INTRODUCTION

In this study, I will describe in a nutshell what public service models exist today and focus on the present and future prospects of the ongoing reforms of civil services. Civil services have always had a unique status within the government and I will attempt to highlight what paths their development in the EU member states has taken. Basically, I will rely on the research work led by Christoph Demmke and Timo Moilanen.\(^1\)

If we want to define the reasons why civil service systems play an essential role in the systems of governments, we must think about the fact that modern governments still depend to a great extent on the work of the national civil services and their employees – the millions of civil servants. Actually, the quality of life in Europe depends in many ways on those who work for the government and on how the government works as such. Besides, civil services have democratic and ethical functions, as well; they serve or should serve the society and the law, protect the population as well as function in a sustainable manner. In order to perform all these tasks and duties, the Member States of the EU have established specific civil services since no government functions as a private company or under labour law.\(^2\)

THE NATURE OF THE REFORMS IN THE NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICES AND THEIR POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FROM A COMPARATIVE POINT OF VIEW

Until recently, civil service systems were considered to be of national competence. Indeed, they still represent political and administrative systems which have been influenced the most by national traditions and history.\(^3\) This is the very reason why there are difficulties to carry out a comparative research in this area. Besides, there are many other factors e.g. the different national concepts and definitions of civil services and the many specific features of the national systems, which make any comparative research work in this field more difficult. To tell the truth, we cannot be sure whether different reform concepts mean the same thing for all member states or

\(^1\) The findings of their research are included in their co-authored work: DEMMKE, Christoph – MOILANEN, Timo: Civil Services in the EU of 27 Reform Outcomes and the Future of the Civil Service. Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften Frankfurt am Main, 2010.

\(^2\) DEMMKE - MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 1.


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whether the comparison is really comparing the same issues which are seen as political, sensitive, confidential or even secret. In the opinion of Demmke and Moilanen “the reform of classical bureaucracies is actually a fascinating subject. It challenges many popular assumptions, increasingly puts into question traditional characteristics of civil service systems, but leaves us puzzled as to the outcomes of all reforms.” The importance of the public sector can be justified by its major contribution to economic growth, therefore, efficiency of civil services is inevitable to good governance. Furthermore, “besides the need to be efficient – an effective and appropriately sized public service is essential for social cohesion and a sustainable society.”

In Europe, we can observe that although civil services are very different and always linked to traditions and national identities, there are many common and partly converging characteristics of them, too, which reform developments embrace and use for their purposes, e.g. to harmonise civil service practices so that the acquis communautaire shall be enforced in a relatively similar way. This tendency of convergence is confirmed by an OECD analysis which maintains that there is: - a transition from centralised to decentralised determination of employment condition; - a shift from statutory to contractual or managerial governance; - a development from career systems to post-bureaucratic (position systems); - a delegation of responsibilities to managers; - an alignment of pay levels with private sector practices and a change of special retirement schemes.

We can bravely state that the “often prevailing perception that civil services are reform resistant is clearly wrong. Instead, the tremendous pace of change is challenging the experts who have difficulties in understanding how and why the public services are changing.”

By analysing the ongoing reforms of civil service systems, we can see that they are all challenging the classical bureaucratic model. The main conclusion of the comparative study of Demmke and Moilanen is “what will follow. What could be an

5 Ibid., p. 2.  
8 DEMMKE – MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 2.  
alternative model for the old bureaucratic model? Where are the national civil services heading? Do we still need civil servants at all?”

During their work, they experienced a lot of difficulties, the most important of them was to get reliable, yet comparable data from the EU member states. It also brought difficulty into their work that they conducted their study in English and all “discussion partners and respondents to questionnaires were asked to respond to a terminology which may not be understood universally across Europe”.

PUBLIC SERVICE MODELS VERSUS TRADITIONS

National public services have been classified into career system countries, position system countries or hybrid countries. This classification is a result of the phenomenon that – due to a broad range of other reforms in most public administrations over the last decade – there is no longer a civil service model that could be described as a ‘classical bureaucratic career model’. Instead, civil services have started to adopt practices and processes applied in the private sector. An empirical study by Demmke and Henökl, which was based on the examination of 17 indicators, inclusively but not exclusively specific civil service employment rules, existence of lifetime tenure, specific pension schemes or degrees of centralisation of HRM competencies, came to the conclusion that pure models no longer exist.

