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**A Comparative Perspective on  
Emerging Administrations in Italy and Romania**

**Bogdan Berceanu<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** Modern society is highly reformist. There are many attempts at generating agreement between the way things ought to be and the way they are – between ideals and practice. We live in what has been called an organization society. Part of this organization is the system of public administration. The aim of the paper is to present comparative perspective on the dimension of emerging administrations understood as changes and reforms that suffer the Italian and Romanian public administration under the pressure of the European Union rules. The study is using the concept of emergence to research and to analyze the nature of the changes in the public administration starting from the approach of the systems theory.

**Keywords:** emerging administrations; change; reforms; Italy; Romania; European Union

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of the European Union, the national public administrations acquire an increasing relevance, as they become key players in the European policy-making mechanism. Their responsibilities, previously limited to the national level, are extended to the implementation of EU policies and legislation and, equally important, to the management of EU funds.

European Union (EU) through its policies and legislation has a great impact on economic and social conditions in Member States and thus on their economic competitiveness. As national public administrations as well as the judiciary are the guarantors for its implementation, the interest of Member States in public governance of other member states has increased over time.

Conceptually, it is on that basis that we will analyze the nature and kind of change determined by the European Union. We make reference to the definition proposed by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004, p. 8): ‘Public management (PM) reforms consist of deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better objectives subject to change characterizes *management* as a *new* way of conducting the business of the state as opposed to traditional administration, more concerned with the review of law in an area of public life, its enforcement, and the making of decisions on cases that are submitted to the public service.

Thus the two fields public administration and public management cover more or less the same territory, but traditional public administration is more concerned with the preparation and enforcement of law, and the regulation of public powers in the relationship of the public sector with citizens, whilst public management puts emphasis on the employment of (scarce) resources in the pursuit of given objectives (Ongaro, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania, Address: 6 Povernei str., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania. Tel.:+4021.318.08.97. Corresponding author: bogdanberceanu@snsa.ro; Beneficiary of the Project “Doctoral Scholarships for a Sustainable Society”, project co-financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund, Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources and Development 2007-2013.

Thus, we can say that the reforms adopted by the governments from South-eastern Europe represent a part of the emergence of public administration system and a consequence of the process of European integration. The term “reform” also entails a specific type of change, i.e. beneficial change towards a ‘better’ state of affairs in the future: the term ‘reform’ is deeply rooted in the politics of improvement (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004, p. 15).

Taking into consideration the above exposed relation between the concept of “emergence” of public administration and the reforms, in this paper, we will make a comparison study regarding the main reforms that suffered the public administration system from Italy and Romania in the last years.

## **2. Theoretical Background: Emerging Administrations**

### **2.1 Emergence and Public Administration**

The concept of *emergence* is utilized to research and to analyze the nature of these changes in the public administration, starting from the approach of the systemic theory.

Emergence is one of the concepts from the general study of complex systems (in which category we can also include the public-administration system) that promises to reshape the way analysts think about change and development. It is the way in which new, unexpected, and qualitatively distinct configurations appear in complex systems (Galatzer-Lev, 2002).

Emergence signifies *a kind of change* (Pepper, 1929). But not all change is emergent. This paper focuses on emergent change, because it is less understood and we need more effective ways of working with it. Knowing the dimensions of emergence regarding its forms of change provides us the perspective of the reforms that happens at the governmental level in the public administration.

### **2.2 Emergence, Change and Reforms of Public Administration<sup>1</sup>**

In social systems, emergence can move us toward possibilities that serve enduring needs, intentions and values. Forms can change, conserving essential truths while bringing forth innovations that were not possible before. In this case, the European Union has a significant role in influencing the transformations which are happening in the government and public administration. This is so because emergence is a product of interactions among diverse entities. Since interactions do not exist in a vacuum; the context also matters.

Emergence is part of a cycle of change (Holman, 2007, p. 112). Regarding the states from South-Eastern Europe we can affirm that this change is a complex one, and we can identify three processes as part of this cycle of change: transition, reform and convergence. All of them represent the forms of emergence (Figure 1). As part of this cycle, emergence is the one that is closing the changing cycle.

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**Figure 1. The Cycle of Change and the Forms of Emergence** (Berceanu, 2013, p. 84)

*Transition* is the first process of the cycle of change which can be identified at the level of state and public administration. Generally, it means a process of passing from a condition or form to another one. This process can also be synonymous with: democratization, marketization and strong state and nationhood building (Arfire, 2011).

