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Meritocratic aspects concerning civil servant career. Comparative study in
Central and Eastern European countries.

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I. Meritocracy

I.1 Historical aspects

The term “meritocracy” has been introduced by Young (1958) and, in contemporary period, it is used to describe a society in which richness and social position are obtained, mainly, through competition and proved competencies. Moreover, the field literature consider the meritocracy as *a form of government* or organization in which the appointments are done is made and the duties are assigned on the bases of abilities and talent and not on wealth (plutocracy), origin, family connection (nepotism), class privilege (aristocracies), the right of the first born, popularity (democracy) or due to other key factors concerning social position or political power.

History reveals a very long list for the use of meritocracy in political life and in social life. In this context we should mention the example of Venice Republic which over a millennium, until the conquest by Napoleon in 1797, had used a meritocratic system. According to that system where the citizens were ranked by their results - in academic life, in art, trade – and the best were appointed in the Republic Council. Also, The Great Ducat of Finland, in the 19th century, was considered an autocracy, as the executive structures of power persons belonging to the wealth class. Almost until the middle of the 20th century academic titles and military ranks were decisive factors in the appointments of political rulers. Singapore assets, also, as a real meritocracy putting the accent on the discovery and training of exception young people, for the management position, the results obtained in the learning process being considered the highest recognition.

U.S.A. is also considered to be an example of using meritocracy. Even Thomas Jefferson, the author of Declaration of Independence and the third president, had supported the meritocratic form of government.

Other older examples can be found in ancient China, Mongol Empire.

I.2 Intelligence quotient – IQ

The history of IQ starts with Stern’s definition (1912) about intelligence quotient as proportion between estimated “mental age” and “chronological age”

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$$\text{IQ} = \frac{\text{mental age}}{\text{chronological age}} * 100$$

Stern’s definition is not very wide and can be applied, generally at small age, for the adults being used a derivate coefficient for it the comparison of mental capacities of an individual.

Most of the experts underline, as example, that “intelligence” as it is measured by IQ methodology is partial a reflection of intellectual capacities and partial a reflection of the environment. The combination of capacities and influences determine intelligence (Mc Namee and Miller Jr, 2004, 15).

The field literature (Fischer at al, 1996) reveals that it has to be taken into consideration the fact that individuals are different as level of intelligence and due to their environment and genetically heritage. The heritage is considered between 0.4 and 0.8 (on a scale from 0 to 1) that indicates the fact that genetics plays a higher role than environment in creation of different IQ between individuals (Gottfedson 1997, 13). The allegation is sustained also by the fact that most of the individuals are between 90 and 110 and very few, 2 – 3%, are above 130 or below 50.

A study realized by Gottfedson 1997 on multiple groups of American population, underlines, at general level, the next situation:

| | | | | | |
|----|-----|---------|----------|-----------|------|
| IQ | <75 | 75 – 90 | 90 - 110 | 110 – 125 | >125 |
| % | 5 | 20 | 50 | 20 | 5 |

A recent theory that determines many discussions pro and against it belongs to Flynn (2007). In fact, this theory sustains that in the last half of the century, more exactly after the end of the Second World War, the individual average of IQ has known an increase by 3 units at every 10 years (Flynn, 2007, 5-7).The increase of IQ is proved not to be unitary, in certain geographical areas the increase being of 20 units in 20 years. These regions are Eastern Asia, Japan, South Korea, and the Northern countries of Europe. It will be traceable a difference between those areas by the fact that in most of the cases it is about countries suffered after the end of the war and after word they developed a competition system.

There is only one aspect that is worth to be taken into consideration when we look at the “Flynn Effect” through a comparison of the countries in which the increase of IQ was bigger. It is relative easier to make a correlation between standard of living standard and the medium level of IQ from a country. Avoiding the normal divergences on the topic related to poor and rich peoples are, elements than can sustain this supplementary process in developed countries. The percentage of population for those with higher education increase at the same time with the level of living standard, the career opportunities, and when derive from educated families, their development is sensitive improved.

I.3 The concept of meritocracy

For the time being the term “meritocracy” is used to describe that society, apparently perfect, in which social position, wealth, the respect of others are obtained mainly by merit, talent. The principal of heredity is practical excluded from this equation,

as the heritage is not the way to access a position invested with responsibilities and social prestige, it's competition, the fight, the position that have to be won and not received.

A definition with a strong social focus will be the following: meritocracy is the term used to describe a competing society that accepts inequitable gaps of income, wealth and social position taking into consideration the talent, the merit, competencies, motivation and effort (Young, 1958, 16).

Etymologically speaking, meritocracy means the rule of those that deserve. It is strongly inveterated the approach of merit as an academic one, more precisely as a combination of intelligence, studies, training, maybe attitude and effort.