Based on their research, Demmke and Moilanen attempted to construct a model that reflects the main dimensions of traditional bureaucracy. First, they identified the central basic elements of traditional Weberian bureaucracy and they used them as indicators to measure the national civil service systems. They called the systems which follow the Weberian model traditional bureaucracies and the systems which deviate from it post-bureaucracies. They came to the conclusion that in practice most

14 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
15 Ibid., p. 8.
20 DEMMKE – MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 10.
of the countries lay somewhere in between these two extremes.\textsuperscript{22} The model they created consists of five main components: legal status, career structure, recruitment, salary system and tenure system. Each component has an equal weight within the model. Each component may consist of one or several sub items. The basic elements of this model are shown in Table 1. The Table also shows the weighting of each item within its category.\textsuperscript{23}

Table 1: Traditional bureaucracy – post-bureaucracy continuum model\textsuperscript{24}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main components</th>
<th>Component items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Legal status</td>
<td>public law status (100 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) Career structure</td>
<td>existence of career structure (50 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>career development centrally regulated (20 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>entrance from the bottom (15 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>promotions to other positions at mid-career or top-level not possible (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) Recruitment</td>
<td>special recruitment requirements (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recruitment centrally regulated (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>private sector experience not relevant (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.) Salary system</td>
<td>basic salary regulated by law (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wage system based on seniority (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wage system not based on performance (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.) Tenure system</td>
<td>lifetime tenure (high job security) (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>termination rather difficult (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>job security differs from private sector (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demmke and Moilanen have found that the modernisation path of the public management a member state takes largely depends on the public administration tradition of that country.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, they have classified the member states according to their public administration traditions as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Public administration traditions by EU Member States\textsuperscript{26}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Administration tradition</th>
<th>Member State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Saxon tradition</td>
<td>Ireland, Malta, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental European tradition</td>
<td>Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean / South European Tradition</td>
<td>Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian tradition</td>
<td>Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern European tradition</td>
<td>Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Member States (South-Eastern tradition)</td>
<td>Bulgaria, Romania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{22} DEMMKE – MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 10.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{25} See also POLLITT, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{26} DEMMKE – MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 13.
Besides, Demmke and Moilanen have pointed out that though it is logical to identify these tradition clusters, yet it is also important to identify the different reform paths, since there can be huge differences in countries belonging to the same tradition cluster. For example, there are considerable differences amongst the Eastern European countries and it is very risky to compare Spain with Italy as well, since the Italian civil service system is much younger than the Spanish system and moreover, the Italian system, for example is a ‘cross-fertilisation’ of different administrative cultures, including the Rechtsstaat tradition, the bureaucratic Napoleon tradition and local traditions from Lombardia and Veneto, Piedmont and Sicily and the Vatican State.  

THE BUREAUCRATIC ROLE MODELS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Bureaucracies and civil service systems have existed for thousands of years. The term civil service has never been a static and homogenous concept; its meaning has developed and changed over time.

By the beginning of the 20th century, there was a new bureaucracy evolving which was described by Weber as an instrument of power based on the principle of rationality and its main task was to enhance the stability of the state while limiting the influence of the (political) class. It is understandable why this model was chosen by the new EU Member States in 2005 since it was also believed to be more efficient and more ethical than any other organisational form until the 19th century. Today, most Balkan countries are also in favour of structures with classical career paths. For these countries establishing a career system represents the “fight” against the problem of political influence and patronage which had resulted from the Communist era. They launched their reform processes by adopting new civil service laws. Although the situation is different in Western and Northern Europe, we can observe that the reform process there is also leading towards the debureaucratisation of public services.

„Today, it can be stated that while some bureaucratic features are not disappearing, they are nevertheless a subject of great reforms. Traditional government is transforming into “governance” and traditional administration into good administration. ”  

In “The Responsible Administrator” Cooper argues that “we are in a time of transition in which the modern heritage of public administration is increasingly in conflict with

a postmodern model".31 „The implications of these changes for public administration are obvious: post-modern administrations tend to be much more diverse, less hierarchical, more flexible, diverse, representative and less separated from the citizenry. Whereas the term “bureaucracy” represents clear values (“hierarchy, formalism, standardisation, rationality, obedience etc.), the term “postmodernism” implies conflicting values and value dilemmas."32 „When looking back in time we get an impression of what has changed. The boundaries between the civil services and the societies are further eroding. Modern technologies have changed communication styles. Public employees are better educated than ever and can now challenge the authority of their superiors. Line managers are given more individual responsibilities which threaten classical hierarchical decision-making procedures. Citizen orientation and principles of good administration are at the top of all administrative reform agendas.”33 „In many Member States, civil servants are recruited “on the market” and employed at mid-career levels. Everywhere, civil servants are required to be more mobile and flexible. Increasingly, civil servants are working on a part-time basis or making use of offers to work from home (“teleworking”)34. In the future, the internet and virtual social networks (e.g., Facebook, Wikipedia etc.) will also challenge all post-bureaucratic concepts. According to Margetts, in the future traditional public organisations are changing into virtual organisations”3536. „The ongoing and constantly changing digitalisation trend in our societies sets additional challenges to our conceptual understanding of work, structure and organisation in the public services. In the future, not only more public services but also classical civil service tasks (which involve the exercise of public powers) will be carried out at home, in social networks or on the street with the mobile IPhone. The digital era will further erode the boundaries between the civil service and the society, as well as between the public- and private sectors and between the professional and private sectors”37. „Because we have flexitime, improved information technologies and video phones, work is becoming less and less restricted by place and time. At the same time, work which was formerly carried out by state authorities is nowadays carried out by very different forms of public- or private organisations.”38