Generally, we can say that *reform* means significant process changes in which implementation as well as policy development contribute to efficient and effective national development (Farazmand, 2002, p. 6).

Administrative reform means different things in different nations with different political systems (ibid.):

- It generally means a process of changes in the administrative structures or procedures within the public services because they have fallen out of touch with the expectations of the social and political environment. This assumption on the term of reform is more common in developed and industrialized countries with a strong political system and a stable democracy;
- or, administrative reform is referred to as modernization and change in society to effect social and economic transformation. There reforms are more common to the transitional countries, which are pressed by international bodies to modernize and homogenize their governmental system.

*Convergence* can be seen at the public-administration level as a consequences of applying EU legislation at the national level. Convergence is defined by the extent to which domestic administrative styles and structures reveal similar characteristics because of the reforms taken under the influence of the European Union (Berceanu, 2012). Different administrations develop along the same path in a way that produces more homogeneity and coherence among formerly distinct administrations (Matei and Dogaru, 2010).

### 3. Comparative Study of Emerging Administrations in Italy and Romania

For member countries of the European Union (as well as for accession countries and others influenced by the EU even though formally not belonging to the EU), Europeanization processes may be drivers of change. Such global pressures should have produced their effects globally – however, such effects have been studied much more in some countries than in others, an unbalance which in itself may provide a motive for the study of these countries. We will try to see how the change imposed by the EU and concretized in reforms are leading to the emerging administrations in Italy and Romania.

### 3.1. Italy

The need for administrative reform in Italy in the early nineties was driven by the following factors: an obsolete administration: no government-wide reforms since 1865; an inefficient administration: islands of excellence in a sea of general inefficiency; a costly administration: crucial need to balance the budget and reduce public debt.

The process of change that began was led by two main objectives: to reduce the overall costs of administration and its services and to improve the effectiveness and quality of the services provided. The first goal was in response to the problem of the ever growing public debt, which was no longer sustainable especially according to the new requirements that public spending had to meet in order for Italy to join and stay in the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The second goal, improving the quality and effectiveness of services, was in response to the growing expectations of citizens, who were more and more dissatisfied with the public administration's performance (Cepiku, Meneguzzo, Colangelo, Griordano, 2008, p. 46)

In Italy, more than in other countries, administrative reform goes together with constitutional reform. Institutional innovations were necessary to ensure stability, legitimization and decisional power of Government institutions. The bureaucratic burdens on individuals and businesses had to be reduced. The public administration needed to focus on results and not on processes (Bassanini, 2000).

The first steps of the reforms were made in many directions (see Table1): towards a more transparent and accountable administration (1990); towards an administration closer to citizens and their expectations (1990) and introducing "Serice Charters" (1994); towards a more flexible and efficient use of human resources in the civil service, with the reform of the Senior Civil Service and application of Civil Law to Civil Servants (1993 and 1998) (Cepiku, Meneguzzo, Colangelo, Griordano, 2008, p. 47).

**Table 1. Public Administration Reform in Italy**

<b>NMP levels of Change</b>	<b>Public Management Reforms in Italy</b>	<b>Time period</b>
<i>Organisational change and downsizing</i>	New organizational models at the macro level	1990
	New institutional arrangements	1993
	Fusion of ministries	1997
<i>Public competition</i>	Competition between public health organizations	1990
	Competition between other public agencies in allocating regional instruments funds	1996
<i>Market type mechanisms</i>	Constricting out to private profit and nonprofit organizations	1990
	Constructing in	1996
<i>Introduction of private management systems and techniques</i>	Accrual accounting introduced in local government and healthcare organizations	1990
	Responsibility centers and reorganization of budget items	1993
	Audit, control and budget systems	1994
	Fixed-term contracts limited in time and new managerial positions	1995
	More flexible HRM practices	1997
<i>Performance measurement and definitions of results standards</i>	Accrual accounting	1990
	Costs control and management planning	1993
	Strategic planning, budgeting and auditing	1993

*Source: Adaptation after Meneguzzo, 1999*

The process of change the Italian public administration was concretized by the adoption of some important laws. In this sense, we underline the Laws 142 of 1990 and 81 of 1993 introducing the direct election of mayors and presidents of the provinces brought stability, legitimization and a modern set-

up to local government. Law 241 of 1990 was enacted to bring greater transparency and accountability to administrative procedure and to streamline processes. With Decree 29 of 1993 the reform of the status of civil servants began, the concept of the separation of policymaking and administration was established and the premises for introducing private sector management features into public administration were laid (Bassanini, 2000, pp. 229-252).

