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Administrative Reforms in Post-Communist Countries: Similarities and Differences

PETRA GORAN*

Summary

Administrative reforms in post-communist countries are often researched as one-country case studies and with a legal focus. In this article, the author uses a comparative approach to identify the main features of administrative reform policy in post-communist countries, as opposed to such reforms in Western democracies, as well as to point out the elements and actors in these processes that may lead to differences among the post-communist administrations. The article focuses on the civil service systems as key elements of administrative change, stressing the importance of the relationship between the political officials and the top civil servants. These “insiders” to the reform are crucial to the successful policy transfer of administrative reforms, which depends on the development of their competences and results in better administrative capacity. Elite circulation and level of corruption are noted as additional intervening factors. On the basis of existing comparative studies and the identified elements and actors in administrative reforms in post-communist countries, the author indicates potential areas for further research in this field.

Key words: administrative reforms, post-communist countries, EU accession, civil service, policy transfer, elites

Introduction

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, post-communist countries are still facing serious problems in adapting their administrations to the demands of the new democratic market societies. Recent studies of administrative reforms in the new EU member states (SIGMA, 2009; World Bank, 2007) indicate slow progress or even a retreat of the change process in this field, along with considerable differences among the reviewed countries. Hopes of Western authors to find innovative solu-

* *Petra Goran*, MA, is a PhD candidate at the programme of Comparative Politics at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb.

tions for administrative reforms in Central and Eastern Europe (Lane, 1997; Verheijen and Coombes, 1998) have apparently not materialised, with most countries having problems in implementing the adopted legislation and institutions in the administrative practice. Instead of well defining local problems and studying foreign models to find the best fit, post-communist public administrations have often copied solutions from abroad without much consideration of local needs and specificities. However, governance quality indicators and public opinion surveys on issues dealing with trust in public institutions and future perspectives of the country (World Bank, 2009; Eurostat, 2009) indicate that some of these countries consistently score higher than others. The reasons are not quite clear. The already extensive research on administrative reforms in post-communist countries mostly includes prescriptive elements, one-country studies and a legal focus. Comparative studies of this field in post-communist countries are rare and mostly financed by international organizations. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to try and define the specific common traits of administrative reforms in post-communist countries, as opposed to such reforms in Western democracies, and to point out the elements and actors in these processes that lead to differences among countries. Special focus is given to civil service¹ reforms as key elements of administrative change. The paper will first clarify what is usually understood by the terms “administrative reforms” and “post-communist countries”, then consider **why** administrative reforms appear, **what** their purpose is, and **who** is involved in them – both in Western democracies and in post-communist countries. Then some key elements of administrative reform processes in post-communist countries will be analysed in order to point out the similarities and differences among these processes, as well as among the results in different countries. As a conclusion, some ideas for further research in this field will be presented.

Models of Administration and Post-communist Countries

The syntagm of administrative reforms in post-communist countries may seem obvious and understandable to all, but it is important to start this analysis by clarifying various ideas and models existing behind these terms.

One general definition of administrative reform is given by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 8) in their “handbook” on public management reform: “deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better”. This wide definition shows that terms such as “administrative reform”, “reform of public administration”, “public

¹ The term “civil service” here refers to the government systems of human resource management, regardless of the legal status of the civil (public) servants. Due to the limited scope of the article, we do not deal here with differences between “public” and “civil service”, or with differences in the number, status and working positions of civil servants.

sector reform” and “public management reform” refer to various different activities and measures which are often guided by differing objectives and theories. These activities and measures build on different systems of public administration, which, in turn, are based on different cultural contexts and values. Cultural values and beliefs are in fact cornerstones of state and administrative systems, shaping the structure and culture of administrative organizations. Administrative traditions change, but are path dependent, so the same reform measures implemented within different administrative traditions may result in very different outcomes. Administrations do not stem from the same model and do not move in the same direction (see Peters, 2000). It is therefore important to take into consideration the starting point of each reform, as well as to define the desired goals. An additional blurring element in post-communist administrations is the fact that the very values and beliefs of these systems are in transition, making the starting and finishing points of administrative reforms less clear.

