

# Modernising Public Administration in Romania\*

Senior Lecturer, Ph. D. Marius PROFIROIU,  
Chief Department of Management and Public Administration  
Faculty of Management  
Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest

## 1. Framework for Public Administration Reform (PAR)

*Romania has concluded the accession negotiations with the European Union in December 2004, but there are still many things to be done before the actual accession date, which will be January 2007. Integration in the European structures requires the development of a public administration convergent to the values of the European Administrative Space, and also capable to allow Romania to meet the requirements of full EU membership.*

*Public administration reform reflects substantive changes in its major components, both at central government and local administrative level, and in the delivery of public services in general. On the other side, democratic consolidation requires the development of a new relationship between citizens and administration, a strengthened role of the authorities and the redefinition of the partnership with the civil society and the local elected officials.*

### *Administrative Capacity and Public Administration Reform*

In discussions of **Public Administration Reform** in Romania there is often some confusion over what it actually entails. In concrete terms it means more than the kind of reforms required to improve the **administrative capacity**. These are two different categories of idea about public sector organization. However, they are functionally connected.

PAR is an all-embracing concept; it contains all aspects of the public sector organization including the overall architecture of ministries and agencies, the organizations, systems, structures, processes, incentives, as well as the arrangements for maintaining governance over these arrangements and reforming the system from time to time. On one side, administration refers to the way in which the coordination of public sector actions is formally authorized, ordered and organized. On the other side, administrative capacity is an assessment of the functioning of the hierarchy of officials in the public service, and this of course is just one element of wide-ranging PAR.

Nevertheless administrative capacity is crucial to reform and to the functioning of the state, but as we have noted it is only part of the larger vision, and by itself it will not be effective in delivering the results expected from a modern administration. In fact, increased administrative capacity, by itself, can be as much of a hindrance as a help to achieving results. It depends in part how it is organized and directed, and also how it is staffed and with what attitude the staff undertake their functions.

In order to support the fundamental change of the administrative system, in agreement with the requirements of the reform process, a consistent set of measures needs to be implemented in a clear time framework, in the areas of civil service reform – aimed at creating a professional, stable and

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\* Based on the study: Profiroiu M., Andrei T., "Public administration reform in the context of the European integration", financed by the European Institute of Romania, Bucharest 2005

politically neutral corps of civil servants -, local public administration – aimed at continuing the decentralisation/de-concentration process of public services -, and central government reform – aimed at improving the policy formulation process.

A coherent and credible PAR process engaging both the political and the administrative systems requires the development of a stable network promoting the change, made up of the main stakeholders in this process.

In practice, the reformers network can simply get started by trying to develop managerial capabilities and working out how to install these new capabilities within the existing hierarchies of the state. This process will reveal the kind of problems that other countries have had to solve, and will reduce the learning cycle Romania has to go through. In 2002 a national modernisers network covering both central and local administration was set up, with the support of EU funded experts. The network consists of over 380 civil servants working in ministries, prefectures and local communities.

## ***1.2 Statistical analysis of the features of the PAR implementation process***

### *1.2.1 General features*

In 2005, the European Institute of Romania supported a research to assess the progress on the implementation of the PAR measures and the capacity development of the modernisers network. The survey also included data gathered from two representative samples of municipality mayors and modernisers in ministries and counties.

The first two samples were identified by a two stage sampling technique, and represented 9% of the total population researched. The estimated error at the level of the reference populations is 1.2% for the first sample and 1.8% for the second sample.

In drafting the questionnaires, the following two aspects were considered:

- **To measure the opinion of important stakeholders in the process on current PAR issues:** civil service management, in-service training of civil servants, local PAR and the decentralisation process, training of the local elected officials on specific local development issues, corruption, changes of technical staff under political pressure, communication and coordination of the reform process, etc.
- To measure the convergence of vision of the reform issues between the civil service, including the modernisers network and the politicians, including local mayors.

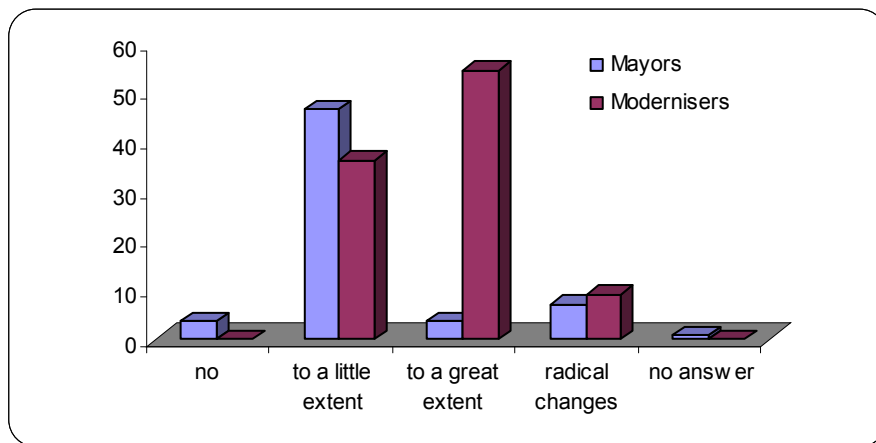
### *1.2.2 Perception of the PAR process*

Both technical staff and elected officials perceive public administration reform as a process which has not brought about the expected changes. Thus, half of the mayors have a negative opinion on the changes in public administration, while 36.4% of modernisers believe public administration is changing to a little extent. Moreover, between the two main actors of the local reform process, modernisers in prefectures and county councils and mayors of local communities, there are significant differences of perception.

