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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

**(Country report prepared for the intellectual output 01 – Assessment of
methodology and materials of public administration teaching and its
relevance for practice)**

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CONTENT

1. Introduction.....	3
2. National educational system and PA education and training	4
2.1 Public administration as a discipline in the Republic of Bulgaria	4
2.2 PA education and its specifics	7
2.3 Requirements on entrance to civil service and on in-service training	10
2.4 Summary.....	12
3. Evaluation and accreditation system and PA study programmes.....	13
3.1 Existing evaluation and accreditation system and PA study programmes	13
3.2 External quality assurance and PA study programmes	15
3.3 Internal quality assurance framework	22
3.4 Anticipated changes	23
3.5 Summary.....	25
4. Existing PA study programmes.....	27
4.1 Data, methods and limitations	27
4.2 Existing PA study programmes	27
4.3 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON PA STUDY PROGRAMMES.....	29
4.4 Summary.....	30
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS, POINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS, CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE	31
5.1 Concluding remarks.....	31
5.2 Points and recommendations for practitioners	32
5.3 Challenges for future.....	32
6. REFERENCES	34

1. INTRODUCTION

The PAQUALITY project aims to support changes in public administration (PA) education in conformity with Bologna objectives, mainly:

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research, which haven't been fully applied in the public administration high education in Slovakia and the new EU states yet.

High education public administration programs vary a lot especially in the Central and Eastern European member countries of the EU - in the new EU member states (NMS). From this perspective it is highly relevant to facilitate quality assurance mechanism which would ensure not only comparable quality of education processes but also comparable outcomes of the education (e.g. quality of graduates, their knowledge, skills and experience) in these countries.

In addition, the project aims at tackling skills gaps and mismatches in public administration high education through designing and developing curricula that meet the learning needs of students that are relevant to the labor market and societal needs, including through better use of open and on-line, work based, multi - disciplinary learning and new quality assessment criteria. Simultaneously, with a view of this priority, promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development, training of academics in new and innovative pedagogical approaches, new curriculum design approaches and sharing of good practices through collaborative platforms will be in the center of the project.

This report on the Republic of Bulgaria represents an input for the intellectual output 01 of the PAQUALITY project. Within this intellectual output country studies developed based on guidelines and surveys are anticipated. The studies will be used in other project phases but also for mutual information of the project partners at the beginning of the project.

This research is focused on the conceptual vision of the national education system related to public administration training in accordance with the legal framework, the accreditation system and the established practices in the autonomous Bulgarian higher education institutions.

This report summarizes findings on:

- the national educational system related to present state of PA education;
- the system of evaluation and accreditation;
- PA programmes existing in the country – the subject of research are the programmes titled as „Public administration“ (PA) and other relevant programmes, which are quite close to public administration and public services;
- relevance to practice based on research among alumni and civil servants / employers.

It is based on data available as of March 2019. The report was finished in November 2019 based on feedback received within the project.

2. NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND PA EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS A DISCIPLINE IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

Training of specialists in various public administration programmes occupies an important place in the higher education system in the Republic of Bulgaria. The significance of this type of training is determined by the specialized needs of staff in the sphere of management and public administration, which arise in Bulgaria after 1990¹. For a short period of time the major "Public Administration" was introduced in the Bulgarian higher schools and won recognition as one of the preferred majors. It intrigues students because they want to acquire knowledge and skills for the organization and functioning of the new Bulgarian public administration which has been reforming itself at that time and further find work and realization in its structures.

For this reason training in various Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in Public Administration was introduced in a large part of the higher education institutions, respectively²: at Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" (since 1991), at Dimitar Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov (since 1993), at the New Bulgarian University (since 1993), at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (since 1997), at the University of National and World Economy - Sofia (since 1998), etc.

The characteristics of the public administration as a university discipline cannot be isolated from the specifics of the environment in which the modern public administration in Bulgaria operates. In recent years, the public sector in Bulgaria faces number of challenges, which can generally be presented in the following way:

- Reducing the cost of implementing public policies because of the observed fiscal constraints, as there is a rising demand for public services and state support;
- Increasing the expectations of citizens towards the institutions related to ensuring more public control over their activities and higher quality of public services provided;
- Bulgarians becoming less satisfied by their quality and way of life and the ability of the administration to coordinate and direct public efforts to ensure a favorable business environment and socio-economic progress;
- Guaranteed respect for the principles of good management.

In the context of these challenges, basic requirements for public administration in Bulgaria can be outlined:

- Increasing the efficiency of the institutions;
- Developing an optimal institutional environment;
- Effective use of limited resources to provide quality public services;
- Identifying and defining problems in society early on and providing solutions;
- Adapting the structures of government to the dynamically changing necessities of citizens and businesses;
- Adequate reporting to match the interests of different groups of people.

There is a need for a flexible, creative, responsible and helpful administration, which can abandon the traditions of routine work and put citizens and businesses with respect to their needs and

¹ It marks the beginning of the democratic changes and the transition to a market economy in Bulgaria.

² According to the Summary Report of the Standing Committee on Economic Sciences and Management at the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, published in 2009, see: Arabadjisky N. Development and Prospects of the Public Administration Programmes in the Higher Schools of the Republic of Bulgaria, <http://eprints.nbu.bg/411/> (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

interests in the focus of its activity. To achieve the necessary balance is a difficult task which raises some questions about the possibilities of mobilizing the administrative potential, strengthening the administrative capacity and, of course, increasing the quality of public administration training in the country.

It is precisely these requirements that define the conceptual vision for the developing of Public Administration in Bulgaria as a university discipline, confirmed by the characteristics of the currently functioning programmes in this area, namely:

- to be developed a modern generation of administrators in the public area in Bulgaria, associated with the historical moment and the efforts of the Bulgarian nation for democratization, adequate integration into the European family and developing a civil society in the country;
- to be guaranteed the internationalization of training through relations with foreign partners;
- to be improved the quality of education through a real connection of teaching to the necessities of public practice;
- to be made a transition from student training to qualification and training of active administrators.

With regards to the present situation in PA education in Bulgaria (according to paragraphs 4 and 7 in the present research) the PA discipline is introduced by 14 state and private universities as Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes titled 'public administration'. The Bulgarian case shows that PA discipline is usually situated in faculties of: Administration and Management; Economics and Administration; Business and Management, but also in faculties of: Police; Law; Social sciences; Philosophy; Economics; Management; History and Law.

It should be underlined that the development of PA as a university speciality in Bulgaria is subordinated to the principle of the HEIs' academic autonomy, regulated in the acting Law on Higher Education³. In this sense, HEIs which offer PA training dispose of freedom to teach, freedom to conduct researches, freedom of training, freedom to collaborate with other academic institutions and scientific organizations in the country and abroad (see: paragraph 2.2.). All this, as well as the fact that PA in Bulgaria doesn't belong to the state regulated specialities, accounts the lack of explicit state standards in connection to the content of the PA curriculum.

That is why the state requirements about the structure and organization of PA education in Bulgaria come down to observing of legal requirements on realization of educational process, which is to be conducted according to standards for educational documentation, which should be developed for each speciality. The required documentation encompasses: qualification characteristic by educational and scientific degrees, curriculum and syllabuses for each of the disciplines (teaching subjects) within the curriculum. Essentially, during the programme accreditation procedure (see paragraph 3) the quality of the offered PA training in professional field Administration and Management (the PA discipline in Bulgaria is placed in this professional field, see: paragraph 2.2) is being evaluated based on the content of the educational documentation and its correspondence to the adopted standards and evaluation criteria. The evaluation is directed to quality check of the PA training in all offered forms of education in each educational-and-qualification and scientific degrees – Bachelor, Master and Doctor. Subject of evaluation in programme accreditation are the structure, the organization and the content of PA curriculum and syllabuses, as well as the profile and qualification of the academic staff, engaged with the teaching of necessary knowledge, skills and competences.

Of great significance in the process of validation of PA as a university discipline are the researches in this field based on which the improvements of the structure, organization and content of the speciality could be made. In this sense a primary research unit at PA domain in Bulgaria is the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). IPA was established in 2000 and functions under the Civil

³ Higher Education Act, SG. issue 112 of December 27, 1995, last updated. SG. issue 30 of 3 April 2018.