32 DEMMKE – MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 28.
33 Ibid., p. 29.
This blurring of boundaries between the different spheres is quite ironic as many traditional tasks and duties of the national civil services are not changing. Protecting the common good and ensuring liberty, freedom and human rights remain the prime goals of the public sector. Another ironic fact is that – despite the many changes that have taken place and many reforms that have been introduced – one important part of the national public services, the civil service, is without doubt the section of the politico-administrative systems of the Member States of the European Union (EU), which has most been influenced by the respective national traditions and histories, and which for a long time was least affected by European integration. None of the present treaties therefore provided for any EU competences with respect to the regulation of the public service. The Treaty of Lisbon did not divert from this tradition either. 

It does not matter whether a country is EU member or not, the globalization of the public administration is taking place worldwide due to external and internal reform pressures. 

The traditional concept of the public service as a single, unified employer is slowly disappearing. [...] Today, civil service observers agree that the classical models and perceptions of public service and civil service were shaped in a world that no longer exists. This is the discrepancy between the monolithic and centralised 19th century roots and the fragmented and diverse (post-) modern realities we face at the beginning of the 21st century. The fragmentation of the public services, the decentralisation of responsibilities, outsourcing policies and private public partnerships make the public service a somewhat fragmented body.

Nowadays, more reform measures encourage the change, deconstruction and decentralisation of the public service and the civil service on all fronts. Beneath the simplistic image that public policy is a top-down matter between two participants – the State (and public authorities) and the private sector/citizens – lies a new and far more complex reality in which a growing number of actors (e.g., NGOs, citizens, lobbyists, Public-Private Partnerships, semi-public bodies) require an important decision-making role. Today, the term “Governance” describes this development. The ongoing trend towards more decentralisation has important paradoxical consequences for our understanding of accountability and for the legitimacy of a specific civil service. While government is still held responsible for almost any “governmental failures”, most public policies are nowadays carried out by mixed...

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39 See MIKKELSEN, op. cit.
40 However, during the last few decades the European Union has decided upon a number of important legal instruments which are binding upon the Member States and which have an impact on the national public services, services of general interest and HR policies within the national public services. This is mostly the case in the field of antidiscrimination policies and to a lesser extent in the field of free movement of persons and working conditions and working time. In addition to this, the developments towards more international administrative cooperation, benchmarking, the identification of good practices, theories of good governance, common reform pressures and the growing impact of EU Legislation etc., all of these developments have – at least partially – led to a gradual “Europeanisation of Public Administrations”. In: DEMMKE –MOILANEN, op. cit., pp. 30-31. See also MIKKELSEN, op. cit.
41 DEMMKE –MOILANEN, op. cit., p. 32. see also REICHARD, op. cit.
42 Ibid., p. 32. See also REICHARD, op. cit.
forms of public and private actors and authorities, or are even delegated to outside private organisations. Consequently, experts face growing difficulties in answering the question of who is carrying out public services and whether public services should be carried out by a specific group of public employees: the civil servants. Because of the speed of modernisation and the lack of clear strategies, there is no longer any common understanding of which services should be carried out by the public, by the private sector, or by combinations of state and private actors (e.g., public-private partnerships)."43

"The alignment between the public service and the private sector and the blurring of the boundaries between the public and private sectors provoke additional confusion over the question of which tasks and positions should be carried out by civil servants with public status, and which by public employees, consultants, advisors and contractors."44

CLOSING THOUGHTS

As a summary, we can say that public administrations worldwide are going through major reform processes due to internal and external factors and this is what we experience in the European Union, too. The main purpose of reform attempts is obviously to make the public sector to become more effective, efficient and transparent thus enabling it to fight the challenges of the 21th century in all segments of our life. Although as far as the reforms are concerned, we can state that “the change will not result in a linear progress for the better, but rather to failures, successes, paradoxes, dilemmas and simple alternation.”45 “Today, it is widely accepted that evidence about the impact and the results of many reforms is still insubstantial. […] [L]ittle is being done about the reform outcomes.”46 And yet we must agree with the German sociologist Schulze, who says that the best of all words cannot be achieved, but it is worth searching for and the fact that this search will never come to an end is no reason to be pessimistic.47

43 Ibid., p. 33. See also REICHARD, op. cit.
44 Ibid. p. 33. see also VAN DER MEER - VAN DEN BERG – DIJKSTRA, op. cit.
46 Ibid., p. 21.