Young (1958, XIII) defines: merit = IQ + effort which together with the concept itself of IQ appears as an expression of contextual approach even a simplistic one.

Young (1958) asserted, first of all, that modern educational system has brought a change, in the sense that not the class and the origin environment are on first level, but a system in which employment, promotion and the career of a person shaped on the bases of the abilities derives from education. In other order of ideas, the development through education – often seen as merit by the above mentioned author although with some reserves – exceeds in value the aristocratic system, bringing a plus to the development of the society as a whole. In fact, one of the ideas from the paper would be the difference between those who benefit from education and those who did not benefit from it.

Maybe, the fundamental problem of this concept, defined as meritocracy is the fact that it doesn't do delimitation between merit and education.

“A great part of the discussions concerning the meritocracy is not based on problems concerning what is good and what is wrong, but on the ambiguity of using merit as an explanation for the Western society evolution. There for, meritocracy is not a term that can be easy forgotten. Weber notion about administrative bureaucratic structure is important – one that needs educated peoples and not intelligent “rule-makers” and not “rule-breakers”. Intellectual accomplishments are totally different from administrative accomplishments. The fact that both can be found in academic environment makes even more confusing the difference between them. But all of those issues strengthen the argument that according to whom the last part of 20th century is defined mainly (or in totality) by merit” (Horovitz, 2006, 143)

We have quoted the above paragraph with the purpose to preface the next affirmation and the argumentation to sustain it.

The definition of merit could be a more complex one, including a series of elements belonging to the modern society. Nowadays in the private and in the public areas, the focus is on performance, on results. It is less important the IQ of an employee or maybe to the same extent with the effort for accomplishing job duties.

The only thing that matters is the final result, individual performance in his/her activity. We are not talking about the selection process, the used of intelligence tests for the selection of candidates, but the next stage, about the activity itself. First of all the diversity of activities has grown exponentially in last decade. Also we can say that the degree of complexity of work has grown and this has determined the increase of level of education of employees. Here we touch directly the Flynn effect. If, indeed the IQ has increase in the last century, isn't it a direct result of the increase of level of education of population?

Nowadays the percentage of those that have at least medium studies is greater than 100 years ago and we do not talk about higher education.

The societies react to that increase, because we have many graduates the importance of their educational level decreases. If 30 years ago a university diploma was important, now the things are different. This became a necessity in order to have access to a certain level of professional development.

It is far away to be enough. Although the diploma itself contains a series of information that will determine the point of view of employer without having a direct connection with the profession itself, such as the rating of the university or its name, a diploma, even from a well known university does not guarantee performance, and this determines the employer to apply other selection methods including psychometric tests and so on.

Still, here we can identify a false direction, falling in the same trap of confusion between education and intelligence. As we mentioned the modern society awards greater focus on result, on one hand and merit on the other hand. The result has an importance only in that field of activity, rarely with a connection to the society welfare.

II. Meritocracy and civil service performance

Several older or newer studies (Weber, 1947, Young, 1958, 9-12, Davis, 2006, Dench, 2006) establish and determine a direct and complex connection between meritocracy and civil service development. The perspective of the present study obliges us to underline one of the most eloquent contributions to the study of meritocracy in the general framework of bureaucracy. Weber (1947) identified seven factors that govern a bureaucratic organization: rules, specialization, meritocracy, leadership, separate ownership, impersonality and accountability. These preoccupations and many others lead us to the conclusions that for public sector, meritocracy is an important and actual subject. Still we have to take into account a number of factors concerning the specificity of civil service, the legal nature of civil service, fundamental different from the contractual one.

Traditionally the term civil service has as dominant characteristic, the French expression “*fonction publique*” and the British one “*civil service*”. The two terms are far to be identically, being the expression of concepts totally opposed, the French one evokes the state philosophy and the British the liberal one (Iorgovan, 2001, 547).

Permanent debate over the subject, who is and who is not a civil servant, where appears the difference between a state employee and a civil servant, have enriched the jurisprudence in the last decades. But those have been determined by objective factors such as the numerous situations in which civil service interferes as well as the necessity to adapt the administrative system to the permanent changes needs of the society.

Unequivocal delimitation of legal system unilateral system of public law and the differentiation of staff by citizens of public power have divided Europe concerning civil service. In this case we have two main trends. The first one, in which we can find France, Belgium and Netherlands etc. mainly, brings under the incidence of common law all the category of permanent employees of the state. The second, in which we can find Germany and Denmark, there is a clear difference between the officials under unilateral legal system and the employees acting under the contractual legal system. Thus only the

officials can undertake activities that suppose exercising public power prerogatives. A different case is the one of Great Britain where the difference appears in a different light, related to the rules of common law, fundamental different from the one in the French system.

