

# *Special Status of Bucharest*

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Bucharest is the capital of Romania and the largest city in the country with about two million inhabitants. It is the biggest economic centre of Romania that has both the municipal and departmental statuses. The deliberative body is the General Council of Bucharest with 55 councillors, while the executive body is the City Mayor. The City Hall is managed by the Mayor. The City Hall is the executive and administrative apparatus of the City. Sub-municipal level in Bucharest is organized in the network consisting of six administrative sectors that have their own deliberative and executive bodies.

*Key words:* local self-government – Romania, City of Bucharest, Europeanization of local government, city management

## 1. Introduction

The importance of Bucharest as an administrative unit results essentially from its status of the capital of Romania, the status the city has had for

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more than a century, but also because it is the largest Romanian city, and the centre of industry, commerce and culture. In terms of population size, Bucharest is the sixth largest city of the European Union.

Bucharest as an administrative unit has a special status compared to other local authorities in Romania. It is the only city that is not part of any department. Nevertheless, its population exceeds the population of any department in the country.

It is necessary for this study to be structured according to the historical, demographic and administrative development of this local authority. It is also necessary to emphasize the geo-economic position of Bucharest within the European Union.

## 2. History, Geo-Economic Position, and Demography

The first document confirming that the City of Bucharest dates back to 1459 is a parchment dated 20<sup>th</sup> September. It is a document issued by Prince Vlad Tepes, who exempted some inhabitants of the region from taxes and reinforced their property rights, confirming a donation given to small feudal lords. Vlad Tepes spent four out of six years of his reign in the »City of Bucharest«, preferring it to his residence in Târgoviște.

Between the fifteenth century and the end of the feudal era, despite large-scale natural disasters and wars, the City of Bucharest experienced continuous economic and social development, thus becoming one of the main urban centres of Southeast Europe. The first higher education institution was opened in 1694 (Saint Sava Academy). Bucharest University was founded in 1864, situated in the vicinity of the Academy of Sciences, the National Library and the National Theatre.

The first administrative division of Bucharest was made in 1789, when the City was composed of five »plăși« (ancient administrative subdivision in Romania). In 1830, the City Council was formed (nowadays Local Public Administration) and the City was divided into five zones (sectors). In 1846, the City Council devised the first Cadastre Plan of Bucharest. In 1859, the city became the capital of Romania, and on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1862, the first parliament in the country opened its session in Bucharest's administrative territory.

In 1864, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza promulgated the Municipal Law; the City of Bucharest became »urban district of Ilfov department«, run by the mayor and the City Council.

With the declaration of state independence in 1877, Bucharest experienced strong economic and social development. During this period, it was the main commercial centre in the country; the first institutions that appeared were the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1858), the Securities Exchange (1881), the National Bank of Romania (1858). The end of the nineteenth century was marked by the development of capitalism and the creation of the banking sector with the emergence of several new banks.

This period also witnessed the works on deepening the bed of the Dâmbovița River and on water supply for the capital from the filtered Dâmbovița waters. Electric public lighting was introduced in 1882, and the Grozăvești power station was constructed in 1892. Opening of the Filaret power station (1894) brought the first electric tramway to the City in 1908.

The Law on the Organisation of Municipal Administration of the City of Bucharest of 1926 and 1929 granted the City Charter to the Romanian capital. Following the systematization plan of February 1929, the City of Bucharest was administratively divided into the central and the suburban zones respectively. The central zone had four sectors, each having its local council. The suburban zone comprised the rest of the territory that spread to the city fortresses. The municipalities belonging to this zone got the status of suburban communities. The city and its suburban communities were under the competence of the General Council, composed of 36 elected councillors, 24 appointed councillors and up to 7 co-opted councillors. City administration was run by the General Mayor, elected by the Council.

