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ABSTRACT

HABILITATION THESIS : The Capacity of Local Government to Support
Administrative Reform for Economic Development and Social Inclusion of
Vulnerable Groups

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Alina Georgiana Profiroiu is currently professor within the Administration and Public Management Department of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies .

The habilitation thesis presents the author's academic, professional and scientific accomplishments over the past 15 years since the PhD thesis completion, as well as her future academic , professional and scientific plans . The thesis is divided into three sections as follows: Section 1 Academic, professional and scientific accomplishments, Section 2 Future plans and Section 3 References.

Section 1: Academic, professional and scientific accomplishments

A. **The Academic Accomplishments** subsection has also been structured into four parts: pedagogic accomplishments, contribution to curricular innovation through development of new study programmes or modules, contribution to international cooperation and professional achievements.

Since 2000 I have moved up the university hierarchy, reaching the position of professor in 2014. During my academic career, I have conducted pedagogic activities through lectures and seminars, both in bachelor programs (full-time and distance learning), as well as in postgraduate and master programs within the "Public Administration" specialization branch. So far, I have developed several first-time courses at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies in the following areas: *Administrative Sciences Theory* and *Fundamentals of Public Administration* in the bachelor program, *Administration and European Integration* in the Public Management master program, *Local Public Administration at European Level* and *European Governance* in the Administration and Public Management master program. Also, I have established and coordinated the Public Administration and European Integration master program, I was trainer in several postgraduated studies programs such as Local Public Administration, Public Policy Management, Management of Public Institutions at Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) and I contributed to the curriculum and cours development for the

module Economy and Public Finances in postgraduated program Management of Public Administration to the Babes –Bolyai University.

For some of these modules I have developed coursebooks, 4 as first author and 10 as co-author, and I have participated in the drafting of 13 chapters in edited volumes published in prestigious publishing houses listed on the A2 CNCSIS list.

The teaching activity was complemented by supervision of students' graduation and dissertation theses, as well as by participation in various EU- funded projects. At the same time, I initiated and coordinated undergraduate and graduate students' drafting and presentation of papers at the annual student scientific sessions.

In addition, in 2004 I joined the editorial Comitee of the Administration and Public Management Review, published by ASE, accredited by National Council of Scientific Research(CNCSIS) and quoted in numerous international databases.

In all this periode of time, I have been preoccupied of studies programs quality improvement, being involved in elaboration of the study „ *Training needs of pubic administration staff*” , published to Economica Publishing House, which received in 2011 the Price for research performance in Human Resources Management , awarded by General Association of Economists from Romania(Asociatia Generala a Economistilor din Romania). Toghether with professor Andrei Tudorel , I have coordinated the study *Comparative Analysis of 5 Public Administration master programs from 5 EU member states in order to improve similar programs from Romania and to correlate it to the labour market needs* and I have been also co-author of volum *The Guide for Quality Management of Public Administration Master Programs*(2012), coordinated by Onofrei Mihaela and Oprea Florin, published to Accent Publishing House.

Regarding to the international cooperation, I performed several activities :

- In the period 1999-2002, I participated to the Tempus-PHARE Project „Adaptating local communities in the European integration context -ADAPT”-IB 14210-99, with the goal of development of long –life learning training program for the local public administration;
- Between 2005-2006, I developed the curriculum and cours material for the discipline *Local Finance and Decentralization* for the *Management of Entreprinses and Territory* master Program, organised by Bucharest University of Economic Studies and D'Artois University , Arras France;
- I participated to the development of undergraduate program with double diplomas Romanian and French, *Administration Economique et Sociale*, organised by Bucharest University of Economic Studies and Centre universitaire Jean-Francois Champollion et Toulouse 1 Capitole University, France.

In the same time with academic activity , and for completing of this, after the graduation , I have performed a complex professional activity related to public

administration. In this context, between 2003-2010 , I was public administration expert to the Quality Certification Organism Simtex S.A . Since 2006, I became Public Policy Evaluator within the PHARE Project RO 2003/005-551.03.03.04 and I also became professional competency evaluator for the Project Manager function (Occupational Standard M38).