Concerning Romania, the terms public of authority, public power are for a long period associated with the one of civil servant and civil service. Also, the definition of civil servant is strongly linked with these concepts being a constant of public law doctrine. In this perspective, Negulescu (1934,52) defines civil servant as being “the complex of power and competencies, organized by the law in order to meet a general interest, with the purpose to be occupied, temporally, by a person exercising powers in the limit of competencies, in view of accomplish the purpose for which the position has been created.”

The conceptions concerning the term of civil servant have evolved in the direction of establishing to what extend we can talk about a special legal system for state employee.

Regarding the existence of meritocracy in the civil service system, there is a series of arguments that can be debated. There is a series of aspects that, at least from legal point of view are based on merit for promotion in civil service.

The basis for the promotion in civil service represents the evaluation of civil servant performance. As a rule, general framework for civil servant evaluation, is established through an evaluation methodology, created with the purpose to form a professional body of civil servants. Consequently we aim several objectives such as: a) the objective correlation between civil servant career and the requirements of civil service; b) objective appreciation of professional performance of civil servant; c) acquiring a motivational system through a reward system for civil servants who have obtained special results in their activity; d) identification of the need for training for civil servants in order to improve the results of the accomplished activity.

In his career, a civil servant can promote in civil service according to the law. Promotion in professional rank and on salary scale is not conditioned by the existence of a free job. The promotion is made by exams, organized annually through the transformation of that job.

Concerning accession in management civil service position the conditions established by the law encompass meritocratic aspects stipulating the requirements to be a graduate of master program or postgraduated program in the field of public administration, management or in the specialty of the study necessary to exercise the civil service.

To what extend we can identify the direct link between promotion in rank and the increase of professional competence? Several times the establishment of objectives and the evaluation criteria take less into account the real performance of the civil servant and these reasons are independent from the will of hierarchic supervisor.

Moreover promotion exclusively on the basis of merit does not represent the guarantee of a perfect administrative act. Let's not forget that France has been considered as the ideal model of meritocracy in public administration. Those having the higher positions in public administration are usually graduates of the famous education systems from ENA. A very high level of professionally training represents a condition in order to obtain a high ranking public position. Theoretical this fact represents a guarantee of

competence and a proper public administration. The experience has proved that efficiency of several public administrations has lost in excessive bureaucracy.

III. Civil service in Central and Eastern European states.

The Central and Eastern European states, recently members or in the process of becoming members of the European Union, develop reforming programs for civil service as a part of the public administration reform.

Adopting statutes for civil servants represents a necessary stage in order to achieve the civil reform. In the same time the reform civil servant reform put an emphasis on the following values: efficiency, responsibility, honesty, integrity and dynamics. For Central and Eastern European states civil service reform has different forms. All those states have as common preoccupation the improvement of professional performance of civil servants, assuring an active interface with the citizen.

In the centre of those preoccupations, the meritocratic approach of civil service occurs consistently aiming operationality of national civil service systems based upon merit, independence and political impartiality and professionalism. Numerous studies (Meyer-Sahling, 2008; Agh, 2003; Matei and Lazar, 2009), reveal the characteristics and the specificity of civil service evolution to the European values of Administrative European Space. Central and Eastern European states, had to “Europeanize” their civil service to create “accession capacities” and to adopt the legislation on civil service according to the requirements of the European legislation and to the jurisprudence of European Court of Justice (Demmke, 2004, 51; Matei and Lazar, 2009,2).

III.1 Legal framework of civil servant

Following the ideas and logic from Matei and Lazar (2009), in the present study we will refer to some Central and Eastern European states, members of the European Union (Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland) and acceding states (Serbia, Moldavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia). Their accomplish in which concerning the regulation of civil service evoke the preoccupation of the states to adopt and implement specific laws and statutes, the normative framework deriving from the constitutional provisions of the respective states.

Table no. 1 The civil service regulation in some states in Central and Eastern Europe

| No. | State | Legislation |
|-----|-----------------------|---|
| 1 | Hungary | Civil Servants Law of 1992 (separate law covering public servants), Code of Ethics for Civil Servants |
| 2 | Lithuania | Civil Service Law (law on "public service"), July 1999; Code on Professional Ethics and Conduct for Public Servants |
| 3 | Estonia | Civil Service Law of 1995, Public Service Code of Ethics of 1999. |
| 4 | Romania | Constitution of 1991 (revised in 2003), Civil Servants Law of 1999, Deontological Code for Civil Servants of 2004. |
| 5 | Bulgaria | Civil Service Law of 1999, Civil Servant's Code of Conduct, December 2000. |
| 6 | Poland | Constitution of the Republic of Poland 1997, Civil Service Act, December 1999; and Public Service Act, Code of Civil Service Ethics 2002. |
| 7 | Serbia | Civil Servants Law of 2005, Code of Ethics for Civil Servants. |
| 8 | Republic of Moldova | Constitution of Republic of Moldavia of 1994, Public Service Law no. 443- XIII, May 1995, Law on the civil service and the statute of the public servant 2009, the Code of Conduct of the civil servant 2008. |
| 9 | Bosnia Herzegovina – | Civil Service Law in the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 2002, Code of Ethics for Civil Servants. |
| 10 | Republic of Macedonia | Civil Servants Law of 2000, Codes of Ethics for Civil Servants of |

Source: Matei and Lazar, 2009, p5.