The most prosperous period of Bucharest and of Romania was between the two wars. Being the capital of the unitary Romanian state in the inter-war period facilitated the development of Bucharest into the industrial, commercial and financial centre of the country. In 1938, Bucharest had around 17 per cent of the total number of enterprises, contributing significantly to the country's economy, covering the whole range of industries of the period. Currently, Bucharest is the biggest economic centre of Romania. Its share in the country's GDP is approximately 19 per cent, 21 per cent if we add Ilfov Department.

The City of Bucharest is geo-economically defined by the steady population of about 2 million and the area of more than 228 km<sup>2</sup> (0.8 per cent of Romanian territory). It generated a territory of support and influence –

the metropolitan area of more than 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, where there are 94 administrative units, 8 of which are towns. It has an advantageous geographic position, at the junction of principal pan-European transport corridors (no. 4, 9, 7). Bucharest is the capital and politico-administrative centre of Romania, it is part of the network of European capital cities and it plays an important role in central and eastern Europe.

In 1877, Bucharest had a population of 177,646. The majority were Christians, 75 per cent Orthodox and 10 per cent Roman-Catholic. There also were 12 per cent of Jewish people. In 1930, there were 77.5 per cent of Romanians and 11 per cent of Jews in Romania. In 2002, 96 per cent of the population in Romania belonged to the Orthodox Church.

### 3. Administrative Structure

There are two types of administrative bodies with regard to the scope of their competences – the bodies of central public administration, whose competences cover the state level; and the bodies of local public administration, whose competences cover the units of local administration.

The following public administration bodies can be identified:

- I. Central state bodies: (1) two heads of the executive branch: the President and the Government; (2) the ministries and other specialized central bodies, subordinated to the Government; (3) autonomous central authorities (not subordinated to the Government); (4) central institutions subordinated to the ministries or to the autonomous central authorities.
- II. There are state bodies and autonomous regional bodies at the level of departments. State bodies include (1) the Prefect, who is government representative at the local level; and (2) decentralized branch offices of the ministries and other specialized central bodies. Autonomous body is the departmental council.
- III. There are two bodies at the local level: (1) local council, the deliberative body; (2) mayor, the executive body.

Romanian territory is organized into the following types of territorial administrative units: departments, municipalities, cities, towns, communes and villages.<sup>1</sup> The capital city is the municipality of Bucharest, organized

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<sup>1</sup> Legal and institutional framework has been established by the Law no. 215 (Official Gazette no. 204, April 2001), which abrogated the Law on Local Public Administration no. 69 of 1991.

in administrative sectors. Departments are administrative-territorial units consisting of municipalities, cities/towns and communes as basic administrative-territorial units. The organization of departments is based on geographic, economic, social and political conditions. Departments ensure social, cultural and administrative development of municipalities, cities/towns and communes.

Municipalities are urban areas with a large population, developed industry, particular importance in the economic, social, political, cultural and scientific life of the country, with significant housing fund and urban equipment, and with a complex network of educational, healthcare and cultural units. The municipality where the department prefecture is situated is the department seat.

Cities/towns are more developed population centres with regard to economy, culture, and social and administrative matters. Communes are local administrative units consisting of one or several villages that include rural population, organized according to economic, social, cultural and geographic conditions. Villages where there are village halls (bodies that run the commune) are the seats of communes. Villages are basic local administrative units.

Romania ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Law no. 199 of 1997, OG 331/97; ECLSG). The organization of modern Bucharest, like that of other local administrations in the country, is based on constitutional and legal provisions. There are certain principles fundamental for the organization and functioning of local administration in Romania. The relevant laws are the Law on Local Public Administration (No. 215 of 2001, OG 123/01), with subsequent amendments; the Law on Decentralisation (No. 195 of 2006, OG 453/06); the Law on the Status of Locally Elected Representatives (No. 393 of 2004 OG 912/04, amended); the Law on the Prefect and the Institution of Prefect (No. 340 of 2004 OG 225/04); and the Law on the Election of Local Public Administration Bodies (no. 67 of 2004 OG 333/07).