Servants Act. It serves as an institution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. In fulfilling its mission – to develop a modern, effective, citizen-oriented system of public administration, IPA works along three main streams: Training, Research and Consultancy. The focus is on the training activities, which are complemented and enriched by applied research and consultancy missions in the field of public administration. Some of the IPA's key functions include: playing a major role in the process of research, development, promotion and transfer of innovations and practices of "good governance" for modernizing the administration; increasing the capabilities of the administration to develop and implement projects in the framework of EU funds; providing assistance in implementing quality management systems in the administration; providing consultation services for better decision making in the public administration activities; formulating proposals for reforms and changes in the work of the public administration.

Despite the presence of IPA, as well as the availability of different national and international PA relevant researches, the HEIs stay autonomous to determine the content of the various PA training programs (in terms of qualification characteristics, curriculum and syllabuses), respectively with reference to the necessity of taking into consideration of the researches results in the educational content.

Nevertheless, the Bulgarian HEIs case shows that PA as a university discipline is determined by the uniqueness of public administration as a social science – closely connected to law, management, economics, sociology, psychology, the science for organizations, bureaucracy, etc. Thus, the PA university discipline in Bulgaria provides a balanced incorporation of the different elements of interdisciplinary public administration training, such as:

- Legal knowledge – based on courses: Fundamentals of Law, Administrative Law and Process, European Union Law, Constitutional Law, etc.
- Political knowledge - based on courses: Politics and Public Power, European Policies, etc.
- Managerial knowledge - based on courses: Introduction to Management, Introduction to Entrepreneurship, Fundamentals of Public Administration, Organization and Technology of Management, Psychology of Management, State Governance and Administration, Human Resource Management, Local Self-governance and Regional Development, Strategic Management in the Public Sector, Conflict Management, etc.
- Economic knowledge - based on courses: Globalization of Economy and Development, Economics of the Public Sector, Accounting of Budget-Funded Enterprises, Public Finance, Regional Economy, etc.

It deserves attention the fact, that if looking at PA as a discipline only, but not a speciality, variety of programmes in the country include it in their curricula, breaking the educational content of the course through the prism of their specific field. When delivered only as a separate subject, often PA is oriented towards delivering to students: *knowledge about* – the system of state organs and administration in the Republic of Bulgaria, general European institutions and their administration, instruments for quality management of the administrative activity; skills to – differentiate the complex of activities, though which is realized the function of "supporting the state authority", analysis of the general principals of euro integration, competencies between institution and administration, definition of skills and competencies for execution of the civil servant profession. Anyway, the content of PA as a separate discipline can vary of the programme it is part of, of its interdisciplinary connection to other subjects and of the subjective perspective of the tutor.

2.2 PA EDUCATION AND ITS SPECIFICS

At present, PA education in the Republic of Bulgaria is focused on the training of professionals for the needs of various public sector structures relevant to government bodies and the administrations that support them. In accordance with the current Law on Higher Education⁴ (active since 2005) and the European Credit Transfer System (adopted by the higher education schools in Bulgaria in 2004), the training can be carried out in the following higher education degrees:

- Educational-and-qualification degree Bachelor: In order to be awarded "a Professional Bachelor in ..." one needs not less than 180 credits for the duration of at least three years; and to be awarded Bachelor's degree one needs not less than 240 credits and at least 4 years of study.
- Educational-and-qualification degree Master: The award of the "Master in ..." depends of the fulfilment of different hypotheses – 1. One needs not less than 300 credits according to the curriculum for at least 5 years (for the state-regulated specialities); 2. Not less than 120 credits (after the graduation of a programme, awarded with "Professional Bachelor in ...") 3. not less than 60 credits (after the graduation of a programme, awarded with a Bachelor's degree).
- Educational-and-scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD): One is to be awarded with a PhD, after having obtained the Master's degree, after completing an independent research, determined by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

According to the law and the established in the country Classification of Higher Education Areas and Professional Fields⁵ the higher education institutions are given the opportunity to develop, accredit and introduce training programmes for students (Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral programmes) related to various professional fields. What is characteristic of the Bulgarian practice is that there is no separate professional field "Public Administration" that can prepare specialists for the needs of the Bulgarian public administration. In this respect the education in the field of public governance and administration is realized in the frameworks of the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, which is within the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences (a detailed review is provided in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report).

In this connection and according to the curricula, PA training is organized in the following modes of study - full-time, part-time and distance learning. PA education in the Bachelor's degree programmes provides broad-based training or specialized professional training for different majors. PA education in the Master's degree programmes provides in-depth fundamental training, combined with a career profile. We must note that in Bulgaria there are two types of PA Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes: programmes which are titled Public Administration and programmes which are quite close to Public Administration and Public services (both are the subject of further research and detailed review is provided in paragraph 7).

Because of the above-mentioned peculiarities of the educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria, in the country there are no doctoral programmes titled Public Administration, as far as the PA education in the educational-and-scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) is carried out under accredited doctoral programmes in the field of Administration and Management. For example, at Varna Free University there are 4 accredited doctoral programmes (within the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management): Social Governance; Industrial Organization and Management; Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production; Economics and

⁴ Higher Education Act, SG. issue 112 of December 27, 1995, last updated. SG. issue 30 of 3 April 2018.

⁵ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Classification of the higher education areas and professional areas, Cabinet Office Ordinance (Ordinance No 125 of 24.06.2002. <https://www.neaa.government.bg/normativna-baza/postanovlenija> (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

Management in Industry. The choice of a doctoral programme, in which students who develop PhD theses are going to be enrolled, depends on the subject of their PhD dissertation (in the meaning of the concrete PA research problem and its relevance). In most cases, the PA PhD students elaborate their dissertations within the doctoral programme Social Governance or doctoral programme Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production, but each case is discussed separately on a departmental level, depending on the specificity of the topic which is normally interdisciplinary. Namely the department council is the unit, which directs the enrolled PA PhD student to concrete doctoral programme, after hearing of 2 reviewers and discussion of their recommendations.

It is accepted in the Republic of Bulgaria, that the main criterion for the quality of the training is the degree of professional aptitude of the graduates, which of course implies constant adaptation of the training in accordance to the changes in the environment, i.e. knowledge, skills and competencies to provide the necessary professional, informational and technical level.

The overall attitude is, that the **Bachelor's degree programmes in PA** provide broad-profile fundamental **knowledge** about: the key concepts in the field of management and public administration; classical theories and contemporary trends in the development of European public administration and management; the structure, functions and characteristic features of modern public administration at territorial, national and supranational level; development of projects under the European programmes and funds; the national and European regulations in the field of public administration; the classic and modern management tools in public administration; principles, approaches and mechanisms for the implementation of e-government in public administration; the current requirements and standards in the making and getting through management and administrative paperwork, etc.

It is expected that during their Bachelor education the students acquire **skills** to: work and be able to make coordination in complex hierarchical administrative systems; work with citizens, groups of people, families, non-governmental organizations, social partners, etc.; analyze administrative processes; be able to understand the regulatory information system; find solutions to organizational and management problems independently; keep business records, have foreign language skills and IT skills.

Specific **personal competencies** that the Bachelor students need to develop are also in the focus of the attention, such as: personal efficiency and time management, entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership; independence and responsibility; communicativeness and emotional intelligence; continuous learning and improvement; flexibility, adaptability, facilitating change, etc., as well as professional competencies to collect, analyze and interpret relevant data in the field of administration and management, designed to solve problems; critical analysis of the influence of various factors in a complex social environment; expert assessment in the professional field; identifying priorities in everyday work; problem analysis of phenomena and processes in terms of social and ethical aspects that appear during my daily work; organization of document transfer and filing activities in the administration, etc.

This wide-range of knowledge, competence and skills during the Bachelor education is typical for the Republic of Bulgaria and possible to be achieved because of the fact that in the country, the duration of a Bachelor programme is 4 years (240 ECTS) credits, which in comparison to some Western European countries seems to be more intensive (ex.: often Bachelor of Arts qualification (which does not figure in the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria) varies between 120 to 160 credits, where sometimes they are even not marked ECTS credits⁶).

⁶ *Note by the authors:* It is important to highlight that, with regard to the fact of the European membership and the unite education market, where the issue of recognition of previous education and qualification often arises in two directions: recognition of the education of Bulgarian students by EU member countries and recognition of the previous education of foreign, incl. EU citizens by Bulgarian authorities and institutions, incl. educational ones.