Studies from the period of 2000's (Verheijen, 1999, Gaetz, 2001) have underlined the lack of significant progresses in order to create a career public service. Except Hungary that adopted the appropriate legislation in 1992 and of the Baltic Republics, that adopt a new legislation in the middle of 1990's in the other states, "the adoption of legal frameworks for regulating civil services been achieved in a longer period of time than the estimated period". (Goetz, 2001, 1036). Poland had adopted a law on civil servant in 1996 and, due to some problems concerning de implementation a new Act was in force since 1999. In the same way, Romania and Bulgaria, adopted their laws on civil service in 1999.

III.2 Meritocratic aspects in recruitment and career of civil servant

The public servants are recruited for a certain position or public office, but can stand as candidates for any other vacant position in the public sector, if the candidate fulfils the

required conditions provided by the job description or the vacant civil service and the candidate takes the responsibility of fulfilling specific attributions.

In **Hungary**, the recruitment conditions vary according to employee status. They are defined in the laws governing the status of each group. In most cases, the positions must be advertised and recruitment should take place following a competition procedure. The recruitment system is decentralized and each ministry or department defines its needs and selects its staff. Hungary's senior civil servants are subject to special provisions with respect to salaries and leave. Furthermore, they are required to declare all their ownership interests.

In **Lithuania**, the conditions to enter the civil service are related to citizenship, age (between 18 and 65), education (level depending in the position required) and language proficiency. The procedure of recruitment in civil service depends on what position the person is recruited. Each department or institution organises the recruitment in compliance with the provisions of the civil service law and the procedure for organising civil service competitive exams. The examination consists of two parts: a written exam and an interview. Their goal is to control the candidates' ability to fulfil the functions required as part of the position applied for. The procedure of recruitment for positions of civil servants of political confidence is not regulated – the entire procedure covers only the adoption of a recruitment order by the person recruiting civil servant. There is no specific senior civil service status. But there are some special provisions for the heads of the institution and civil servants of 18-20 categories (the highest categories). These civil servants are recruited through competition on the basis of political (personal) confidence.

In **Estonia**, the recruitment is not based on competitive exams, but is performed at a decentralised level within each ministry or administrative office through interview and according to needs. There is however an exception for senior State civil servants, who are recruited, promoted and assessed by the "Committee for the Recruitment and Assessment of Senior State Civil Servants" In 2004, special status was granted to senior civil servants. It applies to central administration secretary-generals, assistant secretary-generals in ministries, director-generals of agencies and county governors. The law stipulates that senior civil servants of the State civil service must be recruited after taking open competitive exams. The criteria and selection methods are defined by the recruiting department. Senior civil servants are also assessed on their skills. Public sector employees are entitled to remuneration, specifically based on seniority, qualifications and number of languages spoken.

In **Romania**, Section I of chapter VI of the revised 1999 Law defines civil servant recruitment conditions. It stipulates general requirements in terms of language proficiency, nationality and qualifications. Civil servants are selected by: the Contest Commission for senior civil servants; the National Agency of Civil Servants for management positions (except for office manager and department manager positions); each administration, on a decentralised basis, for "execution positions" and office manager and department manager positions. Recruitment must be through an open and transparent contest procedure and based on candidates' skills. There is a special law on the recruitment, appraisal and mobility of high-ranking civil servants.

In **Bulgaria**, citizens of age with a blank criminal record may enter the Bulgarian civil service. There are no centralised administrative competitive exams for recruitment

purposes. About 80% of contractual hires and 35% of civil servants are recruited openly by the appointment of an applicant. The civil service law stipulates that a competition procedure must be followed for all assignments exceeding 6 months. The civil service law defines all the positions within the Senior Civil Service (Secretary-General, Director, etc.). There are no exceptional recruitment procedures for these positions. Senior civil servants are recruited through a competition procedure, as for other public employees. For some senior civil servants, a recruitment committee appointed by the Council of Ministers carries out the recruitment process. Officials with a position in senior administration for the first time in their career must follow a mandatory training course.

