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## Public service performance and good administration. Socio economic empirical evaluations

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### Abstract

The field literature reveals multiple approaches of local public service performance. Directly managed by public administrative institutions or by private agents through concession or public-private partnership, the public services should respond to important requirements concerning the higher level of citizens' satisfaction. In this context, the periodical evaluation both of citizens' satisfaction and of the economic performance achieved by the public services becomes necessary in view to accomplish good administration of a local community. Based on the field literature and a series of socio-economic empirical evaluations, the current paper aims to present both comparative results and relevant conclusions from the prospect of the principles of good administration. Our approach is based on the concept of good governance making indirectly the necessary assertions for good administration.

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### 1. Introduction

Good governance and the right to good governance represent relatively recent important concerns both for the national and the European governmental authorities.

The two concepts reside from the quasi-unanimous understanding regarding the introducing of a new, managerial, manner of thinking in the national or local public administration systems.

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This tendency was operationalized through the theories and practices specific to the New Public Management or to the New Weberianism, being also supported by international bodies, such as: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or OECD. Torma (2010) reveals the fact that the national attitudes have been diverse, starting from explicit support – United Kingdom, the Scandinavian states or the Netherlands – until reserve, as is the case of France, Germany, Italy and certain South-Eastern European states.

Referring to the wider framework of governance of public sector organizations, Laegraid and Verhoest (2010) identify the evolutions of this process by means of proliferation and specialization, autonomy and control in a context of increased complexity in the public organizations. At the same time, the mentioned authors discuss the possible influence of the specific managerial instruments on governance in the situation in which “specific contextual factors are controlled” (Laegraid and Verhoest, 2010, p. 211).

Based on the constitutive documents of the European Union, Statskontoret (2005) or Nassis (2009) develop and make operational the concept of good administration simultaneously with that of good governance.

Referring to performance, on the basis of relevant literature, the same authors conclude that it must be admitted to be multidimensional. Boyne (2003, 2004) argues that the potential influences on organizational performance in the public sector can be categorized into three broad sets of variables: the external environment, internal organizational characteristics and managerial strategies.

Heffron (1989) grounds a more comprising concept on the performance of the public sector, by grouping 35 criteria in five approaches, from the point of view of objectives, human resources, internal processes, systems and policies.

## **2. Theoretical perspectives on measuring performance of public service**

Public organizations are typically required to meet multiple and potentially conflicting organizational goals (Rainey, 2010).

The citizens desire high quality services, and the public administrations wish to supply public services with a high degree of professionalism, in conditions of efficiency, effectiveness and economy for using the resources. In supplying public services, the local public authorities and institutions have the duty to perform their activity in the achievement of the general interest, applying the principles of good governance.

The following principles of good administration are embraced by most Member States (Statskontoret, 2005, p. 71) implicitly by Romania: 1. The principles of lawfulness, non-discrimination, proportionality; 2. The right to have ones affairs handled impartially and fairly and; 3. within a reasonable time; 4. The right to be heard before any individual measure is taken that would affect the citizen adversely; 5. The right to have access to his or her file, regarding any individual measure that would affect him or her; 6. The right of access to documents; 7. The obligation to state reasons in writing for all decisions; 8. The obligation to give an indication of remedies available to all persons concerned; 9. The obligation to notify all persons concerned of a decision; 10. The obligation to be service-minded.

Based on the principles of good governance, accepted by most European states, ICGGPS (2004) presents “the good governance standard for public policies”, which comprises the focus on outcomes for citizens, transparency of decision, risk management, development of the capacity and capability for efficient governance, real accountability etc.

With the undertaking of these principles, one must become aware of the need to measure performance in the public services and how it might be done better.

There are authors (Behn, 2003 and Bird, 2005) who argue the necessity of performance measurement in the public sector.

Bird et al. (2005, p. 2) suggests that there are three main reasons for measuring the performance of public services: to see what works, to identify the functional competence, to support public accountability.

Behn (2003, p. 588) suggests also eight reasons for the measurement of performance in public sector: to evaluate

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