All the above, presupposes that the **PA Master's degree programmes** in the country offer specialized and up-building managerial and administrative knowledge, skills and competences. That is why, when offered at the educational market, most of the programmes are directed to the wide audience, but specific target groups are managers, experts, career specialists in state and municipal institutions and the related fields, the non-governmental sector and international and European institutions. According to the normative framework in the country and the National Qualification Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria⁷, aligned to the European one, at level 7 – Master, the education is to provide in-depth scientific and theoretic, as well as specialized preparation, so that students acquire: knowledge, based on which they – develop capabilities for education with highest level of independence; can develop new ideas, including in unfamiliar circumstances and in wider, multidisciplinary aspect; get acquainted with scientific and research (R&D) activities and demonstrate skills for practicing it; develop adaptability under the conditions of social, economic and technological change. The training received must enable the masters to: hold positions corresponding to the degree; successfully participate in various forms of research, teaching, expert and other creative and management activities; be competitive in the European economy and the European Education Area.

The doctoral programmes accredited in the professional field Administration and Management build on the bachelor's and master's degree and are developed for prominent students or practitioners. A peculiarity of the PhD education of the Republic of Bulgaria is that, the PhD student works on a research problem by his own choice, but with recognized practical importance and actuality, which is one of the prerequisites for the enrollment. During the study an individual guidance and in depth theoretical and applied preparation is offered, so that the results of the PhD study represent an actual input to the practice. So that by offering training on research topics close to the issues of administration, is enhanced the training of highly qualified staff with an elite expertise in public administration based on proven scientific and applied scientific contributions to the theory and practice of social development.

Another highlight to be noticed is, that the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) facilitates mobility and internationalization of training, has notably led to increasing the recognition of the Bulgarian education system (but also specifically in Public Administration) and the competitiveness of Bulgarian students and graduates on the European and national labor markets, but also vice-versa. For example, the number of foreign PhD students at the professional field of Administration and Management of VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar”, has increased in the past 5 years.

In the recent years, the university education in Bulgaria pays a lot of attention to ensuring access for the students to a wide range of compulsory (internships and work placements) and recommended/elective (LLL courses, master classes, workshops, etc.) practical training courses and initiatives, with the purpose to enable the relation between training and practice. It should be taken into consideration that the same logic is applied towards the development of the curricula, incl. the curricula of PA programmes. According to the Ordinance on State Educational Requirements for the award of higher education in the educational-and-qualification levels Bachelor, Master and Specialist⁸, the training in each speciality should be conducted in compulsory, elective and facultative disciplines, where:

- The compulsory disciplines ensure fundamental preparation in the chosen by the student wide-profile speciality, placed in the corresponding professional field.
- The elective disciplines ensure the specific knowledge and competences in the speciality.
- The facultative disciplines give opportunity for acquiring knowledge and skills in diverse scientific areas in correspondence to the interests of the students.

⁷ National Qualification Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria, https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/LLL/_eqf/eqf_referencing_report_annex_bulgaria.pdf; https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/NQF_bg.pdf

⁸ Ministry of education, Ordinance on State Educational Requirements for the award of higher education in the educational-and-qualification levels Bachelor, Master and Specialist, https://www.mon.bg/upload/4240/nrdb_02_obr_kval_stepeni.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

It might be noted, that the principal of educational autonomy is applied not only to HEIs, but also ensures the students` freedom of choice in connection to their educational preparation and interests, respectively – professional realization opportunities, which arises from the condition of market economy.

The complex nature of the acquired knowledge, skills and competences allows a wide range of realization for the graduates – in all areas and levels of public administration, including at the highest levels of the management hierarchy.

It can be concluded that training in Public Administration in Bulgaria bears the marks of "modern" education. The curricula of the PA programmes are often developed with the view what is the practice of established universities from all over the world and what are the requirements that the employers put on the future graduates.

The overall objective is to put students in an environment that is demanding but also concerned about their professional realization - students are given the opportunity to work on their projects together with teachers who are committed to the contemporary requirements and achievements of the theory and practice of public administration, to meet visiting senior officials from the state management and administration, to go to internships and work placements that best meet their interests and ambitions which can be reflected in their project assignments, diploma works and dissertations.

2.3 REQUIREMENTS ON ENTRANCE TO CIVIL SERVICE AND ON IN-SERVICE TRAINING

In connection to the **professional realization of the PA graduates as civil servants in Bulgaria**, there are **specific regulations (basic requirements, formal exam required)** given mainly in the Administration Act and the Civil Service Act⁹.

The positions occupied by civil servants are defined in the Classification of administrative positions, which is approved by the Council of Ministers and published in the State Gazette. There are **basic requirements for occupying a particular position in the administration** (compulsory minimum level of education and professional experience or rank defined by law), as well as other additional requirements, which can be determined by the rules of procedure of the respective administration.

A person can be appointed a civil servant if he/she:

- is a Bulgarian citizen, a citizen of another member state of the European Union, of another country - a party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area or of the Swiss Confederation;
- has reached the age of majority;
- is not placed under guardianship;
- has not been convicted of an offence committed intentionally;
- is not deprived of the right to occupy a particular post;
- meets the minimum requirements for educational degree or professional experience as well as the specific requirements from the regulations for occupying the respective post.

It is compulsory to sit an exam before taking up the duty of a civil servant at the corresponding administration, unless otherwise specified by law, which seeks to guarantee competition between candidates based on professional qualities. The election procedure involves a centralized stage and a decentralized stage.

The centralized stage of the competition is organized by the IPA (as above mentioned in paragraph 2.1.: IPA – Institute of Public Administration) and is carried out through tests to determine the level

⁹ Civil Service Act SG, 67/27.07.1999, last updated SG 38/ 8.05.2018.

of general competencies and basic knowledge necessary for the position. When the position is for a managerial level, the centralized stage includes a test to determine the level of general competences and knowledge needed to hold managerial positions. When the candidates pass the test, the results are valid for a period of three years from the date of their announcement and the candidates cannot sit centralized tests more than twice a year.

The decentralized stage of the competition is held by a Commission consisting of three to seven members and determined by an order of the Appointing Authority. The Commission includes the immediate superior responsible, an employee or a person with legal education and a representative from the Human Resources Department. Representatives of the trade union of the civil servants from the respective administration, as well as external experts in the respective area can also be members of the Commission. The decentralized competition aims at determining the level of the specific competencies, professional and business qualities of the candidates needed to occupy the particular position. The only eligible candidates in the decentralized stage are candidates who have successfully passed the centralized stage. The Commission holds the competition as announced in advance (by an ordinance of the Council of Ministers), assessing the professional and business qualities of the candidates and ranking them first to third. The assessment of the Commission and the ranking of candidates are not subject to judicial review. Participants in the decentralized stage of the competition who are not ranked first may object to the appointing authority within 7 days of the publication of the ranking. In case the objection is justified, the Appointing Authority shall terminate the call for competition and schedule a new competition. The decision of the Appointing Authority is not subject to judicial review.

The in-service trainings are a key component of continuing education for public servants, where they could be trained and discuss their work with others in their peer group. Generally, public servants in Bulgaria are free to choose the best way for their professional training as: postgraduate programs; specialized programs and courses; tailor-made trainings according to the specific training needs of administrative units, etc. In this connection public servants could choose any educational institution where the needed qualification is provided.

However, there are **strict requirements on entrance in-service training of civil servants in Bulgaria** for career and professional development according to Civil Service Act¹⁰. The IPA is a national state institution providing centralized trainings for civil servants from all levels (central, regional and local) of public administration in Bulgaria. IPA offers qualification training programs and retraining programs in two core streams: Compulsory Training - for Career Development, and Specialized Training - for Professional Development.

Compulsory Training (orientation to civil service/management positions) aims to equip civil servants with the common administrative skills and leadership knowledge required for effective performance in the public service. This training is split into 2 core training programmes:

- Introduction to Civil Service Course (for newcomers in public administration);
- The Challenge of Managing (for employees appointed the first time to a managerial position).

Specialized Training (for professional development) includes a variety of specialized programs and courses across relevant fields and topics of interest for public officials. Senior civil servants are obliged to select one specific area for their professional development each year. In this training portfolio, IPA has 8 major training programmes covering approximately 100 training courses as follows: Efficient Leader and Management Practices; Public Policies; Law Making and Enforcement; EU Structural and Investment Funds; E-governance and Cybersecurity; Regional and Local Governance; Foreign Language Training; E-learning Modules.