In practice, administrative systems are made of elements of different models: very rare administrations are “pure” examples of one or another model. We will give a very brief overview of the main models of administration and administrative reforms, in order to be able to recognize them within the processes of administrative reforms in post-communist countries.

The **classical, traditional model** of administration is based on Max Weber’s ideal type of a bureaucratic organization. According to his analysis, the modern state is based on rational-legal authority, which is supported by bureaucracy. The model of bureaucracy is built on: hierarchical structure, decision-making on the basis of written documents, separation of professional and private life of the public servants, separation of politics and professional work, task specialisation, remuneration in the form of salary, career advancement and “service for life”. The career system associated with bureaucracy means that public servants are generally employed at the beginning of their working career, deployed according to the needs of service and promoted individually on the basis of formal criteria and years of employment. The advantage of bureaucracy over other organizational types is its technical supremacy: compared to spoils or collegial forms of administration, bureaucracy is precise, fast, unambiguous, discreet and cheaper (see Blažević, 2002; Drechsler, 2005; Olsen, 2008). This model insists on the difference between the private and public sectors, due to the public sector’s specific concerns for public interest, protection of public goods and equity, which require specific organizational structure and employment conditions of public servants (security, independence and competence).

However, Weber’s ideal type does not exist in practice – bureaucracy often shows a range of dysfunctional elements. Numerous authors (Lane, 1997; Jreisat, 2002; Hughes, 2003) discard this model as “outdated”, claiming that it is slow and

difficult to change, expensive, inefficient and rigid, neglecting citizens and promoting career development based only on formal criteria. In spite of recent loud criticisms and trends to reform this model, a number of authors analyse its *raison d'être* in modern democratic societies and point out the positive sides of Weberian bureaucracy, such as continuity, clear responsibilities, concern for public interest and professionalism (see Olsen, 2008; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Peters, 2003). Administrations in post-communist countries, which suffer from structural instability, discontinuity and politicisation, may in fact benefit from incorporating some elements of the classical Weberian administration, for instance the separation of political and administrative functions, work security, protection of public servants from political pressure and career prospects (see Marčetić, 2007).

The trend of the **New Public Management** (NPM) since the 1980s introduces private sector mechanisms into the public administration. Deregulation, privatisation of public enterprises and marketization are the cornerstones of the new philosophy, which is focused on decreasing the public sector and the public expenditure in general (see Lane, 1997). Main objectives of the NPM are to make the public administration more efficient, more effective and more focused on the quality of services offered to its taxpayers. This is why public-private partnerships, outsourcing, tendering, proliferation of agencies and private sector human resources tools (i.e. performance management, pay-for-performance, contracting) are seen as useful mechanisms to improve the functioning of public administration. The NPM promotes the normalisation of working conditions and abolition of the “privileged” status of public servants, as well as an important focus on performance measurement. The “open” or “position” system of civil service is associated with such practices: recruitment aims at finding the best candidate for the specific job, either from within or from outside the public service; employees enter and leave the public service frequently, and mobility is fostered; there is a focus on performance and results (UN, 2005).

The NPM is currently widely criticized, among other things, for its negative results which have appeared in post-communist and developing countries. It is considered that NPM-related reforms of civil service are ill-suited for post-communist countries because the liberalisation of working conditions in practice leads to further politicisation and destabilisation of public services. The NPM's basic logic that “management in the public sector is not in any meaningful way different from management in the private sector” (Peters, 2003: 11) contradicts the fact that the economic values and motives of the NPM do not necessarily correspond with the values and objectives of the public administration, which must care for public interest, equity, lawfulness. However, some studies show that post-communist administrations have preference for some NPM elements, such as flexible employment systems (SIGMA, 2009), and that they are actually desirable, due to the very dynamic environment and labour markets (World Bank, 2007).