In **Poland**, the general-law rules for recruiting staff are openness, transparency and competitiveness. The process of recruitment is decentralised – organised in details by relevant Directors General. Employees to fill high-ranking state positions are appointed from the State Staffing Pool. Some of these obligations are stipulated in the law and in ethics code of 11 October 2002.

In **Serbia**, a person who has prescribed professional qualifications and fulfils other requirements prescribed by law, other legislation or Regulation on internal organization and systematization of job positions may be employed as a civil servant. For each individual case a concourse commission shall be appointed by the High Civil Service Council amongst its members and experts for certain fields, from whom one member can be a civil servant from the state authority in which the appointed position is being occupied. A civil servant shall be promoted by transfer to a directly higher-ranking executive job position or by appointment to the appointed position or higher-ranking appointed position in the same or other state authority. A directly higher-ranking executive job position shall be the job position which tasks are performed under directly higher rank or within the same rank but on the job position of the Manager of the internal unit in the state authority. A civil servant may be promoted by transfer to higher pay scale without changing the job position in accordance with law that regulates the pay system in state authorities.

In the Law on civil service and the statute of the public servant from the **Republic of Moldova**, Chapter V, article 27 of the law defines civil servant recruitment conditions. It stipulates general requirements in terms of language proficiency, nationality, studies and qualifications. Filling the vacant civil service is done through: a) competitive examination; b) promotion; c) transfer. The competitive examination is organized, under the law, by a specialized commission for filling the position through competition. High level public servants in management positions execute the superior level management within public authorities. This category includes the persons appointed to one of the following superior level management public functions: a) manager and deputy manager of the Government Apparatus; b) vice-minister; c) deputy manager of the administrative authority; d) manager and deputy manager of the public authority apparatus (Parliament, President of the Republic of Moldova, Superior Magistrates' Council, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court of Justice, General Prosecutor's Office, Court of Accounts). The filling of the vacant higher level management public function is performed by means of competition. In order to fill a high level management public function, the person must cumulatively fulfil several requirements: studies, seniority.

In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** the recruitment and promotion of the professional career of a Civil servant is based on public competition and professional abilities. Chapter IV of

Law defines civil servant recruitment conditions. It stipulates general requirements in terms of language proficiency, age, nationality and qualifications. The Agency of Civil Service shall appoint specific selection committees that are impartial at administrating the public open competitions. The open competition shall include: a) a general exam; b) a specialized exam.

In **Macedonia**, the article 9 of law on civil servants defines civil servant recruitment conditions. It stipulates general requirements in terms of language proficiency, age, nationality and qualifications.

Referring to the civil servant career (table III.2) in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the Republic of Moldova we find the career system, according to which a public servant will successively fulfill positions in the administrative hierarchy of public function, in the conditions of guaranteeing the bearer's stability in public positions and functions. For Lithuania, Poland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia, the career system is combined with the one focused on the position structure, and in Estonia we find once again the position system.

| No. | Country | Career system | Recruitment methods |
|-----|---|----------------|---|
| 1 | Hungary Romania Bulgaria Republic of Moldova | Career-based | - Personnel selection through competition/exam; - Promotion; - Redistribution; - Transfer. |
| 2 | Lithuania Poland Bosnia- Herzegovina Serbia Republic of Macedonia | Hybrid | - Personnel selection with or without organizing a competition/exam. |
| 3 | Estonia | Position-based | - Open application procedures are required by the law for recruitment. |

Source: Matei and Lazar, 2009, p.12

In Hungary, moving up to a different level depends on seniority and merit. Movement to a higher grade is possible if civil servants meet the conditions set by their supervisor, pass the exam as required by law and if they are deemed to be apt. In Lithuania, an annual performance assessment appraises the performance of the civil servants. A very good assessment can accelerate promotion and an unsatisfactory one may lead to the civil servant being downgraded or even dismissed (after two unsatisfactory assessments). There is a career-based system in Estonia. Promotion therefore involves changing position. Supervisors recommend employees for appointment to a higher vacant position. An assessment committee then validates the promotion. In Romania, the career civil servants are not entitled to automatic promotion. Promotion to a vacant higher position is achieved by passing a test or competitive exam. Advancement is not automatic, but based on merit. In Bulgaria, after accumulating certain official practice the civil servant shall have the right to promotion in the civil service. The promotion in the civil service shall be implemented through subsequent passing to higher rank or position. In Poland the advancement is not automatic, but based on merit. In Serbia, the

promotion of a civil servant shall depend on his or her professionalism, working results and needs of a state authority. In the Republic of Moldova, the promotion of the public servant to a superior public function is performed on the basis of merits.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the promotion of a civil servant to a higher working position within the same or a different institution shall exclusively take place through public open recruitment. The promotion of a civil servant to a higher category shall be based upon positive performance appraisals and shall be decided upon by the appointing authority. In Republic on Macedonia the promotion is based on merit.