¹⁰ See clauses 35a-35b of Civil Service Act SG, 67/27.07.1999, last updated SG 38/ 8.05.2018

2.4 SUMMARY

Based on the above text, the following summary can be made:

<p>2.1. Is PA education in your country specific for some reasons? If yes, why?</p>	<p>According to the law there is no specific professional field Public Administration that can prepare specialists for the needs of the Bulgarian public sector.</p> <p>The HEIs are given the opportunity to develop, accredit and introduce PA training programmes (Bachelor's, Master's, doctoral degree programmes) for students related to the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, which is within the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences.</p> <p>In this regard in Bulgaria there are only Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes titled Public Administration, but there are no doctoral programmes titled Public Administration.</p>
<p>2.2. Is PA a well-established own (inter-) discipline?</p>	<p>PA is a well-established own discipline in Bulgaria. It has been introduced in a large part of the higher education institutions since the 90s of the 20 Century till nowadays. PA discipline is introduced by 14 state and private universities as Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes titled 'public administration'.</p> <p>There are no strict state requirements about the content of PA curriculum. The structure and organization of PA education in Bulgaria comes down to observing of legal requirements on realization of educational process conducted according to educational documentation (qualification characteristic, curriculum and syllabuses) for each speciality/programme.</p> <p>The specifics of the environment in which the modern PA in Bulgaria operates determine the content of PA discipline – mostly connected with a balanced presentation of the different elements of interdisciplinary PA training, such as legal, political, managerial and economic knowledge.</p>
<p>2.3. Is any formal exam required for entrance to civil service? If yes, what are the requirements?</p>	<p>It is compulsory to sit an exam before taking up the duty of a civil servant. The procedure involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a centralized stage – carried out through tests to determine the level of general competencies and basic knowledge necessary for the position; • a decentralized stage – aims at determining the level of the specific competencies, professional and business qualities of the candidates needed to occupy the particular position.

3. EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

3.1 EXISTING EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

According to the Bulgarian law the state creates conditions for the **free development** of higher education, as well as conditions for access to higher education, **by organizing the activities of the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation**. The state authority in the Republic of Bulgaria for the implementation of the national policy in higher education is **the Minister of Education and Science**. The state exercises its functions in the management of the higher education through **the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers, which vote the Rules of Procedure of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency on a proposal of the Accreditation Council**.

The Higher Education Act regulates:

- a new approach of implementation of the procedures for programme accreditation of professional fields and for evaluation of projects for opening new professional fields;
- special approach of implementation of the procedures for evaluation of projects and programme accreditation of the majors from the regulated professions
- new expanded credentials of the Standing Committees by areas of higher education (SCAHE);
- establishment of new structures of NEAA for carrying out post-accreditation monitoring and control.

The **National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA)** is a statutory body for **evaluation, accreditation and monitoring of the quality** in higher education institutions and scientific organizations aiming at the enhancement of their teaching and research, as well as of their development as scientific, cultural, and innovative organizations. The Agency **monitors the ability of institutions, their main units and branches to provide good quality of education and scientific research through an internal quality assurance system**.

The Minister of Education makes proposals to the Council of Ministers, where such proposals as for the opening and transformation of higher education institutions, their basic units and branches, except for the opening of an institute and of a higher education institution abroad, shall be made **after a positive evaluation of the respective project by the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation**.

Types of accreditation

According to article 76 of the HE Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the accreditation is **institutional and programming** (accreditation of programmes)¹¹.

Program accreditation may be requested by the higher education institution upon receipt of institutional accreditation. This would mean that there is no option to accredit a PA programme in the country, if the HEI has not received an institutional accreditation. **It should be taken into consideration that according to the Classification of the higher education areas and professional areas¹² programmes are placed under professional fields and professional fields are placed under scientific areas**. As already clarified in paragraph 2, PA programmes are placed within professional

¹¹ See clauses 76 of HE Act SG, 60/1999, last updated SG 48/ 2004

¹² National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Classification of the higher education areas and professional areas, Ordinance No 125 of 24.06.2002., <https://www.neaa.government.bg/normativna-baza/postanovlenija> (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

field 3.7. Administration and Management and are part of higher education area 3. Social, business and legal sciences.

Institutional Accreditation:

1. is based on an evaluation of how the higher school fulfills its mission and goals as an organization;
2. is a result of the evaluation of the efficiency with which the higher education institution controls, maintains and enhances the quality of education in the offered areas of higher education and professional fields;
3. The assessment of institutional accreditation is aimed at checking the effectiveness of:
 - the internal system for assessing and maintaining the quality of education;
 - the procedures for approving, monitoring and updating curricula and programs;
 - the procedures for acting on and related to the results of program accreditation as well as other external independent audits;
 - the overall management and control of the evaluation processes in the higher school;
 - the management of the system for accumulation and transfer of credits;
 - managing cooperation with other higher schools and organizations;
 - maintenance, management and development of the facilities of the higher school;
 - the scientific and artistic activity of the academic staff and the participation of the trainees in this activity.

Programme Accreditation:

Program accreditation is based on the evaluation of the quality of the offered education in a particular professional field in a basic unit and/or a branch of a HEI, a specialty from the regulated professions or a doctoral program. Within the professional field, the evaluation is aimed at verifying the quality of the education of the students in all offered forms of education at the educational qualification levels and the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

The subject of evaluation in the program accreditation is:

1. the structure, organization and content of curricula and programs;
2. the profile and qualification of the teaching staff;
3. the material and technical provision of the training;
4. methods of teaching and assessing students' achievements;
5. quality management of education;
6. the research and artistic and creative activity of the academic staff and the participation of students and postgraduates in the academic staff.

Evaluation by institutional and programme accreditation

The evaluation for institutional and program accreditation is carried out on a 10-point system, including the assessments from 0 to 10.00. The evaluation for each evaluation criterion is formed as the arithmetic mean of the estimates obtained on all its indicators according to their coefficient.

For each criterion for institutional and program accreditation, the Accreditation Council of the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation validates indicators with weight coefficients. The "scientific activity" criterion has the greatest relative weight.

If a score of 0 to 3.99 is obtained, a refusal to accredit is made. Refusal of accreditation is also made in cases where, in institutional accreditation, the higher school has received an assessment of 0 to 3.99 per one or more of the following criteria:

1. an internal system for assessing and maintaining the quality of education;
2. profile and qualification of the teaching staff;
3. material and technical provision of the training.

A negative evaluation in program accreditation will receive professional fields with an evaluation of less than 4.00 per one or several of the following criteria:

1. educational documentation and educational process of the professional field or specialty of the regulated professions;
2. profile and qualification of the academic staff of the professional field or specialty of the regulated professions;
3. material and technical facilities specialized for training in the professional field or specialty of the regulated professions.

The period of validity of the accreditation is:

1. six years - when the score received is from 9.00 to 10.00;
2. five years - when the score obtained is from 7.00 to 8.99;
3. four years - when the score obtained is from 5.00 to 6.99;
4. three years - when the score received is from 4.00 to 4.99.

Higher schools with a program accreditation rating of 4.00 to 4.99 have the right to teach only a bachelor's degree in the respective professional field or specialty of the regulated professions.

Upon evaluation from the program accreditation from 5.00 to 10.00, higher education institutions have the right to acquire the bachelor's and master's degrees and to acquire the educational and scientific degree "doctor" under predefined by the law conditions.

PA programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria do not underlie any specific or separate procedures or criteria for quality assurance and accreditation. They underlie the unified regime, developed by NEAA.

3.2 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

As clarified in paragraph 3.1., specialized State Body for Assessment, Accreditation and Quality Control of the programme accreditation is the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation at the Council of Ministers. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency carries out also post-accreditation monitoring and control plans, in accordance with the procedure established by the Rules of Procedure of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency or on a proposal by the Minister of Education and Science to withdraw the accreditation.

NEAA was founded with the pursuance of art. 11, para. 1 of the Higher Education Act (HEA), passed by the National Assembly on December 27, 1995. With a Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 189 of August 1, 1996 of adopting a Statute of NEAA and defining the number of employees is constituted the subordinate legislative background of the agency. The first Accreditation Council started its work by the end of 1996.

Due to lack of experience in the area of higher education evaluation and accreditation in Bulgaria, the basic approach, adopted by the AC in the process of establishing the Agency and elaborating the required documentation, was studying the international experience and best practices, correlating them to the specifics, conditions and traditions of the Bulgarian higher education with the intention to find the best system suitable for the Bulgarian Education Area.