**Do you think public administration is undergoing a wide ranging reform process?**

**Table 1**

Answer options	Mayors		Modernisers		Balance (%)
	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulated relative frequency (%)	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulated relative frequency (%)	
1	2	3	4	5	6=4-2
No	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	3.6
To a little extent	46.6	50.2	36.4	36.4	10.2
To a great extent	41.9	92.1	54.5	90.9	-12.6
Radical changes	7.1	99.2	9.1	100.0	-2.0
No answer	0.8	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.8
Total	100.0	-	100.0	-	-



**Figure 1. Do you think public administration is undergoing a wide ranging reform process?**

Possible explanations for this status quo are:

- Lack of communication between the county modernisers groups and the local community mayors on specific reform issues;
- Some of the reforms underway do not yet have significant effects at local community level, the reform process is a long term one;
- The political message coming from the central government is not accompanied by a sustained information campaign and training sessions for local elected officials on specific reform components.

In any case, the lack of an information campaign on the reform measures to be undertaken in the next period and affecting the local administration provides an explanation for the gap between the expectations and the changes perceived by the mayors.

## To what extent do current changes meet your expectations?

Table 2

Answer options	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulated relative frequency (%)
Not at all	5.5	5.5
To a little extent	48.6	54.2
To a great extent	39.1	93.3
Entirely	6.3	99.6
No answer	0.4	100.0
Total	100.0	-

### 1.2.3 Introduction of modern management tools

To support the PAR process, the Central Unit for Public Administration Reform (CUPAR) launched the introduction of two innovative tools both for central government and for prefectures and county councils: the **Multi-annual Modernisation Programmes (MMP)** and the **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**.

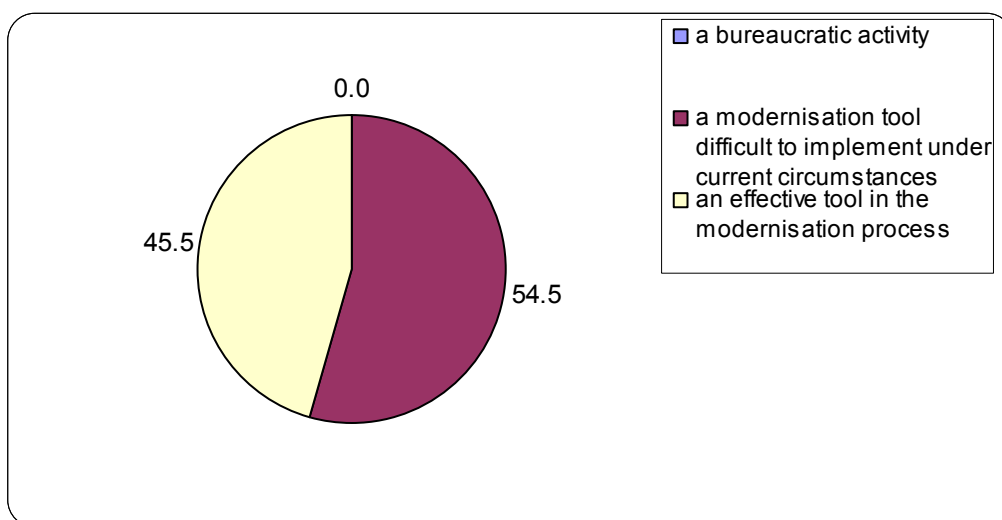
**A. Multi-annual Modernisation Programmes** (stretching over three years) using three documents:

- **The Modernisation Strategy for each institution**, describing the internal environment, the sectoral priorities identified, the modernisation actions and implementation procedures, monitoring and evaluation;
- **The Action Plan**, including the forecasted measures, expected outputs, progress indicators, deadlines, responsibility and funding sources ;
- **The Annual Monitoring Report**, assessing to what extent the agreed objectives have been met, rescheduling the outstanding actions and introducing new priorities in the action plan for the next year.

The implementation of the MMPs in ministries, prefectures and county councils started in June, when they were asked to draft Strategies for accelerating PAR in their policy area.

The questionnaire distributed to the Modernisers Network included two questions about their opinion on the implementation and overall outputs of this tool. The main conclusions are presented below:

- The general opinion is favourable to the implementation of MMPs in public institutions. It is remarkable that none of the interviewees considered the MMP implementation “just a bureaucratic activity”;
- Over half of the modernisers think this is an effective tool for the reform process in public administration;
- The other half is also favourable to the MMP implementation, but points to significant difficulties in the current stage of PAR. These are linked to the lack of a funding mechanism created specifically to support the modernisation measures from the MMP Action Plan;
- The MMPs have produced positive results in the area of communication and IT;
- Less positive results were achieved in the area of human resource management. Thus, more than half of the subjects interviewed considered the results were insignificant following the MMP implementation.



