions, economic agents, civic organizations, private professional organizations, educational institutions and other groups with a clear interest in the local economy.

In recent years, public-private partnership (Hotărârea Guvernului Republicii Moldova cu privire la parteneriatul public-privat pentru prestarea unor servicii de sănătate nr. 1116 din 06.12.2010) has gained more and more ground in the Republic of Moldova, being an effective method of involving and attracting private capital in the realization of projects of public interest. Among the advantages of this investment attraction tool can be listed the transfer of risks to the private sector, access to investment and know-how private technology, including management. Public-private partnerships serve as support and offer the possibility of involvement, especially of Local Public Authorities, in solving problems related to the construction / modernization of infrastructure, the improvement of public services, etc.

Public-private partnerships increase the quality of service offered, providing flexibility and creativity. All institutions involved in the partnership contribute with complementary expertise and financial resources, helping to improve the service offered. Such a partnership brings novelty, expertise and complementarity to tasks.

Complementarity in service provision means that the state brings long-term sustainability, and the non-governmental organization brings innovation and expertise. For example, the Water Treatment System in Balti, almost 40 years old, has been modernized thanks to a public-private partnership between the city hall and the company "Glorin Engineering". Thus, the three pumping stations were repaired, the collection tray was built, a new pressure collector was installed over a 1 km length and the secondary decanter was repaired. Sewerage services benefit 33 thousand individuals and 1250 economic agents, who pay 3.90 lei and 21 lei / cubic meter respectively (Împreună pentru performanțe în guvernarea locală 2014–2015, p.12).

In addition to promoting public sector efficiency through risk-sharing and benefiting from private sector expertise, public-private partnership can release immediate

pressure on public finances by providing additional capital. At the same time, the public-private partnership actively contributes to ensuring greater transparency in the use of local public finances and the establishment of investment policy fairness, thereby enhancing the governance system and the local development process.

Inter-community cooperation is an advanced tool for decentralization, regional and local development. It provides real opportunities for local authorities to streamline their work and to improve the quality of services provided by bringing together the efforts of several communities (Bulat, 2015, p.152). Last but not least, through the cooperation of the territorial-administrative units in the organization and delivery of public services, it contributes to balancing the level of development of the localities. For example, the villages Ermoclia, Popeasca and Festelita in Ștefan Vodă district have become brighter thanks to an inter-communal public lighting service. The length of the lighting network in the village of Ermoclia is 7.5 km, while in Festelita village it is 7 km, and in Popeasca the lighting network has a length of 6.5 km. As a result, the electricity consumption has been reduced and the degree of security and comfort has been increased within these localities (Împreună pentru performanțe în guvernarea locală 2014–2015, p.13).

The municipal enterprise “Lumen-Ermoclia” was created for the management and maintenance of the street lighting service. “Lumen-Ermoclia” enterprise provides services for maintaining and servicing public lighting networks, maintaining electrical networks within public institutions and serving the citizens of the three localities at home. There are 854 households, 32 economic agents and 16 public institutions that pay 4 lei per month but no more than 12 lei per household and 150 lei for legal persons (Împreună pentru performanțe în guvernarea locală 2014–2015, p.14).

In conclusion, we can say that inter-community cooperation can provide an improved quality of public services provided to citizens from local member communities. Such an instrument aims to compensate the insufficiency of funds available to the local government, the lack of specialized personnel able to attract funding, to remove problems caused by environmental conditions and to meet the conditions imposed by the regional and local development operational programs.

5. Achieving the exchange of ideas, experiences and good practices between local public authorities, as well as creating a national network of local leaders

In several Moldovan administrative-territorial units the Leader approach has been implemented, which for more than 20 years is an efficient rural development tool in several European countries.

In the Administrative-Territorial Unit Gagauzia and Taraclia district, through the program “Supporting Agriculture and Rural Development in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia” (SARD) with the financial support of the European Union, were signed in 2016, the first four Accordance Agreements for the formation of LAGs were signed by 21 localities in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district, who decided to apply the Leader concept in the region.

LAG (Local Action Group) is the officially-appointed partnership of representatives of local public authorities, the business community and civil society in the cooperating villages. The LAG area must cover the territories of neighboring rural city halls with at least 10 000 to 100 000 inhabitants.

The Leader methodology is a real chance for the rural development of the Republic of Moldova. This view is made by the representatives of the civil society and the relevant institutions from Hungary, Romania and Lithuania, who shared the experience and the results obtained by their countries as a result of the implementation of this concept for the inhabitants of Gagauzia and Taralia.

In 2018, about 110 LEADER local projects were carried out in ATU Gagauzia, Taraclia and neighboring communities under the LEADER initiative (Shahwan, 2019, p.3).

The enormous interest and energy of the 23 rural development initiatives of local action groups that were identified in 2018 reveal that rural communities are willing to make significant changes to social and economic development in Moldova. A common goal of territorial cooperation is to strengthen local culture. Each locality is distinguished by a mixture of different cultures (Shahwan, 2019, pp.2-3).

It is not an exaggeration to say that the adoption and application of the LEADER approach is an important innovation in Moldovan rural communities. The method put the local development opportunities in a new light and brought together new partners. It is an important basis for innovation in the future.

6. Conclusions

Ensuring a certain level of innovation and efficiency of the local public administration activity should be based on the following premises: the resources spent must find the best use, to respond to long-term needs, to strengthen the administrative capacity, analyzing, monitoring and evaluating public policies, to depoliticize the public function.

The reality demonstrates that a continuation of the management and execution processes within the local public administration, in the context of good European practices, will contribute to the achievement of the new objectives of the public management in the Republic of Moldova.

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