It is extremely important to be stated that the foundation of NEAA and its documentation owe much to the participation of NEAA in a PHARE-BG project 95.06-05.01.001 whose first phase "Feasibility study of Bulgarian higher schools' accreditation" had been implemented with the consultancy of the Quality Support Centre, Open University-London-QSC), long-term advisers William Callaway (November 1996 – May 1997) and Dr. Hue Glenville, while its second phase "National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency" lasted one year and was implemented by a team of the British Council led by Dr. D. Billing. Pilot accreditation procedures were carried out at some higher education institutions. Estimated from the perspective of the past decade, the role of this project for the development of

NEAA was great. Due to it NEAA was able in a very short term to adjust the evaluation and accreditation according to the European concepts for accomplishment of this process.

With the enforcement of the amendments of the Higher Education Act on June 4, 2004 some changes occurred in the evaluation and accreditation procedures of higher education institutions, imposing on NEAA the functions of a specialized governmental body for carrying out evaluation, accreditation and quality control in the activities of higher education institutions and carrying out post-accreditation monitoring and control – a new task in the activity of NEAA.

National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) is an independent statutory body (legal entity) with budget support. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency carries out its activities in compliance with the Higher Education Law and with regulations approved by the Council of Ministers.

Only NEAA can award institutional and programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria. Even if a programme (no matter if PA or other) was accredited by organization or institution different from NEAA, the education (and the diploma at the end) is not accepted as legitimate (and does not receive EU recognition respectively), if the programme is not accredited by NEAA. Also, the diplomas of foreign universities delivering programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are not recognized as legitimate, if they do not have received accreditation by NEAA.

The organs of NEAA are: President, Vice-President, Accreditation Council, Secretary General, Standing Committee on Post Accreditation Monitoring and Control, 8 Standing Committees in Higher Education Areas, as well as Specialized and General Administration. The Accreditation Council and Standing Committees in Higher Education Areas are main actors in accreditation procedures, including in the accreditation of PA programmes. The More detailed information about the structure of NEAA and description of the functions of its organs, which are not commented below, is to be found in section “Structure” on the NEAA web-site¹³.

The Accreditation Council

The Accreditation Council is responsible for the development criteria for evaluation and accreditation, as well as for the development of the specific evaluation and accreditation procedures and the documentation regarding them. Next to that it also:

- adopts decisions for opening of procedures;
- establishes standing committees by areas of higher education and expert teams to the standing committees and upon proposal of the standing committees approves the tasks and the members of the expert teams in accordance with the requested procedures;
- adopts decisions regarding opened procedures based on the reports by the standing committees;
- informs the Minister of Education and Science as well as the higher education institutions about the results of the evaluation and accreditation procedures;
- develops regulations for the activity of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency and through the Minister of Education and Science proposes the regulations for approval by the Council of Ministers.

The Accreditation Council to NEAA consists of 11 members – a chairman and 10 members – Professors and Associate Professors from different areas of higher education, one of whom is a Deputy Chairman on post-accreditation monitoring and control. The members of the Accreditation council are representatives of different academic and scientific institutions:

- Six representatives of higher schools;

¹³National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Structure and description of NEAA organs, <https://www.neaa.government.bg/en/about-us-3/structure> (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

- One representative of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and one representative of the Academy of Agrarian sciences;
- Two representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The members of the Accreditation Council are appointed by the Prime Minister on full-time labor agreements based on the proposals of the Minister of Education and Science, the Rectors' Conference, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Agrarian Sciences.

The term of office of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the Accreditation Council members is 6 years and they cannot be appointed for more than one term of office. One half of the Accreditation Council Members, except for the Chairman, is changed every three years from each quota.

Standing Committees by Areas of Higher Education - Structure and membership

The Standing Committees by areas of higher education and the Standing Committee on Post-Accreditation Monitoring and Control are formed by the Accreditation Council, which appoints their members through selection by applications. The Committees are comprised of 3 to 7 members, one of whom is Chairman of the Committee. The Chairman of the Accreditation Council appoints the members of the Committees for a three-year term.

The Standing Committees by areas of higher education are 8, even though the National Classification of Fields of Study in Higher Education includes 9 areas of higher education and 52 professional fields. The Standing Committees are 8 since for areas 8 and 9: "Arts" and "Military Science" a separate Committee wasn't established because of the small number of institutions and programmes in these two areas. On the contrary in area 3 "Social Science" the number of professional fields and majors is so big that it became necessary that two committees be responsible for them: The Standing Committee on Social Science, Law and National Security Studies and Standing Committee on Economic Sciences and Management.

The functions of the Standing Committees of the HE areas¹⁴ are the following:

1. Make the decision to start the requested accreditation procedure or for rejection to start the procedure for:
 - program accreditation of professional fields;
 - program accreditation of scientific majors, other than those included in the regulated professions list;
 - evaluation of a project for opening a professional field;
2. Propose to the Chairman of the Accreditation Council the membership and tasks of the Expert Teams.
3. Control the work of the Expert Teams and assign the supervision of the procedure to a member of the Standing Committee;
4. Consider the reports of the Expert Teams, submitted to the Committee, after their coordination with those supervising the procedure;
5. Make decisions based on the reports under item 4 about:
 - program accreditation of professional fields;
 - program accreditation of scientific majors, other than those included in the regulated professions list;
 - project evaluation for opening a professional field;
6. Prepare and submit to the Accreditation Council reports on the results of the evaluation carried out for the procedures of:
 - institutional accreditation;
 - program accreditation of majors from the regulated professions list;

¹⁴ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Standing Committees by areas of higher education, <https://www.neaa.government.bg/en/115-english/about-us/structure/284-standing-committees-by-areas-of-higher-education> (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

- program accreditation of scientific majors from the regulated professions list;
- project evaluation for opening a HE institution;
- project evaluation for transformation of a HE institution;
- project evaluation for opening of a primary unit and/or branch;
- project evaluation for opening of a major from the regulated professions list.

Standing Committee on Economic Sciences and Management

Public Administration programmes (no matter if they are addressing bachelor, master or PhD students) are placed within the professional field of Administration and Management and therefore are evaluated by the Standing Committee on Economic Sciences and Management. The SC on Economic Sciences and Management in charge of area of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Law Sciences.

In accordance with the National Classification of Fields of Study in Higher Education this area includes all majors of the following professional fields:

- 3.7. Administration and Management
- 3.8. Economics
- 3.9. Tourism

Procedure for selection of external evaluation experts

Each accreditation procedure is realized by Expert Teams. The procedure for attracting external evaluation experts into the Expert Teams, encompasses:

1. NEAA suggests to the higher schools and colleges in the country, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Union of scientists, the Agrarian Academy, the National Centre of Distance Learning, and the National Representation of the Student's Councils, the business, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce etc. that they nominate specialists for participation in the accreditation and evaluation procedures. Individuals, who meet the requirements, can also be appointed after sending their applications to the NEAA.
2. By its authorities, imposed by the Higher Education Act, the Accreditation Council to the NEAA forms a **bank of experts for external evaluation by selection of documents, which include:**
 - Experts from the Republic of Bulgaria;
 - Experts –representatives of the students and PhD students;
 - **International experts.**

It can be summarized that international bodies are not to participate in the accreditation process as such, but there is an opportunity that experts who are part of different professional or expert organizations can be invited to take part in a personal quality if they correspond to the requirements below:

The experts should meet the following **requirements:**

- Must be habilitated specialists;
- Must have experience in education, scientific and research (art creation) activities and in tutoring PhD students;
- Should be respected scientists and lecturers in the academic community;
- Should possess organizational and managerial skills in the management of the academic activity, in the creation and implementation of quality assurance systems; should participate in scientific councils;
- Should have sound knowledge of the normative regulations of the higher education and accreditation practice of the NEAA;