Between February-March 2009 , I was recruitment and selection expert to European Consultants Organisation, within the PHARE project RO 2006/ 018-147.01.03.01.05- *Adapting Young Professional Scheme to needs of the civil service reform*, aiming to select young civil servants or persons from the outside of civil service in order to employ them as public managers. In 2005, I was evaluator to the National Office of Fellowships for abroad, and in 2004,2005 and 2011, I was member of Commission for didactic grades award for secondary education.

In 2011, I was member of Committee for projects evaluation, registered in the Competition for best practices in Romanian public administration. Between 2010-2011, I was member of target group for elaboration of Administrative Code of Romania within the Project *A legislative Framework more coherent for a public administration more efficient (PODCA code 2989)* and between 2015-2016 I became member of working group for elaboration of Administrative Code of Romania. In 2017 , I became member for elaboration of Local Public Finance Code and member of Group for modernisation of Bucharest Public Administration, organized by Prefect Institution.

During the time, I was taking part of organisation committee of 14 editions of International Conference in Administration and Public Management , organised by Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

B. In the Scientific Accomplishments Subsection of my habilitation thesis, the main contributions to scientific research were set out in detail. In order to reveal my research capability, I began to explain the objectives of my doctoral thesis, accomplished between 1999-2003 under coordination of professor.phd.Alexandru Taşnadi , with the theme modernisation of services from public economy.

The scientific approach was explained, highlighting the main scientific accomplishments, research projects in which I participated and how these were communicated through published studies and research articles or participation at international conferences and subsequent publication.

This part starts by presenting the scientific approach in terms of the logical sequence of the submitted research studies and by highlighting the contribution to the development of scientific knowledge in the field of public administration and the combination of the undertaken research directions in an interdisciplinary approach.

I mention also that I am a founder member of the Research Centre in Administration and Public Services established in 2006 at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. My entire scientific activity materialized in the publication of:

- 6 articles presenting original full contributions in ISI journals with an impact factor that higher than or equal to 0.1, as author and co-author;
- 22 articles presenting original full contributions in ISI journals with an impact factor of less than 0.1 and articles published in journals indexed in at least 3, respectiv 2(2) of recognized international databases
- 4 books published as sole author and 10 books published as co-author with n coauthors ($n \leq 3$)
- 16 studies / chapters, with n authors in collective volumes (volumes with ISBN).
- 45 full papers in international conferences volumes (ISBN or ISSN volumes)
- 19 articles in national journals CNCSIS or recognized in the field
- 18 papers in the volumes of national scientific conferences

In second part of my habilitation thesis, **scientific achievements**, my contributions are presented, structured on **four major research directions**, as follows:

B1. Research direction 1: Public Sector Reform (from the reform of public services to the reform of public administration and civil service)

One main research direction took shape in the area of public sector reform, covering aspects of public services reform on to public administration and civil service reform in Romania and other European countries. Topics such as citizen participation in decision-making processes, corruption, public services performance and quality, civil servants' work satisfaction and remuneration system, modernization of the prefect institution represented my research subjects. Relevant evidence in this respect is provided by the a book , 3 book chapters published in international publishing houses, the 9 published articles and 7 presentations I made at conferences, as well as my member participation in research projects .

Designing an evaluation model of administrative systems reform represents a major theoretical contribution. Such a model involves analysis of reformed administrative procedure which facilitate delivery of public services and generate social impact and a comparative analysis of corruption in different domains of public sector.

The most important theoretical and practical contribution consists in the analysis of Romanian public administration reform and of local public administration capacity to undergo reform.

Carrying through the first research direction was facilitated by participation in 5 research projects, the most important of which was called *Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the impact of public administration reform on the EU integration process in*

terms of reducing development disparities between economic regions, project funded by 4th Program - Partnerships in priority areas (code 91035). My roles in this project were two-fold: scientific quality administrator (2007-2009) and project director (2009-2010). The approach focused on the relationship between reform and administrative capacity, on issues concerning remuneration of civil servants, implementation mechanisms and key actors in the reform process, actors' ability to carry through the public administration reform. I would like to mention that during the project lifetime I collaborated closely with professor Andrei Tudorel.

- A major practical contribution generated by this project consisted in coordinating the application of statistical sampling at the local government level for quantitative characterization of the relationship between reform and administrative capacity, establishment of a database and interpretation of results.