Local budgetary revenues of all units of local administration in Romania consist of a) their own revenues: taxes, fees, contributions, etc.; b) the amounts deducted from certain State Budget revenues; c) subsidies received from the State Budget and other budgets; and d) donations and sponsorships. Local bodies can have access to certain European funds for financing of the projects of public interest.

Local interests are protected and represented at the national level by the RFLA (Romanian Federation of Local Authorities), founded in 2001.

The RFLA is a legal entity of private law, non-profit, non-governmental, and apolitical. It was established with the purpose of universal representation of the associative structures in their relations with the Parliament, the Government, and other public authorities, as well and in the relations with international institutions and bodies. The RFLA consists of the Association of Rumanian Municipalities (AMR), the Association of Rumanian Cities and Towns (AOR), and the Association of Rumanian Communes (ACoR).

The RFLA has two principal roles – to represent the interests of local authorities in the national political system, which is a responsibility that influences the whole system of public administration and is very important for each member, and to provide services and professional assistance to local authorities, including the member associations. The services aim at improving the professional relations and at accelerating the exchange of information between local authorities. The RFLA is the ideal vehicle for dissemination of information and experiences used for the promotion of methods and processes of best practice.

There is a set of provisions regulating the objective, the structure and the functioning of Bucharest as an administrative entity. Bucharest has a special status in the country, since it is the only city that does not belong to a department but has a Prefect. Its population, however, is larger than that of any Romanian department.

The administrative structure of Bucharest is unique. There are municipal executive body (Mayor of the Municipality) and general deliberative body (General Council of the Municipality). On top of that, each administrative sector has an executive body (mayor) and a deliberative body (local council). The City Hall is the executive body managed by the General Mayor and in charge of running the city. Bucharest has the area of 228 km<sup>2</sup>, divided into six administrative sectors, each run by its own town hall. The sectors are distributed radially (and numbered in clockwise direction), so that each sector has one part of the centre of Bucharest in its jurisdiction.

The City Hall is responsible for public services (water, transport, main boulevards) while the town halls of the sectors are responsible for the contact between the citizens and the local councils, secondary streets, parks, schools and sanitary installation services.

Local autonomy is achieved through the authority of The General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest (GCMB). Article 29 of the Law on Local Public Administration stipulates that the Prefect shall determine

the number of councillors, by prefectural order. This number varies according to the number of inhabitants, between nine councillors for the areas of up to 1,500 inhabitants and thirty-one councillors for the areas with more than 400,000 inhabitants, except for the General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest with fifty-five councillors. Main tasks of the GCMB include the establishment and maintenance of road infrastructure and public transport, supply of thermal energy, water supply and wastewater management for the entire city.

The sectoral organisation is as follows (the number of inhabitants in January 2009):

- a) Sector 1 had 227,717 inhabitants. It includes the following neighbourhoods: Aviatorilor, Aviației, Băneasa, Bucureștii Noi, Dămăroaia, Domenii, Dorobanți, Gara de Nord, Grivița, Victoriei, Pajura, Pipera, Primăverii, Chitila.
- b) Sector 2 had 357,338 inhabitants. This sector includes the following neighbourhoods: Pantelimon, Colentina, Iancului, Tei, Fundeni, Floreasca.
- c) Sector 3 with 399,231 inhabitants includes Vitan, Dudești, Titan, Balta Albă, Centru Civic.
- d) Sector 4 had 300,331 inhabitants. This sector includes the following neighbourhoods: Berceni, Olteniței, Giurgiului, Văcărești, Timpuri Noi, Tineretului.
- e) Sector 5 had 288,690 inhabitants. It includes Rahova, Ferentari, Giurgiului, Cotroceni.
- f) Sector 6 with 371,060 inhabitants includes Drumul Taberei, Ghencea, Militari, Crângași, Giulești.

Currently, the administrative apparatus of the Municipality has 1,046 employees, 315 of whom are younger than 35. In 2008, 196 college/university and secondary education graduates were hired, 138 of whom with completed college/university education and 89 were under the age of 35. Out of the total number of staff, 779 completed college/university education, representing approximately 74.5 per cent of the total number of employees.