- Should know well the trends in the development of the higher education processes, scientific and research activities and quality assurance systems of the higher schools in the developed countries in Europe and the world;
 - Should be capable of working in a team, objective and reliable in terms of confidentiality;
 - Should have conceded in participating in evaluation procedures.
3. The Accreditation Council to the NEAA selects students and PhD students, nominated by the National Representation of the Students' Councils for participating in procedures as experts and collaborates closely with the higher schools. They should:
- Have good average grading from their studies up to present or fulfill well their individual tutorial programmes as PhD students;
 - Should have sound knowledge of the normative regulations of the higher education and NEAA;
 - Should know well the trends in the advance of the higher education processes in the developed countries in Europe and the world.
4. **International experts are attracted for participating in evaluation and accreditation procedures on the invitation by the Accreditation Council to the NEAA from:**
- **Equivalent to NEAA foreign national evaluation and accreditation agencies and organizations;**
 - **Academic managements of leading foreign universities;**
 - **Managements of international organizations and unions, the Republic of Bulgaria is a member of or participates in their activities.**
- Rules for the participation of foreign experts, members of expert groups for evaluation and accreditation procedures are to be found in the "methodological documents and procedures" Section on the NEAA web-site¹⁵.
5. Representatives of the business, leading managers of the relevant professional fields, managers of international companies, managers of human resources departments and representatives of branch chambers are also attracted to participate in certain accreditation and evaluation procedures.
6. The Accreditation Council to the NEAA work out general requirements for an expert's CV, which cover the whole necessary information and additional conditions, stipulated in items III and IV above.
7. The database about the external experts nominated by the Accreditation Council to the NEAA is at the disposal of the Standing committees. Each standing committee selects the most appropriate applicants, according to its needs and profile. These experts constitute the experts' bank of the SC, which is revised, supplemented and renewed at regular basis.
8. The council of the experts by scientific areas is announced on regular time periods of 3 years on the web page of the NEAA. X. The main rules of forming an expert team are as follows:
- The expert teams to the standing committees are temporary bodies.
 - The SC suggests on the membership of an expert team for each accreditation or evaluation procedure before the Accreditation Council to the NEAA, enclosing the Information card with the experts' data.
 - The membership of the expert team is approved by the Accreditation Council to the NEAA and it consists of 3 to 7 members, depending on the complexity of the procedure.

¹⁵ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Rules for the participation of foreign experts, members of expert groups for evaluation and accreditation procedures, https://www.neaa.government.bg/_images/OiA_metodicheski_doc/mg4.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

- When selecting the external experts for each procedure, the Accreditation Council applies the equal opportunity principle to specialists from different higher schools and scientific organizations.
- The head and members of the expert team sign contracts with the Chairman of the NEAA in compliance with the Law of obligations and contracts.
- The independence of the expert teams is guaranteed by the provisions of the Higher Education Act and the Statute of the activities of the NEAA for their nomination, appointment and function.

Accreditation procedure

The procedure for programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria has 4 stages¹⁶. The process is initiated by the HEI and its unit, which is responsible for the delivery of the education in the programme, which underlies accreditation. The accreditation stages are as follows:

1. **Self-evaluation and submission of a request for accreditation**
2. **Considering a request to start a procedure**
3. **Site visit to the institution under evaluation**
4. **Expert group report and decision**

Self-evaluation and submission of a request for accreditation.

The applicant shall submit a request for programme accreditation within the term under Art. 28, para. 1 of the NEAA Statute. The applicants are: The higher education institution (HEI); a scientific organization as stipulated by Art. 47, para 1 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and/ or The Minister of Education and Science.

Following the Criteria for program accreditation of a professional¹⁷ field of NEAA and the Methodological Guidelines for Drafting a Self-Evaluation Report¹⁸ the applicants submit to NEAA their self-evaluation reports.

Considering a request to start a procedure.

NEAA undertakes the following actions:

- *NEAA chairman*: sends the request to the respective Standing Committee (SC) by higher education area for deciding to start or refuse to start a procedure. The request contains:
 1. A filled-in request form.
 2. A self-evaluation report, including information pursuant to Art. 78, para. 3 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and on meeting the Agency criteria
 3. A report on implementing the obligatory recommendations of the Accreditation Council from the previous procedure and from procedures of post-accreditation monitoring and control.
 4. An excerpt from the Minutes of the Academic (Scientific) Council's decision concerning the receipt of the documentation under items 2 and 3.
 5. Structure of the HEI compliant with HEA.
- *The standing committee* makes a well-reasoned decision to start a procedure or to refuse to start a procedure. In case of a decision to start a procedure, the Standing Committee notifies the Chairman of the Accreditation Council and proposes the members and tasks of the Expert Group (EG) for approval.
- *NEAA's a chairman* informs the Accreditation Council about the decision of the Standing Committee. Informs the applicant about the decision - Submits a proposal about the EG members and tasks.
- *The accreditation council* shall approve the composition and tasks of the expert group.
- *NEAA's chairman* concludes contracts with EG members. If necessary, sends EG and SC members to visit the institutions under evaluation.

¹⁶ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Procedures for programme accreditation of professional fields and doctoral programmes other than those on the regulated professions list. Documentation for their implementation, https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/Criteria_EN/prozeduri_PNiDP_EN.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

¹⁷ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Criteria for program accreditation of a professional field / major of the regulated professions in accordance with ESG- part 1 (1-10) and pursuant to art. 78, para. 3 of HEA, https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/Criteria_EN/Kriterii_PN_SRP_EN.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

¹⁸ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Methodological guidelines for drafting a self-evaluation report for accreditation procedures, https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/OiA_metodicheski_doc/MethodologicalGuidelines_sefl_EN.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

Site visit to the institution under evaluation.

The expert pane systematizes and analyzes the submitted documents related to the procedure. If necessary, it requests additional information and evidence. Following the Methodological guidelines of NEAA¹⁹, the expert group visits the HEI and checks the credibility of the information included in the self-evaluation report, based on which prepares and submits a report on the completed review to the standing committee of the respective area. The standing committee provides the expert group`s report to the institution under evaluation for opinion under Art. 38, para 1 of NEAA Statute. The institution under evaluation has the right to submit its opinion to the Standing Committee in the respective area within a two-week period.

EG report and decision.

The standing committee becomes familiar with the EG report and A programme of the site visit The Report of the Expert group on the review, concerning the procedure, which shall be structured according to the adopted sample. An Opinion of the institution to the Standing Committee, pursuant to Art. 38, para.1 of the NEAA Statute Minutes of the meeting the HEI response, and if necessary, returns the documents to the EG for reconsideration. *The standing committee* gives an evaluation grade, pursuant to Art. 79, para 4 of the HEA and decides for accreditation of the professional field in question. It also might refuse accreditation. Therefore, the NEAA Chairman is being informed about the awarded evaluation grade and the decisions made. The chairmen of NEAA informs the institution about the SC decision; informs the Minister of Education and Science about the decision and issues an order for payment to the EG members. The NEAA administration updates the list of accredited professional fields and scientific specialties, stores the documents regarding the procedure in the Agency archives and publishes the evaluation and accreditation results on the Agency website: www.neaa.government.bg.

According to the accreditation requirements of NEAA, external quality assurance is cyclical, which is set in Standard 10 of the Criteria for program accreditation of a professional field / major of the regulated professions²⁰ in accordance with ESG. Institutions ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

3.3 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Internal quality assurance is part of the accreditation requirements of NEAA and is evaluated under Standard 1 of the criteria framework, therefore it can be concluded that each HEI and professional field (respectively the programmes in the professional field) are ensured with a minimum level of quality, set by the state. There are 2 criteria to be evaluated within the standard²⁰, which encompass the following content:

Criterion 1.1. When conducting training in the professional field / major of the regulated professions, HEI maintains and develops a quality assurance policy which is disclosed and is part of the HEI strategic management

1.1.1. HEI organizes training in the professional field in selected educational and qualification degrees and forms of education in accordance with its mission, goals and objectives.

1.1.2. The overall activity in the professional field / major of the regulated professions is subject to the institutional quality system, without neglecting their specificity. Ratio of the

¹⁹ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Methodological guidelines for the activities of the expert group on accreditation procedures of the national evaluation and accreditation agency, https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/OiA_metodicheski_doc/Methodological_guidelines_expgroup_EN.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

²⁰ National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Criteria for program accreditation of a professional field / major of the regulated professions in accordance with ESG- part 1 (1-10) and pursuant to art. 78, para. 3 of HEA, https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/Criteria_EN/Kriterii_PN_SRP_EN.pdf (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

number of the planned activities to the activities, realized by the CQAE during the last 5 years: internal audits for quality assessment and functioning of the respective training programmes.

1.1.3. HEI builds and implements a policy for realizing the relationship between research and training within the national and institutional context.

Criterion 1.2. Management of educational quality

1.2.1. There is a well-built organization to manage the quality of the educational process and the associated teaching activity. Trainings and seminars carried out to exchange experience in the quality assurance of the educational process in the professional field / major of the regulated professions.

1.2.2. The rules of the code of ethics to ensure academic unity, which guarantee academic freedoms, provided for in the HEA, and intolerance to all forms of discrimination, are applied. Rules and procedures to prevent and punish examination fraud and plagiarism have been adopted and published. Number of documented procedures to prevent discrimination manifestations; to punish examination fraud and plagiarism during the last 5 years.