IV. Meritocratic evaluation of civil servant. An empiric study.

The empiric study presented below represent the result of a social investigation made in February – March 2009. On a sample of 540 civil servants and public employees from local and central public administration and other public sectors such as education.

IV.I Weberian Scale

The use so called Weberian Scale a instrument for analyzing the quality of bureaucracy and the application of meritocratic principles that we have already mentioned above. The conception belongs to Evans and Rauch (1999) and it is based on the principles of bureaucracy formulated by Weber (1968).

The Weberian Scale (WS 1) was created from 10 items in the original questionnaire. The item (with fixed response alternatives abbreviated) are shown below. The full questionnaire and the recording used in compiling the scale are available at www.weber.ucsd.edu/~jrauch/website

The individual response to the 10 questions (except question 9) were aggregated to create a country-data level set, in which each country's score was the average of the responses of all experts answering each question for that country. (Country ratings on question 9 were based on the investigator's assessment of combined country expert responses to two question regarding initiation and selectivity of civil service exams.) Country averages for each of the 10 questions were recoded into two or three categories in such a way as to obtain as equal distribution of countries over the categories as possible. The 10 questions were then combined to form a scale. (Evans and Rauch 1999, 761)

Starting with the structure of the Weberian scale of Evans and Rauch (1999), in Annex 1 presents the adapted structure according with the present issue of meritocratic promotion situation, generated by the economic crisis. Other instruments for analyzing meritocracy in the civil service systems are based on statistical analyses that use as independent variables exactly the meritocratic data which characterize the corps of civil servants at a given moment. As examples it is worth to study Matei and Matei (2008), Krauze and Slonczynski (1985)

IV.2 Empirical results

The results that are presented below could represent empirical bases to deepen more general topics such as meritocracy and its use in the public sector. Among this we can mention that meritocratic recruitment is based on a combination between education and checking of knowledge, how the principles of meritocratic recruitment, career and

mechanisms for rewarding are supported by legislative reforms, the institutional system supporting the public career system.

IV.2.1. Supporting the public policy making process.

Distribution of answers to WS 1 are presented in table IV.1

Table IV.1

| Answering option | Weight % |
|--|----------|
| 1. Numerous new politics are created by these. | 36.0 |
| 2. Some new policies originate inside them | 37.3 |
| 3. They rarely originate new policies | 25.4 |
| 4. NA | 1.3 |

The answers prove the existence in proportion almost equal weights of same divergent practices concerning the *implication* of civil servants in policy making process. In Romania the reform strategy for public administration has, as important pillar, the one concerning public policies. Therefore the empiric study does not underline very good results from this perspective. The situation is changing when we evaluate the importance of exam in the access to the body of civil servants. With some small uncertainty over 90 % from the respondents consider these issues important. As a result, we identify completely different attitudes when we analyze the category of high civil servants or beginners.

IV.2.2. Recruitment and career of civil servant

In order to emphasis the quantitative results from this perspective, we used several items of social investigation

Item WS2

Table IV.2 Distribution of answers to item WS 2

| Option of answering | Percentage % |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. Less then 30 % | 39.5 |
| 2. 30 – 60% | 21.9 |
| 3. 60 – 90% | 23.0 |
| 4. Over 90% | 15.4 |
| 5. NA | 0.2 |

Item WS 3

Table IV.3 Distribution of answers to item WS 3

| Option of answering | Percentage % |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. 1 – 5 years | 24.3 |
| 2. 5 – 10 years | 34.7 |
| 3. 10 – 20 years | 28.8 |
| 4. Whole career | 11.5 |
| 5. NA | 0.7 |

Item WS 4

Table IV.4 Distribution of answers from the perspective of promotion

| | Distribution of answers % | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|-----|
| | No | Yes | NA |
| In most cases will move up one or two levels; | 64.0 | 35.6 | 0.4 |
| In most cases will move up three or four levels; | 68.8 | 30.8 | 0.4 |
| Will move up several levels to the level just below top political appointees; | 71.8 | 27.8 | 0.4 |
| In at least a few cases, will move up to the very top. | 77.7 | 21.9 | 0.4 |

Item WS 5

Table IV.5 Distribution of answers to item WS 5

| Option of answering | Percentage % |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Normal | 19.2 |
| 2. Frequent but not modal | 46.4 |
| 3. Unusual | 19.7 |
| 4. Almost never | 14.5 |
| 5. NA | 0.2 |

The item WS 2 underlines the access to management and top positions in bureaucratic hierarchy. We can notice that in majority of the cases the perception is that more than 50 % of civil servants access the top positions without respecting the principles of meritocracy. The situation determines a series of interpretations, the most common one takes into account political influence in promoting of civil servants.