- Another main practical contribution was the analysis of reform implementation and monitoring mechanism and the drafting of proposals to modernize the implementation mechanism and the reform process management. At the same time, tools were developed and used for measuring the actors' capacity to support and carry through the reform process.

- I can confidently include among practical contributions the analysis of important aspects of civil service, such as employee satisfaction, identification of elements that motivate civil servants, quality of civil service promotion and recruitment competitions, quality of the civil service modernization and reform process, quality of interpersonal relationships among local government employees and quality of the performance management system.

- Another contribution was the analysis of the public administration remuneration system compared to other sectors and the elaboration of three scenarios regarding the evolution of wages in public administration, their comparative analysis, followed by drafting a set of recommendations.

- A last contribution consisted in a critical review of achievements and challenges of civil service reform in the last twenty years, with a special focusing on the professionalization of prefect function and on the control exercised by this high civil servant.

B.2 Research Direction 2: Local Administration and local finance

This strand is concerned with the administrative-territorial organization of European countries, taking a comparative view on the local civil service and local financial resources. My concern towards issues related to local and regional government resulted in several relevant papers (4 articles in journals, 4 conference participations, a book and chapters in other books), on topics such as financial and fiscal autonomy of local

communities, competitiveness analysis of European cities, the decentralization process, access to services of general interest at local level, local public-private partnerships, the local public administrator role.

In respect of this research strand, I have presented in detail the theme of decentralization and local government funding sources and their borrowing capacity. I analyzed *the impact of administrative and financial decentralization from the perspective of local economic development and competitiveness*. My contribution within the research team that I coordinated was to build two scenarios of social and economic local development taking into account the impact of decentralization in the health care domain. One scenario was based on the opinion of employees in public administration using descriptive statistics and the other one on employee opinion, using econometric models developed by professor Andrei Tudorel.

The study conclusions were presented in terms of the analysis of local communities' financing needs with a view to determining local government borrowing capacity and resources. My contribution to this activity was to coordinate the study together with PhD Professor Mihaela Onofrei from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University and to collect data from the Ministry of Finance.

Another contribution to this research direction was my participation in the project "Indicators and Perspectives for Services of General Interest in Territorial Cohesion and Development (SeGi) EPSON" project run by the Bucharest University of Economic Studies together with other 11 partners, under the coordination of the Royal Institute of Stockholm, and with the institutional supervision of professor Luminita Constantin-Daniela. My contribution consisted in collecting research data on services of general interest in the six counties of the North-East Region and in studying the legal and institutional framework of these services. In the paper there were presented the research results obtained by the research team as a conclusion of the analysis of a case study on the sewer services in six counties from the North-East Region.

The last contribution to this research direction linked of local public administration and local finance was the following :

- a book „*Local public administration at European level*”, 2013 published in Tritonic Books Publishing House, where it has been presented the characteristics of administrative-territorial organization at local authorities regime, models and tendencies of local civil services, as well as features of local communities financing system in the European countries;

- a book chapter *Decentralization process in Romania*, in collaboration with Constantin Marius Profiroiu and Septimiu Rares Szabo , part of the *Palgrave Handbook on Decentralisation in Europe*, published by Palgrave Macmillan, in 2017, referring to the recent trends in decentralization, history of the process and current situation , public service and financial decentralization in Romania.

B.3 Research direction: social inclusion of vulnerable groups

The third research direction was a spin-off from my overall research interest in public administration in general and local administration in particular. It examined social inclusion of vulnerable groups primarily through prevention and decrease of school dropout and by establishment of social economy structures. Research in this area was facilitated by the participation of the author in 3 POSDRU projects, whose beneficiaries were civil society actors. The projects had an extensive research component and many activities have resulted in high-profile research studies.

Regarding projects on preventing and combating early school leaving, my contribution consisted in drafting the chapter on features of the dropout phenomenon in the Central and Western regions of Romania, in analyzing dropout at primary and secondary level and in identifying features of the roma population dropout. Features of dropout at national and regional level were presented.

A second research contribution in this direction was my engagement as institutional coordinator for Bucharest University of Economic Studies and as a long-term expert for RIES project *Social Economy Incubators Network RIEs - strategic approach to human resource development (POSDRU code 53 606 the measure 6.1)* This contribution along with other team members materialized in two studies: Study on social economy in Romania: actors, stage of development, regulation, implementation mechanisms and *Stage Analysis of the social economy in four development regions of Romania : South, South-East, South-West Oltenia and Bucharest-Ilfov*.