Evidence to be provided in the self-evaluation report in completion of the criteria for internal quality assurance are the following:

1. The strategy for the development of the professional field / major of the regulated professions
2. Availability of standards and rules for periodic self-assessment and external evaluation
3. HEI legal documents, in which the quality assurance policies for the professional field / major of the regulated professions, have been developed.
4. Official web page, reflecting information on the functioning of the particular professional field / major of the regulated professions
5. Regulations, procedures, decisions, and other documents for internal quality assurance of the educational process in the respective professional field / major of the regulated professions
6. Annual plans and reports on the CQAE activities carried out: internal audits, compliance checks, prescriptions, evaluations of the activities of the teaching staff, development of the quality assurance and assessment system, operation of training programs, educational activities.
7. Code of Ethics of the academic unity adopted and approved composition of the committee. Annual activity reports of the ethics committee.
8. Annual plans, reports, published on the HEI website.
9. Minutes of trainings and seminars carried out for exchange of experiences in the operation of the quality assurance system in the professional field / major of the regulated professions
10. Documented procedures to prevent and punish examination fraud and plagiarism.

3.4 ANTICIPATED CHANGES

Background:

Up to 2016:

The HE system in the Republic of Bulgaria has four key sub-systems – HEIs management, accreditation, financing and the development of the academic staff. Changes in two of the sub-systems - financing and development of the academic staff, were made up to 2016 and a policy towards restructuring the admission at the universities and their financing have started. Up to date

the financing is distributed on basis of the quality and realization of students on the labor market are approximately 40%.

The admission in the professional field of “Administration and management” was decreased with 60% and in the professional field of “Economics” – with 50%, with the purpose to stimulate the admission in the priority professional fields – pedagogical, engineering, technical, agricultural, environmental sciences (i.e. STEM). The priority professional fields are the one that are considered to have a gap between these days demand and future necessities of the labor market. The admission in those priority areas is stimulated through the award of additional grants (scholarships) and through supplementary grants to HEIs.

Up to July 2018 the following directions of changes in the HE are commented in the public information space of the Republic of Bulgaria, based on statements of the Minister of education of the country:

- Improvements in the accreditation of the universities with the purpose that it is to be more effective, takes less time and allows rating of the HEIs in comparative plan what concerns the quality of education;
- The rating and complex evaluation of HEIs is going to be used more actively;
- There is a possibility that contracts for management are going to be concluded with the Rectors (to be implemented as a change in the HE Act), in connection with foreseen changes in the management of the HEIs. Those contracts intend to stimulate higher responsibility of the rectors towards the development of HEIs, but outside the HE Act there is a discussion on the necessity of general strategies for the development of the separate universities.
- Development of a strategy devoted to young lecturers, with the purpose to invest in them;
- Trend to enhance the inclusion of the Bulgarian HEIs in the European university networks, with the purpose that they become more recognizable;

Up to January – February 2019 the following directions of changes are commented in the public information space of the Republic of Bulgaria (expected to be announced through proposition of changes in the legislation in the spring of 2019):

- One lecturer can participate in the accreditation of only one HEI with the purpose to reduce the supply of the same programs at several universities. The changes are proposed in connection to the fragmentation and the fact that the same lecturers have the right and do work at several universities at the same time.
- The period of the programme accreditation is to be affected by changes. It is discussed that the programme accreditation is to be conducted on the same time for all professional fields, with the purpose of comparativeness. The expectation of the Minister of education is that the programme accreditation becomes the leading one and the institutional accreditation will depend on it. Several criteria will increase on importance – property, facility, profiles of the academic staff, internal quality assurance system. Changes are foreseen also what concerns the experts’ group to accomplish the accreditation. The intention is that professional education auditors is conducting it, as far as now academicians are the experts, participating at the expert groups. Nowadays there are no professional auditors and evaluators in the commissions, therefore the ministry will propose that at least one auditing professional is included.
- National map is to be developed, which will define the profile and the territorial structure of the HE in the country. In correspondence to it, new professional areas are to be opened at HEIs. The map will have the purpose to coordinate the strategies of HEIs in the Republic of Bulgaria. It is connected also to the moratorium for higher education, which will be introduced next to the expected changes in the HE Act and will contain three general limitations – establishment of new universities, transformation of colleges and opening of new specialities/programmes.

3.5 SUMMARY

Based on the above text, the following summary can be made:

<p>3.1 What is the general governance structure with regard to external quality assurance of higher education institutions? Is it the same or is it different for PA programmes?</p>	<p>HEIs underlie quality assurance by NEAA and by external auditing organizations (not assuring the quality of education, but the quality of overall processes in the HEI). PA programmes follow the general procedures of quality assurance and accreditation, respectively – do not underlie any specific regime.</p>
<p>3.2 Which are the main providers of programme accreditation? Is there a national body (regulator etc.), e.g. as an agency under control of the Ministry of Education, responsible for the regulation of accreditation? What is the status of relevant institutions (government authorities, semi-autonomous or independent organizations)?</p>	<p>The only provider of accreditation is NEAA. Specialized State Body for Assessment, Accreditation and Quality Control of the programme accreditation is the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation at the Council of Ministers. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency carries out post-accreditation monitoring and control plans, in accordance with the procedure established by the Rules of Procedure of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency or on a proposal by the Minister of Education and Science to withdraw the accreditation. The external quality assurance is the same for PA programmes in comparison to other programmes, which are not professions regulated by the state (ex.: law, medicine, architecture), as the PA programmes are not, as well.</p>
<p>3.3 What are the rules and requirements for accreditation (e.g. are all programmes subject of accreditation or only new programmes? Are only state or public universities to be evaluated? etc.)?</p>	<p>All programmes in the country are subject of accreditation no matter if they are offered by private or public universities. It is important to notice, that when a programme accreditation of professional field is awarded, the department can take its own decisions on how many specialities within the programme will be offered until the next accreditation period.</p> <p>Programme accreditation addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majors from the regulated professions • PhD programmes • Professional fields. <p>Public administration programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are accredited under the professional field Administration and Management.</p>
<p>3.4 Who is allowed to do programme accreditation? Only an official government agency, (like e.g. in Austria) or other (ENQA- or EQAR-) recognized institutions?</p>	<p>Only NEAA can do programme accreditation in the Republic of Bulgaria.</p> <p>Even if a programme (no matter if PA or other) was accredited by organization or institution different from NEAA, the education (and the diploma at the end) is not accepted as legitimate (and does not receive EU recognition respectively), if the programme is not accredited by NEAA. Also, the diplomas of foreign universities giving programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are not recognized as</p>

	legitimate, if they do not have accreditation by NEAA.
3.5 Who are the evaluators (bureaucrats and/or academic peers, are foreign academic peers involved)?	<p>NEAA forms a bank of experts for external evaluation by selection of documents, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts from the Republic of Bulgaria; • Experts –representatives of the students and PhD students; • International experts. <p>International bodies are not to participate in the accreditation process as such, but there is an opportunity that experts who are part of different professional or expert organizations can be invited to take part in a personal quality if they correspond to certain requirements.</p> <p>International experts are attracted for participating in evaluation and accreditation procedures on the invitation by the Accreditation Council to the NEAA from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equivalent to NEAA foreign national evaluation and accreditation agencies and organizations; • Academic managements of leading foreign universities; • Managements of international organizations and unions, the Republic of Bulgaria is a member of or participates in their activities
3.6 Which methods of accreditation are primarily applied in the respective country?	<p>There is a criteria system, developed by NEAA and the HEI/programme should evidence to which level it corresponds to those. The correspondence is measured trough scores, where the HE Act identifies levels of scores, which do not allow the accreditation to be awarded.</p>
3.7 Who takes the decision to accredit a programme? (Is it the institution doing the evaluation or a superior government body?)	<p>The decision is made by the Accreditation Council of NEAA and announced on its web-site in the database of accredited HEIs and programmes.</p>

4. EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

4.1 DATA, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

A desk research was carried out. The aim of this research is an assessment of the potential of PA education to form initiative and creative staff to the public sector and assure sustainable development for the regions in Bulgaria. For the purposes of the desk research are used following online sources of information: Bulgarian ministry of education website as the websites of the observed universities.

Another great source of information is Bulgarian University Ranking System. "The system gives users access to a large volume of data on Bulgarian higher education. Unlike other ranking systems in which users can access only the final ranking (sometimes even only in a ranking scale without specific scores or other quantitative results), the Bulgarian University Ranking System is also an information system, which provides full access to a significant volume of primary data and ensures transparency regarding the weights assigned and the calculation procedures used. The ranking system also contains additional information about universities, including address and contact details, as well as information about the different majors and educational degrees offered by each university in each professional field in which they provide education. This information is based on data from the AdminUni module in the Education Information System to which universities submit information twice a year. Therefore, any changes that may have occurred in the meantime are not reflected in the current version of the ranking system.