After the primary economic criteria of the NPM, **governance** once again turns the focus on accountability, public interest, rule of law, and participation in the policy process. The strengthening of institutional capacity and democratic legitimacy of political institutions is recognized as a priority in both developed and developing countries. In post-communist countries, this concept is promoted because it points out the need for better policy participation, coordination and cooperation of central and local administrations, as well as non-governmental institutions. The concept of governance links the study of public policy and public administration by concentrating on the horizontal activities of coordination and steering, where the state acquires the new role(s) of “moderating” the interweaving interests and actors (see Petak, 2008). Various definitions of governance include concepts such as policy networks and public accountability, but we might say that a common element to all of them is the “creation of public value” (UN, 2005). In relation to civil service, governance stresses the need for institutional capacity and accountability, putting the civil servant in the limelight, with the new skills, attitudes and responsibilities necessary for successful networking, decision-making and monitoring.

Considering the “**post-communist**”² countries, we delineate their borders around the former communist and socialist Central and Eastern European countries that are either new EU members or have perspectives for membership in the European Union (see Marčetić, 2005: 147). This group, however, includes countries of quite different historical paths, often including occupation by foreign empires, from Austro-Hungarian to Russian or Ottoman. Some countries had important periods of independence and conquests of foreign lands, while others were sovereign countries only in the Middle Ages. Different levels of openness and dictatorship during the communist rule in the second half of the 20th century should also be taken into account, considering that the self-management system and quite open borders of the former Yugoslavia produced very different social and economic impacts than the isolated dictatorships in Romania and Albania.³ Finally, the process of EU in-

² Related terms “post-socialist” and “transitional” are often used interchangeably. “Post-socialist” is sometimes used for countries ensuing from Yugoslavia (as its system was termed “socialist” and not “communist”). “Transitional” usually relates to transition from the communist system towards democracy, but the origin of this transition may also be a post-colonial situation, post-dictatorship or an economically underdeveloped situation, as in some Latin American, Asian or African countries. Therefore, we use the term “post-communist” as more widely used than “post-socialist”, and as more specific than “transitional”.

³ More on cultural differences and their impact on post-communist economies can be found, for example, in Prašnikar and Cirman (2007). Cultural influences on political systems are more widely treated in Lane and Ersson (2005), while Langer (1998) gives an interesting analysis of cultural similarities and differences between various post-communist societies, and between post-communist and West European countries.

tegration, recognised as one of the crucial influences on the reform processes in post-communist countries (see Grabbe, 2001), started at different points in different countries: from the first four “Visegrad countries” (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and the other half of the “2004 enlargement” group (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia), to the two “laggard” new member countries (Bulgaria and Romania), the current candidate countries (Croatia and Macedonia), and finally, the future or so-called potential candidate countries (including the Stabilisation and Association Agreement countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as more Eastern European countries included in the EU’s Neighbourhood Programme). All of these factors point at the variety in cultural foundations, level of economic and democratic development, participation in transnational organizations and integrations, as well as some regional groupings (the Baltics, Central Europe, the Western Balkans, etc.). This article focuses on the post-communist new EU member states (EU-10) and the candidate countries, because this group has been through a longer period of deep institutional reforms aligned with the criteria for EU accession and provides more research and comparative surveys than other post-communist countries.

Why Do Administrative Reforms Appear and What Are Their Objectives?

Administrative reforms first appeared in a more important and organized form in the 1980s in the Western democracies, as a reaction to the world oil crisis of the 1970s which has challenged the sustainability of the welfare state and large public spending. Briefly, two common perceived problems were the macro-economical problem of large proportion of the public sector in GDP and important deficits, and the lack of trust and legitimacy in public institutions. To solve these problems, the governments focused on three main objectives (Bouckaert, 2008: 13-14):

- reduction of the proportion of government in GDP and of deficits;
- improvement of the performance of public sector institutions;
- redefinition of responsibilities among institutions and mechanisms of their accountability.