The general strategy and guidelines to reform the Italian public administration were issued by the Italian Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation on 28 May 2008. This strategy, enacted into law on 4 March 2009 (Law 15/2009), provides a comprehensive reform design for the Italian public administration (the “Brunetta Reform”). On 27 October 2009, the government approved Legislative Decree 150 (the Reform Decree), implementing the Brunetta Reform in the field of regulation of public employment and efficiency and transparency of the public administration (OECD, 2010, p. 9).

### **3.2. Romania**

In comparison with Italy where the main reforms were taken to join the EMU, in Romania the main reforms were taken in order to consolidate the administrative capacity and to fulfill on of the criteria imposed by the process of accession to the European Union.

Thus, a consistent set of measures needs to be implemented in a clear time framework in the areas of civil-service reform – aimed at creating a professional, stable and politically neutral corps of civil servants – local public administration – aimed at continuing the decentralization/de-concentration process of public services – and central-government reform – aimed at improving the policy formulation process (Profiroiu et al., 2006, p. 4).

The newly adopted strategies were in charge of the Ministry of Administration and Interior, which monitors the application of the provisions comprised in the reform and restructuring strategies and programs of the central and local public administration according to the European Union. A more formal institutional-driven approach to the reform process was also implemented. Specialized governmental structures, such as the Central Unit for the Reform of Public Administration (within the Ministry of Administration and Interior), the Superior Council for the Reform of Public Administration, Coordination of Public Policies, and Structural Adjustment as well as the Unit for Public Policy, were created.

In 2004 the Updated Strategy for Accelerating Public Administration Reform was adopted in Government Decision No. 699/2004. One of the most important components of this strategy was the continuation of the decentralization and deconcentration processes. These principles were also stipulated in article 130, paragraph 1 of the revised Constitution from 2003.

The changes made in the revision of the Constitution from 2003 regulate a series of aspects concerning public administration (Matei, 2009, p. 80):

- Public administration from the administrative-territorial units is based on the principles of decentralization, local autonomy and devolution of the public services;
- The County Council represents the authority of the public administration for the coordination of the activity of commune and town councils aimed to achieve the public services of county interest;

- The Government appoints a prefect in each county and in Bucharest Municipality. The prefect is the Government's representative at the local level, and he leads the devolved public services of the ministries and other bodies of central government.

Regarding the central public administration, there has been a major reorganization of the executive in 2003. The main novelty was the appointment of three deputy prime ministers responsible for coordinating the activities of other ministries and institutions responsible for the establishment of new structures under the direct authority of the legislative process. It was decided that the number of ministries was to be reduced, and new ministries were created to help the process of EU accession, such as the Ministry of European Integration (Macovei, 2005, p. 36). Another aspect of the government reform was that of civil service. According to the Strategy for administration reform, the institutions responsible for civil-service reform were: the National Agency of Civil Servants for the management of the civil service and the National Institute of Administration for continual training of civil servants. The objectives of the reform in this area illustrated long-term reform measures: developing the management of transformation in the period 2004–2006 and stabilizing and consolidating the system of civil service in the period 2007–2010.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The research undertaken in the paper associated the emerging administrations from Romania and Italy with process of change and reformation of the public administration. The analysis outlined that it is a consequence of European integration and Europeanization which represent the implementation of common rules and strategies in order to fulfill the objectives imposed by the European Union. For the Romanian case, the changes of the public administration system were very important step in the process of accession to the European Union, and it continued after 2007, too. For Italy, the redesigning of the public administration system was also directly related with the EU. In this case it was regarding another stage of the long process of European integration, that of fulfilling the criteria for joining the European Economic and Monetary Union. As final remarks it is also important to underline that both states made some very important changes in certain main areas, such as: the redesign of the government structure through downsizing and reorganization of the state; the decentralization of powers, tasks and functions to local authorities, the completion of civil service reform and the creation of the premises for a transparent and efficient system of public administration.

The emerging administrations from Italy and Romania were underlined also by the reform strategies implemented by the governments from the both countries. The reform scheme drawn by strategies included the modernization of the public administration, innovation and digitalization within the public administration and throughout the country, and development of a relationship between the public administration, citizens and businesses.

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