

Oleksandr RUDIK

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORMS IN THE CANDIDATE AND POTENTIAL
CANDIDATE COUNTRIES: STATE OF AFFAIRS AND ACTUAL PROBLEMS**

This article explores the state and current problems of public administration reform in the candidate countries (Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey) and potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) on the basis of the European Commission's annual report on EU enlargement policy of April 17, 2018.

The purpose of the article is to find out the state and actual problems of public administration reform in the candidate countries and potential candidates for EU membership based on the latest report of the European Commission on EU enlargement policy.

In the medium-term Enlargement Strategy of 10 November 2015, the European Commission emphasizes that effective government governance is a prerequisite for democratic governance and accountability. The quality of public administration has a direct impact on the ability of governments to provide public services, to prevent and combat corruption, and to stimulate competitiveness and economic growth. The European Commission also draws attention to the importance of including meritocratic principles in the management of the civil service and in ensuring proper administrative procedures. It is also emphasized that citizens have the right not only to have proper management but also to participate actively in the process of public policymaking.

The state, problems and prospects of public administration reform in candidate countries and potential candidates are the subject of research and analytical reviews that the Commission holds annually within the framework of the preparation of the annual «Enlargement package» – a set of documents explaining its policy on EU enlargement. The most important document of this package is a Communication on enlargement, which sets out the way forward and reviews the status of reforms in the enlargement countries, in particular in the field of public administration. The latest report by the Commission dated April 17, 2018 will be analyzed in this article.

After analysing the progress made by the candidate countries in their public administration reform in 2017, the European Commission assessed it as moderate, that is, which corresponds to their status as candidates for accession, and the level of relations with

EU that follows directly from this status. The Commission pays special attention to the issues of institutional capacity building of the authorities, increasing transparency and accountability and involving external stakeholders in policy-making, professionalisation and de-politicisation of the civil service.

Thus, the enlargement process continues to be built on established criteria and fair and rigorous conditionality. Each country is assessed on the basis of its own merits. The assessment of progress achieved and the identification of shortcomings aim to provide incentives and guidance to the countries to pursue the necessary far-reaching reforms. Based on the principle of «fundamentals first», the Commission regards the reform of public administration as one of the key issues in the process of European integration and requires the enlargement countries to be effective, decisive and convincing and to embrace all the fundamental EU values.

Countries that are potential candidates for accession have demonstrated only a certain degree of readiness for the reform of public administration. Providing these countries the status of candidates for accession will depend on the success of key reforms, including in the area of public administration. The Commission emphasizes that accession negotiations are not – and never have been – an end in themselves. They are part of a wider process of modernization and reforms. The governments of the enlargement countries need to embrace the necessary reforms more actively and truly make them part and parcel of their political agenda – not because the EU is asking for it, but because it is in the best interests of their citizens.