Apart from the coordination of the BUES Team, I contributed to the elaboration of the study *Social Protection and Social Economy* in which I addressed the following issues: the social protection system, the role of social economy in social inclusion, analysis of poverty rates in Romania. As an example, findings were communicated on the profile of categories likely to be stimulated to participate in social economy activities, together with recommendations about means of ensuring the efficiency and sustainability of social protection. I also conducted a research study by administering an online questionnaire and interviewing people engaged in social economy in late 2011. Through building a database, statistics about different aspects of the social economy were obtained.

The visibility of research in this strand was ensured by two book chapters published in Romanian publishing house, a book chapter in an international publishing house and 3 articles in international scientific journals.

B.4 Research Direction 4: Education and further education in the public administration field

The fourth direction of research concerns initial and further education in public administration, direction supported by my participation in various training courses and in 5 research or institutional development projects. As I have previously shown, during on my career, I had the opportunity to conduct several researches on the following themes:

- Evaluation of training needs of public administration's employees

- Methods of teaching and assessment in public administration programs
- Analysis of master programs in public administration
- Ways of improvement of students professional development

In this regard there were highlighted findings of the study - Andrei Tudorel, Marius Profiroiu, Alina Profiroiu *"The training needs of public administration employees"*, published in Editura Economica in 2010. Based on this study results, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Another contribution to this research direction was the coordination and participation in conducting the study - Tudorel Andrei, Alina Profiroiu- coordinators, Florescu M, Marton B., OpreaF., Mina L. (2011). *Comparative analysis of five master programs in public administration from 5 universities in five EU Member States in view of improving similar programs in Romania and their correlation with the labor market*, Accent Publishing House, ISBN 978-606-561-038-5. This study was conducted as an activity of the POSDRU project /86/1.2/S/60072 - *Increasing the quality of the masters program in public administration*.

To conclude, one more practical contribution taken into account was research on pedagogy of public administration disciplines, particularly student teaching and assessments methods.

This line of research consists in two studies, one chapter in a guide book, two articles and a paper presented at an international conference.

Section 2: Future Plans

A. In the first part of this section future academic and professional plans of the author were presented.

The part related to teaching methodology highlighted my interest in and plans to use *modern teaching methods* (discussions, simulations, case studies, project work), the information tools and resources as well as *teaching objectives*. *These focus on strengthening the student - teacher partnership by increased involvement of students in research and extra-curricular activities and developing teaching tools in order to increase the practical relevance of the teaching process.*

My short, medium and long-term goals related to improving the content of the undergraduate and master program disciplines were discussed at length . These goals regard refining the *Administrative Sciences Handbook*, publication of an *Administration and Public Management Treaty* and of a *European Governance textbook for the corresponding master program discipline*.

Intentions related to the development of new study programs were presented, such as the post-graduate training program Management of Public Procurement initiated in collaboration with KPMG experts. In this program I will develop course

materials for the discipline *Administration and Public Policy in the Context Good Governance* and those for new disciplines such as the *European Policies for Human Resources* to be taught within the newly developed undergraduate program in Sociology - Human Resources and Organizational development and performance measurement *for the corresponding* new master program Human Resources Management in public sector at Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE Bucuresti) .

At the end of the first part of Section 2 future professional and international cooperation plans were presented.

B. In the second part of this section the main future research topics and the intended research methodology were presented:

- *Developing, as co-author, the chapter The transparency of public administration, fight against corruption and trust on public institutions in Romania, as part of comparative study*

- *Assessment of central and local authorities' capacity to support the development of social economy in Romania.*

- *Evaluation of Romania's administrative capacity to participate in decision-making processes at EU level*

- *Voluntary intermunicipal cooperation versus administrative-territorial forced reform in view of increasing the efficiency of local government in Romania*

- *Analysis of regional governance, with application to South Muntenia Region*

- *Evaluation of motivation and satisfaction of public administration human resources in Romania in the context of current reforms , including the assessment of civil servants motivation in Romania to participate in European-funded project.*

Section 3: References and Annexes

The third section contains as references a number of 60 papers or articles of national and international authors recognized in scientific literature and as annexes , a list of tables and a list of figures used in my thesis.