Market-type mechanisms and privatisation were introduced as an answer to the first objective, various performance measurements were adopted from the private sector to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions, and participation, coordination and networks were being improved to foster accountability. Although these reform objectives and measures can be regarded as universal, there have been important differences among the stable democracies introducing these reforms in terms of the reforms’ scope, depth and sequencing.

Post-communist countries face the same problems, only in the extreme. In fact, a large proportion of public sector spending and the lack of trust and legitimacy are reflected in the need to move from the centrally planned economy to the market economy and rebuild the legitimacy and accountability of the discredited government institutions in a democratic environment. The causes of administrative reforms in post-communist countries can simply be divided into internal and external causes. Internal changes of economic and political systems require delegation of central authority to the local level and private or non-governmental institutions, improved communication between governments and citizens, support for business development, concern for public welfare and social justice, and efficient administration at all levels (Rice, 1992). External changes in the form of globalisation and European integration processes introduce the need for radically new working methods and capacities in administrations that used to be closed, hierarchical and unchangeable. Participation in international organizations and in the EU accession process puts pressure on civil servants and their organizations to lower hierarchies, open communication channels, delegate responsibilities and adopt a range of new skills and attitudes in a very short time. While administrative reforms in Western democracies refer to “fine-tuning” of stable administrations, reforms in post-communist countries are usually understood as frameworks for restructuring overall administrative systems (Kustec-Lipicer and Kovač, 2008: 5). Post-communist administrations are in the position to introduce complex reforms which normally imply two separate phases of administrative development: first a legal, supervised administration, and then a technologically developed and economical one. Is it possible to implement reforms that would simultaneously “encompass strengthening of the legality, i.e. lawfulness of the administration, as well as increase of its flexibility and adaptability”? (Pusić, 2005: 14).

The process of EU accession implies adherence to the principles of the “European Administrative Space” (EAS) as defined by SIGMA⁴ and to the Madrid criteria⁵ of administrative capacity. The EAS principles include: reliability and predictability; openness and transparency; accountability; efficiency and effectiveness (SIGMA, 1999). The difficulty which the accession countries have in applying these principles lies in the very fact that they are non-binding and that there is no specific EU *acquis* which would regulate the model and way of functioning of public administrations.

⁴ SIGMA is a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, principally financed by the EU.

⁵ The EU accession criteria include the political, economic and legal criteria adopted at the 1993 EU Summit in Copenhagen and the criteria of administrative capacity adopted later, at the EU Summit in Madrid in 1995. The latter is of special interest because it represents a formal, although insufficiently clear condition of administrative reform in future EU member states.

The accession countries are expected only to enable their administrations to implement the EU *acquis*, but they are free to define the combination of reform models and measures most suitable for their circumstances. The administrative capacity is assessed by the European Commission in the yearly Progress Reports during the period of accession negotiations. However, the Commission's concept of administrative capacity is limited to the possibility of a candidate country's administration to implement EU legislation, common policies and related EU funds (precisely because there is no EU administrative *acquis*). The EU's influence in acceding countries therefore often lacks a more comprehensive view of administrative capacity which would include a range of issues: legal, organisational, human resources, functional, and support to the development of administrative capacity (Koprić, 2009).

Who Are the Actors in Administrative Reforms?

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004: 19-20) define three groups of key actors involved in the administrative reforms in Western democracies: leading politicians, senior civil servants, and "outsiders" who include management consultants, think tanks and academics. High-level politicians are often stressed as the "engine" of administrative reforms, as this is nothing but a change process, which generally starts with a "top-down" approach in order to engage all levels of administration and face the opposition to change (Pollitt, 2008: 12). Senior civil servants are expected to be sources of policy proposals and analyses, as well as independent advisors to politicians and some sort of a "bridge" between them and the citizens. The long-term perspective and continuity of reforms requires well-functioning relations between politicians and senior civil servants, because the former should lead the strategic change, while the latter should take care of implementation and expert evaluation.