Stability for high rank civil servants in local or central public administration is evaluated through item WS 3. We can notice that the percentage of high rank civil servants that want to become career civil servants is relative small (11.5%), most of them working in the public administration for a period not longer than 5-10 years. The average of this variable is 10.6 years showing that is no stability for high rank civil servant.

Item WS 4 evaluates the promotion perspectives from the position of beginners to the position of high civil servant. The most common opinion sustains the fact that most often, the promotion perspective is between 1 or 2 levels, decreasing for the other levels.

This fact is justified, on one hand by the pyramidal structures of public administration, and on the other hand, by low average of stability in civil service, underlined by WS 3.

The mobility of positions between public and private sector it is underlined by the results WS 5. These results reveal a situation mainly majoritary (approx. 65%) concerning combination of public and private activities. All four items can offer a concise image on the evolution of civil servant body in the context of civil service reform in Romania. The conclusions can be extended easily to all the other state analyzed in this paper.

IV.2.3. Motivation of civil servants.

The issue of motivation of civil servants and public employees is of a great actuality in Central and Eastern Europe. Aggravated by economic crisis, the motivation of civil servants does not seem to have a linear evolution in connection with the employee from private sector. This hypothesis, confirmed by the results of our research, leads us to extending the research towards corruption of civil servants.

The empirical dates obtained in analysis are as follows:

Item WS 6

Table IV.6 Estimation of the ratio between legal salaries of management or high ranking civil servant and the salaries of top management from private sector

| Option of answers | Predominance of the answers in total (%) | Cumulative decreasing frequencies (%) |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Less than 50% | 28.5 | 99.8 |
| 2. 50 – 80 % | 22.9 | 71.3 |
| 3. 80 – 90 % | 6.3 | 48.4 |
| 4. Comparable | 32.4 | 42.1 |
| 5. Higher | 9.7 | 9.7 |
| 6. NA | 0.2 | - |

Item WS 7

Table IV.7 Estimation of the ratio between salaries of high ranking civil servant and the salaries of top management from private sector

| Option of answers | Predominance of the answers in total (%) | Cumulative decreasing frequencies (%) |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Less than 50% | 31.5 | 99.1 |
| 2. 50 – 80 % | 17.0 | 67.6 |
| 3. 80 – 90 % | 6.7 | 50.6 |
| 4. Comparables | 19.9 | 43.9 |
| 5. Bigger | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| 6. NA | 0.9 | - |

Item WS 8

Table IV.8 Evolution of the report between legal income in public sector and legal income in private sector

| Option of answering | Predominance of the answers from total (%) |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Declined dramatically | 19.7 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 2. Declined slightly | 27.0 |
| 3. Maintained the same position | 26.4 |
| 4. Improved their position | 26.4 |
| 5. NA | 0.4 |

Item WS 9

Table IV.9 The importance of accession exam in the body of civil servant

| Option of answering | Predominance (%) |
|---|------------------|
| 1. No civil service exam or exams of trivial importance | 7.4 |
| 2. Ambiguous | 35.9 |
| 3. Civil service exams are an important component of entry to the bureaucracy | 56.6 |

The results from the table IV.6 – IV.8 lead us to the following conclusions:

- Salaries from the public sector, for top management and high ranking officials, are generally lower (57,7%) or comparable (32.4%);
- The above situation has the tendency to modify when we include the revenues from other sources, generally illegal. In this situation the incomes are lower (55.2%) or comparable (19.9%) and the percentage of higher incomes in the public sector increase significant.
- If we associate different categories of income to levels of administrative hierarchy, then we could make a difference between different ranks, of illegal advantages, of whom benefit especially those with high salaries.

The period of economic crisis is the main reason for the decrease the incomes in public sector (46.7%). More precisely it is about the effects of strategies of combating the crisis, based on reduction of public expenditure. (Tab. IV.8)

IV.2.4. The attractiveness of civil service

For Romania, and we consider that also for many states from Central and Eastern Europe, a career in civil service remains still unattractive or it does not represent a first option. As second option or related different circumstances, the preferences are major (67.3%).

The above conclusions are based on the results for the item WS 10 from the table IV.10

| Option of answering | Predominance (%) |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Best option | 6.5 |
| 2. Taking into account the circumstances, less | |
| 3. Taking into account the circumstances, more | 34.5 |
| 4. A second good option | 32.8 |
| NA | 0.6 |

V. Conclusions

The present paper can be concluded with two categories of conclusions. General conclusions with general applicability and special conclusions concerning the target group analyzed and the presented analysis.