## 4. Perspectives

Overall activity of the Romanian administration should be based on the principle of legality. The principle of legality is to be connected with the

principle of subsidiarity, which is stipulated in the ECLSG and in Article 5 of the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>2</sup> The explicit legal definition of subsidiarity principle in these European documents reflects the democratic necessity of transferring decision-making competences to the basic government levels, closer to citizens.

The role of the Municipality of Bucharest is emphasized by the measures and programmes supported by the European financial resources in the best interest of local communities. One of them was the measure *Ex-ISPA 2004/RO/16/P/PE/003* – Reconstruction of the wastewater treatment plant in Bucharest – Stage I. The Funding Memorandum was signed by the European Commission (EC) on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2004 and by the Government of Romania on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005. The final beneficiary and the contracting authority was the Municipality of Bucharest. The completion date was 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010, and the total eligible amount – €108,300,000. It was an important investment in the wastewater treatment system of Bucharest since non-treated wastewaters of Bucharest were the biggest pollutant of the Danube in the region. The reconstruction of the Bucharest's wastewater treatment plant would thus remedy the main pollution point along the Danube. This ISPA measure is considered to be one of the most important environmental projects in Romania, involving the following contracts:

There are three types of zones where the implementation of urban reconstruction strategies and operations is imposed: a) historic zones (protected urban areas) – degraded; b) destroyed urban zones; c) collective housing zones. The reconstruction of certain urban zones – through restoration, renovation, and reconstruction – produces direct or indirect beneficial effects on the quality of life of residents or other users, constituting a set of social policies beyond urban policy. The reconstruction of the historic centre is going to upgrade the quality of all the functions localized within the zone (i.e. residential function for local inhabitants as well as for temporary residents, like tourists).

Sectoral development policies in Bucharest currently comprise: a) utility and public services' policy, which is a priority for the municipality, considered a development catalyst that determines the capacity of the private sector's interest. The policy in this area aims at enlarging the capacities of municipal networks in accordance with the growing consumers' demand and at ensuring coordination between the investments in infrastructure

<sup>2</sup> Romania ratified the Lisbon Treaty by the Law no. 13 of 2008 (OG 107/08).



and the reconstruction of the existing housing fund; b) investment policy; c) transport policy; d) urban environment policy; and e) institutional development policy.<sup>3</sup>

## SPECIAL STATUS OF BUCHAREST

### *Summary*

*Bucharest is the capital of Romania and the largest city in the country with about two million inhabitants. It is the biggest economic centre of Rumania that has both the municipal and departmental statuses. The deliberative body is the General Council of Bucharest with 55 councillors, while executive body is the City Mayor. The City Hall is managed by the Mayor. The City Hall is the executive and administrative apparatus of the City. Sub-municipal level within Bucharest is organized in the network consisting of six administrative sectors that have their own deliberative and executive bodies.*

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<sup>3</sup> Data have been mainly taken from the Bucharest Municipality Sustainable Development Plan 2009–2012 (2009).

## POSEBNI STATUS BUKUREŠTA

### Sažetak

*Bukurešt je glavni grad Rumunjske i najveći grad u toj zemlji s oko dva milijuna stanovnika. On je najjače ekonomsko središte Rumunjske. Ima status jedinice lokalne samouprave i departmana. Predstavničko tijelo je Glavno vijeće Bukurešta s 55 vijećnika, dok je izvršni organ gradonačelnik, koji vodi gradsku upravu. Gradska je uprava kao izvršni i upravni aparat odgovorna za upravljanje gradskim poslovima, posebno gradskim javnim službama. Submunicipalna razina u Bukureštu je organizirana kroz mrežu sastavljenu od šest sektora koji imaju svoja vlastita predstavnička i izvršna tijela.*

*Ključne riječi: lokalna samouprava – Rumunjska, Grad Bukurešt, europeizacija lokalne samouprave, upravljanje gradom*