When analysing administrative reforms in post-communist countries, we should take into account one more concept: policy transfer. As mentioned above, these countries often adopt solutions from abroad, whether they are laws, institutions or even ideologies and whether they are literally copied, combined or only taken as an inspiration. This is why this process, in which knowledge, policies or administrative arrangements are transposed from one nation or policy domain to another, can be taken as a frame in our analysis. Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) propose nine groups of actors in this process: elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs and experts, transnational corporations, think tanks, supra-national governmental and nongovernmental institutions and consultants.

Taking into consideration that the classification of actors by Pollitt and Bouckaert gives an important role to think tanks and management consultants, whose influence in post-communist countries is limited or incorporated in the work of international institutions, while the classification of Dolowitz and Marsh gives a very

detailed view of various influences, we would like to propose four groups of actors who seem relevant for post-communist countries. Firstly, political officials (members of parliament and government and other politically appointed officials in the administration who are responsible for policy-making), being the ones who make decisions on administrative reforms and steer the process. Secondly, top civil servants (non-political managing civil servants who can influence the process), who mainly participate in the elaboration and implementation of reform policies and measures. Thirdly, international institutions (World Bank, IMF, NATO, but primarily the European Union through the Commission), which influence the decisions and set the criteria. Finally, experts (including academics, consultants, professional networks and non-governmental organisations), who advise, prepare proposals and offer solutions and models to be applied locally.

The critical point among these actors in post-communist countries is the relationship between the political officials and top civil servants, as the two groups of “insiders” to the reform. Even in Western countries the nature of this relation can vary (from the two groups having completely separate careers to being considerably politicised), but post-communist administrations are generally considered to be politicised. This presence of politics at all levels of post-communist public administration usually results in frequent replacement of senior civil servants (Coombes, 2007: 39), which hinders continuous implementation of administrative reforms and influences the high turnover of quality staff with competences, knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of reforms.

Administrative Reform Processes in Post-communist Countries: Elements of Analysis

Political and economic transformation has identical goals for all post-communist countries and the EU sets the same criteria for all accession countries, but the processes of administrative reforms still differ considerably from country to country. The roles of different actors and their relationships influence the process of policy transfer – the choice and combination of reform models and the level of their adaptation and implementation.

Policy transfer seems to be especially useful for post-communist countries, because the uncertainties of policy-making in the transitional environment press the politicians to opt for quick solutions available through such transfer. It should be mentioned that countries usually reach for geographically and culturally close examples⁶ or look into their own past searching for institutional or legal models

⁶ Baltic states are often considered to be adopting policies and institutions from the Scandinavian countries, while Central European countries are often seen as following in the footsteps of Germany and Austria.

(Randma-Liiv, 2005). However, if we consider the transfer of administrative reforms, the adoption of NPM measures and tools may be observed in all post-communist countries, as it was a global trend in administrative reforms of the 1990s and largely promoted by international institutions. The World Bank in particular, and the IMF, promoted the reduction of public spending along with privatisation and more flexible employment in the civil service. Such measures were, for instance, warmly embraced by neoliberal governments in Estonia, opting for a minimal state, flexibility and open civil service with general employment conditions (Randma-Liiv, 2005: 469). On the other hand, the European Commission and SIGMA have, through the EU accession process, i.e. in the late 1990s when negative effects of the NPM started to emerge, often promoted the advantages of the classical administration model and the career civil service, claiming that post-communist countries must first establish depoliticised, stable administrations before they can introduce elements of flexibility.