Generally, taking into account the American perspective of DeSario(2003) we could underline the following:

- A series of characteristics of meritocratic system could find application in the administrative system. In order implement such a system, without affecting the principles of democracy, it is necessary to rethink the definition of merit.
- Measuring the level of individuals intelligence could not represent anything else then the establishment of a level of potential for that individual and could not be the same thing with the merit. The abilities prove only the capacity to fulfill different tasks of a certain complexity and nothing more. Moreover individuals IQ as we mentioned before, is under the influence of same external factors such as education, environment and exercise.
- If the retrospective model of meritocracy applies the theory in vacuum, ignoring the “social context” (DeSario, 2003, 508), it remains only a list of arguments pro meritocracy and nothing else. Any new theory has to take into account this context.
- Social condition in the context of meritocracy represents equal opportunities. Standard’s test for measuring the individual’s intelligence or the level of education are assimilated with merit, then this model of meritocracy starts with the assumption that every individual has equal opportunities in life. We cannot talk about a real meritocracy without equal access to education, training. Without embracing certain political doctrines, we could agree that “egalitarianism could be a precursor of a functional meritocracy”(DeSario, 2003, 508).
- The definition of merit may constitute in a complex equation comprising individual’s IQ, other elements such as education effort, proved efficiency, effectiveness and other elements. Modern society has enough meritocratic models applied in unequal measures, in private and public sector.
- The meritocratic model applied in the administrative state system, in which civil servants should be elected and promoted in different positions on the basis of merit, represents a desideratum hard to obtain, even at theoretical level.
- Defining public administration as the instrument used by politicians to apply their programs, we notice that a complete meritocratic system cannot be empowered. Being against any influence of politics in public administration, it is hard to imagine a system without any influence from politics. The politicians represent the essence of a democracy because they have been elected by the people and the administration is the instrument through which they apply the political program.

The conclusions concerning the meritocratic model promoted in public sector in countries from Central and Eastern Europe take into considerations the following issues:

- The legislative support has been achieve relatively recently, with little exception, in last decade and a half;
- The promotion of meritocratic principles does not result from the legislation analyzed, and the pattern in which these are framing is different;
- The culture of public organization concerning the affirmation of meritocracy is the process of being constituted. Therefore the political influence affect meritocratic aspect;
- Empirical data reveal conclusions supporting fragility of meritocratic systems in Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Annex 1

WS 1

Which of the following description best fits the role of public institution and authorities in the formulation of economic policy?

- (1) Numerous new politics are created by these.
- (2) Some new policies originate inside them
- (3) They rarely originate new policies

WS 2

Approximately what proportion of the top management civil servants and higher ranking officials enter de civil service via a formal examination system?

- (1) Less than 30%
- (2) 30 – 60 %
- (3) 60 – 90%
- (4) More than 90%

WS 3

What is roughly the modal number of years spent by a high ranking official in local or central administration during his career?

- (1) 1-5 years
- (2) 5-10 years
- (3) 10 – 20 years
- (4) Entire career

WS 4

What prospects for promotion can someone, reasonably, who enters in one public institution through a higher civil service examination at the beginning of his/her career? Assuming that there are at least six steps between entry level position and top management position, how would you characterize the possibilities for moving up in the institution.(Nota bene more than one may apply)

- (1) In most cases will move up one or two levels;
- (2) In most cases will move up three or four levels;
- (3) Will move up several levels to the level just below top political appointees;
- (4) In at least a few cases, will move up to the very top.

WS 5

How common is for top management civil servant to spend substantial proportions of their careers in the private sector, interspersing private and public sector activity?

- (1) Normal
- (2) Frequent but not modal
- (3) Unusual
- (4) Almost never

WS 6

How you estimate the salaries (and perquisites but not any illegal income) of top management civil servants relative to those of private sectors managers with roughly comparable training and responsibilities?

- (1) Less than 50%
- (2) 50 -80%
- (3) 80 – 90 %
- (4) Comparable
- (5) Higher

WS 7

If illegal income would be included what will be the proportion?

- (1) Less than 50%
- (2) 50 -80%
- (3) 80 – 90 %
- (4) Comparable
- (5) Higher

WS 8

Over the period in question (1999 – 2009) what was the movement of legal income in public sector relative to private sector?

- (1) Declined dramatically
- (2) Declined slightly
- (3) Maintained the same position
- (4) Improved their position

WS 9

The exams in order to enter in the civil service body are important in different measures relative to the political and legislative context. How do you appreciate present position?

- (1) No civil service exam or exams of trivial importance
- (2) Ambiguous
- (3) Civil service exams are an important component of entry to the bureaucracy

WS 10

Among graduates of country's most elite university is a public sector career considered?

- (1) The best possible option
- (2) Depends on the circumstance, less
- (3) Depends on the circumstance, more
- (4) A second best option

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