**Figure 2. What describes better the MMP implementation in your institution?**

**To what extent did the MMP contribute to the improvement of the following?**

**Table 3**

	Internal Organisation (%)	Human Resource Management (%)	Public Management Tools (%)	Communication and IT (%)
Not at all	0.0	4.5	0.0	4.5
Insignificant degree	9.1	13.6	13.6	0.0
Moderately	27.3	36.4	36.4	36.4
Quite a lot	27.3	22.7	36.4	22.7
To a great extent	27.3	13.6	4.5	31.8
No answer	9.1	9.1	9.1	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

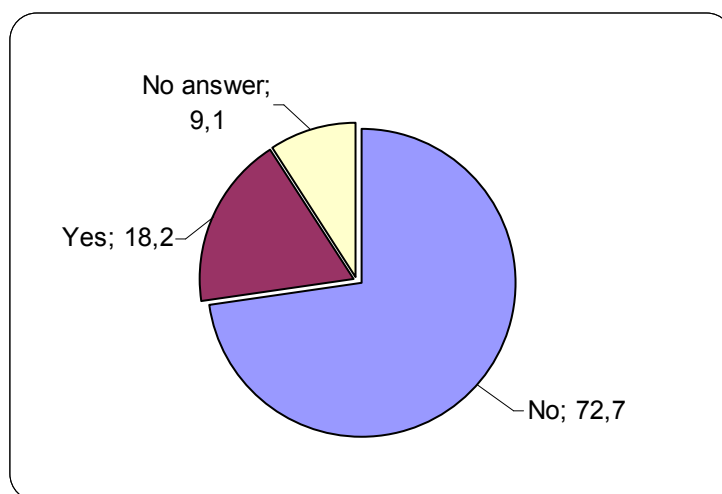
**B. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** measures the performance of an organisation, by using a diagnostic analysis. This tool, designed in 2000 by the Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG) of the European Commission, has four main directions:

- Specific features of public sector organisations;
- Organisational performance improvement;
- Coordination of various models of quality management;
- Benchmarking of public sector organisations.

The second version of CAF is being used by central and local administration, but also by private companies throughout the European Union.

During 2004, this tool was introduced on a pilot basis in nine divisions of the Ministry of Administration and Interior and the National Agency for Civil Servants. With the support of the Modernisers Network the CAF implementation started to be extended to other ministries, county councils, prefectures, as well as other interested institutions.

Based on the interview with the modernisers, the extension of the CAF implementation is very slow. Thus, almost three quarters of ministries, prefectures and county councils have not yet started the pilot implementation.



**Figure 3. CAF Implementation in public institutions**

#### 1.2.4 European integration and public administration

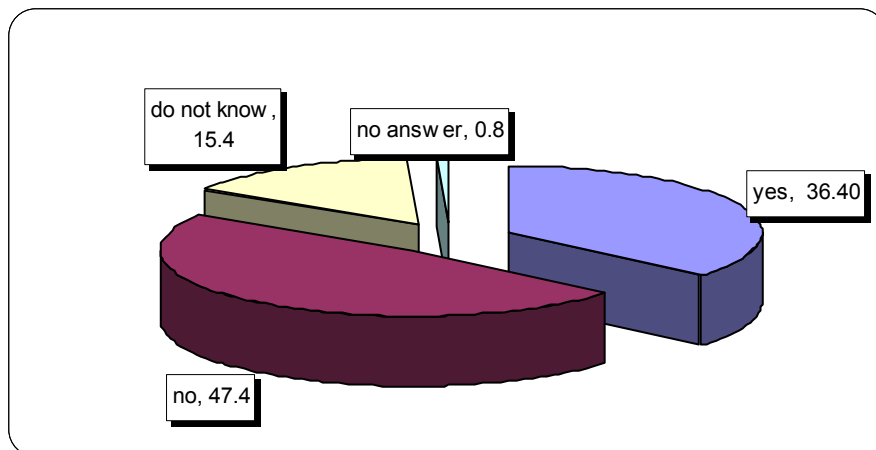
The representatives of local communities believe that the integration in the EU structures is a beneficial process for the short and medium term local development. More than 80% of mayors responded that EU integration will positively influence the development of their local community in the next five years, while 17.8% were sceptical.

**What influence do you think Romania's accession to the EU will have on your community's development in the next 5 years?**

**Tabelul 4**

Answer options	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulated relative frequency (%)
Negative influence	2.4	2.4
Insignificant influence	15.4	17.8
Positive influence	81.8	99.6
No answer	0.4	100.0
Total	100.0	-

Unfortunately, the optimism of the mayors about the accession process is not accompanied by the necessary capacity of local authorities and local companies to use structural funds. Moreover, local administrations are not interested in assessing the training level of local elected officials and companies on accessing and using these funds (15% of the interviewed mayors could not express an opinion on this topic).



**Figure 4. Training of local companies in using structural funds**

More than half of local authorities in Romania have not yet applied for EU funding for institutional development or local community development. This is a clear indication of the reduced administrative capacity for employing structural funds in the period immediately following the accession.

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