It is important to consider whether the sources of administrative change are exogenous or endogenous – do the incentives for reform come from the outside (usually from international institutions) or from within the administration (be it the political or the civil service level)? Endogenous change, “owned” by the members of administrative organizations, is deemed to have more success than the change imposed from the outside (see Hesse, 1997: 120). The decision makers in post-communist countries are recommended to analyse and choose examples of good practice from the OECD countries and implement appropriate measures from all three administrative models in such a way that they can complement each other. Such an approach should focus on concrete problems and pragmatic solutions, not forgetting a comprehensive view of the administrative system and the way individual measures fit into the context (Verheijen and Coombes, 1998: 416). This active role of local actors is difficult to realise at the beginning of the process, when financial and human resources for policy analysis and development are scarce and the time pressure for introducing change is high. Most post-communist countries started with “supply-driven” policy transfer, relying on foreign assistance and expertise, disregarding the need for analysis, adaptation and coordination of reform efforts. The important step comes with the development of politicians’ and civil servants’ competencies, increasing the number of experts in the field and, consequently, producing better administrative capacity. All of this is a basis for more balanced “demand-based” policy learning, where politicians and top civil servants lead the change by proactively selecting different foreign models and blending national practices and experience from other countries (see Randma-Liiv, 2005). If this learning and engagement of local actors does not occur, the administrative reforms may remain at the level of formal adoption of legislation, which is not reflected in the change of administrative practice (Verheijen, 2003; Meyer-Sahling, 2006; SIGMA, 2009).

Research on elites in post-communist countries is also relevant for the process of administrative reforms, providing an analysis of the structure and interrelations of political and administrative elites. The dominant view of Eastern European elites is one of “reproduction”, claiming stability of the social composition of elites. This view holds that the privatisation process benefited the communist political class, which “managed to survive as the new propertied bourgeoisie”. In this way, the people remain the same, only “the principles by which they legitimate their authority, power and privilege are altered” (Szelenyi and Szelenyi, 1995: 616, 618). There is some evidence of a limited “circulation” of elites, i.e. of replacement of the old political class by new people through a structural change, one of examples being Estonia, where there has been considerable circulation of key positions in the government (Adam et al., 2008: 50). However, the prevalent idea of elite reproduction leads to the problem of changing values, vision, competences, leadership style and organisational culture in the administrations managed by the politicians and top civil servants who were in similar positions during the communist rule. To what extent is it possible for the same people who worked in centralised, hierarchical, closed systems to represent new values and a new administrative culture?

One more element influencing the process of administrative reform is the extent of corruption and nepotism. In particular, the early transition decisions about the liberalisation and privatisation of state enterprises “can have important implications for the capacity of governments to enforce the rule of law, to promote competition and to regulate effectively” (EBRD in Ahrens, 2001: 63). Political corruption includes “misuse of public office, gains in status, non-material advantages, manipulation of public power and authority” (Grubiša, 2005: 57), all of which affects the quality, functioning and human resources of administrative systems. The interweaving private interests of political and administrative elites can seriously obstruct any reform effort.

Results of Administrative Reforms: Similarities and Differences

Recent studies of administrative reforms in the new EU member states indicate slow progress or even a retreat of the change process in this field, with considerable differences among the reviewed countries. The expectations of certain Western experts to find innovative solutions for governance (Verheijen, Coombes, 1998; Lane, 1997) have mostly not materialised. A study of the administrative capacity of eight new EU member states (World Bank, 2007) estimates that innovations are rare, while in some areas reform processes are actually reversed, which can be attributed to externally imposed models which were not adapted to the local political, economic and labour market context. Human resource management systems are the main area of failure everywhere, while good practices of strategic planning and

policy coordination can be found in Lithuania and Latvia. Estonia is a model for public service delivery systems. Verheijen (2003) claims that none of the administrative reform processes in post-communist countries can be considered as irreversible: good administrative practices often prove to be unsustainable, usually due to the lack of political guidance and ownership. SIGMA report on sustainability of civil service reforms in Central and Eastern Europe five years after EU accession (SIGMA, 2009) concludes that only a minority (Baltic states) have made further progress in reforming their civil services and fit the European principles of administration. Slovenia and Hungary have progressed in some areas and backslidened in others, showing an intermediate fit with the European principles, while Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic experienced “destructive reform reversals”, eliminating formerly established civil service institutions. Formal rules and the attitude of civil servants toward human resource policies is generally more in line with the European standards than the everyday practice of human resource management. It seems that the EU pressure for administrative reform stops on the day of accession and the results of reforms five years later depend only on the local circumstances and influences in each country.

The differences between post-communist administrations can actually be compared to the old EU member states, which still retain different administrative systems. Grabbe (2001, 2003) explains this by two limitations of EU influence on governance in accession countries: 1) diffusion of EU impact due to the lack of own (common) institutional models, unclear link between fulfilling particular tasks and receiving particular benefits, and the inconsistency in advice coming from EU actors; 2) interaction of the “Europeization” process with other internal and external change processes.

Generally speaking, authors seem to agree that successes of administrative reform in post-communist countries are meagre, but that there are considerable differences among countries both in the substance and the quality of administrative reforms.

It is very difficult to define the results of reforms, and such a definition should include the questions of “results for whom, defined by whom, against what criteria and in pursuit of which objectives?” (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004: 103). Although there is no possibility to enter into such a discussion here, a few global surveys assessing some aspects of administration and its functioning may be considered. Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank, 2009) include six indicators of which four are relevant for the quality of administration: government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. If we compare the ratings of 10 post-communist new EU member states, Estonia and Slovenia take the first and second place in all but the regulatory quality (where Estonia takes the first,

and Slovenia the seventh place). Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010 (WEF, 2009) includes, inter alia, ratings on: public institutions, ethics and corruption, and government inefficiency. Estonia and Slovenia, again, score the best among the EU-10 on all three indicators. The same result is given by the indicators of the Freedom House report *Nations in Transit 2009: national democratic governance and corruption* (Freedom House, 2009). When citizens are asked whether the current situation in their country is good or bad, Estonians and Slovenians are second and third most optimistic among the citizens of the EU-10; when asked how much they trust their governments, Estonians are the first, and Slovenians the third most trustful towards their governments (Eurostat, 2009).

Looking at these indicators, one would expect a common denominator of administrative reforms in Estonia and Slovenia, which could have led to such success. On the contrary, Adam et al. (2008) list the differences in the wider reform contexts: elites in Slovenia have mostly reproduced, while Estonia faced considerable elite circulation; Slovenian left-oriented governments have opted for a corporate welfare state, while Estonian neo-liberal governments established a liberal minimalist state; Slovenia is a coordinated market economy, Estonia a liberal market economy, etc. In addition, Slovenia has a career civil service and Estonia an open, position-based one (Demmke et al., 2006). It remains unclear which are the exact levers that lead to successful functioning of public administrations in post-communist countries.

In Place of a Conclusion: Directions for Further Research

An overview of the processes and results of public administration reforms in post-communist countries shows that they are far from uniform. Current research generally deals with which reform measures are taken, when they are taken, in which way the elements of administrative reform models are combined, and to what extent the adopted measures are implemented and rooted in practice. Rare comparative studies point to some common preconditions for progress in administrative reforms: central management capacity, depoliticisation and right sequencing of reform measures, while identifying other elements which were promoted as necessary for the professionalisation of civil services, but do not seem relevant for successfully enforcing EU administrative standards (SIGMA, 2009: 76). However, such analyses of administrative systems are not sufficient to define the cause-effect links. It would be important to evaluate the effects and outputs of administrative reforms, which may give indication about some factors that positively impact the results of these reforms. This is, however, very rare due to (understandable) difficulties in data collection, methodology and the short time-span of reform implementation. There is a large space for further research in this field by analysing specific factors in administrative reforms. To name but a few: politico-administrative relations, including

the extent of (de)politicisation and factors which contributed to the depoliticisation; role of strategic planning, continuity and coherence of administrative reform efforts in achieving results; relative influence of foreign bilateral and multilateral actors, as well as local actors (including non-governmental and private sector organizations) on the reform process; persistence or change of organizational and administrative cultures; influence of corruption and nepotism in politics and administration, etc. More comparative research of administrative reforms in post-communist countries is needed, with a different view on various aspects of these processes.

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Mailing Address: 1. Ferenščica 57, HR 10000 Zagreb. *E-mail:* petragoran.pg@gmail.com