There might be some individual majors or professional fields in a given university, for which no new admissions are planned, and/or no students are currently enrolled. Universities with no student enrolment in a professional field are not included in the rankings for this professional field or are placed "below the line". Where there are sufficient reasons, such professional fields in affected universities may be excluded from the ranking system although they might exist in the AdminUni data. Some individual majors or professional fields (usually newly established) may also be excluded from the current version of the ranking system, although they plan to and/or have already enrolled students." In order to avoid this limitation universities websites and their enrolment websites are used for more detailed and up to date information.

4.2 EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

There is a list of programmes given (see: App. 1) that are subject of this research, because they are relevant for considerations about the quality of PA education in Bulgaria. 16 Bachelor and 16 Master degree PA programmes that are titled "...public administration..." can be counted in the list (highlighted in blue), next to other programmes, which are quite close to public services - 8 Bachelor and 35 Master degree, highlighted in orange.

In the number of those 75 programmes are couples that are taught both in Bulgarian and in English, so they must be counted as one. This is the case of PA programme of Sofia University.

Therefore, to the number of 74 can be added 13 MBA programmes and 10 more PhD ones. Despite of the overall methodology and instructions within the project, observed is the Public Administration - Healthcare Management programme, because its curriculum gives a reason to prove that this program is in the field of PA as its title says.

MBA programmes are not observed as they are not in the field of public sector.

What concerns the MPA programmes in the Bulgarian education system, according to the observations of the authors it can be summarized that there are hardly found established traditions, yet. Each university/unit can decide what is the target audience of an offered programme, once accreditation of the definite professional field was received (concerning PA programmes – the professional field is 3.7. Administration and management). According to the contents of curricula and syllabuses, the professional qualification of the programme can also vary.

As MPA programmes in Table 1 are counted programmes, offering the professional qualification of a “manager in the public sector” (or similar), and all the other programmes are awarding the professional qualification of a “master in public sector”. Nevertheless, it is good to have in mind that in Bulgaria, even if a programme is not delivered under the form of a MPA, this does not mean that it is not, in the meaning of organization and contents of the educational process (mix of classroom teaching on evenings and weekends, online classes and tutorials, and occasional full-day workshops).

On the other hand, if discussing the typical understanding of an executive PA Master`s programme, as directed at executives and managers who are already in the workforce, we should say that in the practice it has happened that a HEI (incl. VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar”) has offered such specialized training on behalf of different government bodies, but it is not a regular practice and arises by occasion of realized necessity. It should be underlined as well, that in Bulgaria the concept of a MBA/MPA is not very popular yet, what concerns the internal education market.

Next to that, it might be noted that the supply exceeds the demand and all Master`s programmes are:

1. Offered on the free educational market and everybody, who has been awarded a Bachelor`s diploma is free to apply, no matter of his professional position. This is often the case where active civil servants, executives, managers are enrolled in regular Master`s programmes;
2. No matter if executive or not, the tradition and the present practice in Bulgaria shows, that all the Master`s programmes are delivering a complex of theoretical and practical preparation.

All the above makes it difficult to clearly define, which of the offered MPA programmes are executive by their concept.

Table 1 – Existing PA study programmes

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	PhD.	MBA	MPA	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
1. Academy of the Ministry of Interior – Sofia	1	-	-	-	1	2
2. University of Veliko Tarnovo “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”	3	-	1	1	1	6
3. University of Economics- Varna	2	1	1	1	1	6
4. University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”	1	1	1	1	1	5
5. University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”	1	4	-	1	-	6
6. University of Sofia “ St. Kliment Ohridski”	2	6	1	-	1	11
7. Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics- Svishtov	1	2	1	1	1	6
8. Technical University of Gabrovo	2	1	-	-	1	4
9. Technical University of Sofia	1	-	1	-	1	3
10. University of National and World Economy	1	3	1	1	1	7
11. South-West University “Neofit Rilski”- Blagoevgrad	2	7	1	1	-	11
12. University of Agriculture Plovdiv	1	1	-	1	-	3
13 Trakia University – Stara Zagora	1	1	-	-	-	2

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	PhD.	MBA	MPA	TOTAL
14. University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov"- Burgas	-	1	-	1	-	2
Private HEIs						
15. Burgas Free University	1	1	-	-	1	3
16. Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"	1	2	1	1	-	5
17. New Bulgarian University	2	5	1	1	-	9
Foreign universities / colleges						
18. American University in Bulgaria	1	-	-	-	-	1
Other types you would like to distinguish						
19. Academy of agribusiness and regional development - Plovdiv	-	3	-	1	-	4
20. International Business School-Botevgrad	-	1	-	1	-	2
TOTAL	24	40	10	13	10	97

Source: Authors.

4.3 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

In the Republic of Bulgaria there are 17 Higher Education Institutions, which are accredited in the field of 3.7. Administration and Management, where PA programmes are placed. Among them there are 14 State Universities and 3 Private, which are placed in altogether 10 cities in the country (1 – in Plovdiv, 1 – in Burgas, 1 -in Svishtov, 1 – in Botevgrad, 3 – in Varna, 5 – in Sofia, 1 – in Blagoevgrad, 2 – in Veliko Tarnovo, 1 -in Stara Zagora, 1 – in Ruse). Only 5 of them are accredited in the field of 3.7. Administration and Management - "Organization and Management outside the sphere of material production", the fact of which gives them the right to offer PhD education in PA, as well. All of that would mean, that there are 5 universities, to offer a complete cycle of PA education in the country (Bachelor`s, Master`s and PhD programmes):

- Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", Varna
- Naval Academy "Nikola Y. Vaptsarov", Varna
- National Military University "Vasil Levski", Veliko Tarnovo
- New Bulgarian University, Sofia
- South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad

Not all the universities provide easy access to the curriculum of the offered PA programmes. The list of programmes that are subject of this research (given in App. 1) and relevant for consideration about the quality of PA education in Bulgaria, provides links to the university websites where we can be found information about the content of their curriculum.

Information available on the study programmes web pages is about the level of education, form of study, graduate profile and learning outcomes, literature on the subject, staff involved in teaching and their requirements on passing individual courses. Not all the universities provide easy access to the curriculum of the offered PA programmes. For more than 70% of the programmes, there is no direct link on programme website to the curriculum and syllabus where can be seen ECTS credits of individual courses. For 51% of the observed programmes, the curriculum is available only in Bulgarian, where unfortunately, not all the information is up to date.

All the observed programmes, follow the structure given by the Law, therefore contain 3 main parts (labels) in their curriculum – compulsory courses, elective courses and optional courses. In the frameworks of awarded accreditation each university has freedom to decide on the title, contents

and label of a definite course within the curriculum. After the analysis of curriculum of the PA programmes offered by universities in Bulgaria, it can be summarized that most of the PA Master`s programmes do focus their attention on the following disciplines: Local Self-Government and Decentralization, Regional Statistics, Regional Economy, Regional Sustainable Development, Public Finances, Development of the Rural Regions, Methodology of Regional Development and Regional Politics, Modeling of Regional Systems, Data Bases, Public Claims Collection, Budget Law, Tax Administration, Legal Regime of Indirect Taxes, Legal Regime of Direct Taxes, Systems of Financial Management and Control, Methods of Regional and Regional Analysis, Comparative Administration, Intercultural Communication, Institutions and Decision Making in the EU, European Social and Economic Development, Common Policies in the EU, Management of Regional and Cross-border Projects, Professional Communication, European Law, etc.

4.4 SUMMARY

Based on the above text, the following summary can be made:

<p>4.1 How many relevant PA study programmes have you identified and what is their structure?</p>	<p>There is a list of 74 programmes observed in this research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 Bachelor and 15 Master degree PA programmes that are titled "...public administration..." • 8 Bachelor and 35 Master degree, close to public services • To the number of 74 can be added 13 MBA programmes and 10 PhD programmes. MBA programmes are not observed as they are not in the field of public sector. <p>In Bulgaria the curriculum of Higher Education Programmes is structured into 3 main parts: compulsory courses, elective courses and optional courses.</p>
<p>4.2 What information is available on the study programmes on their web pages?</p>	<p>Information available on the study programmes web pages is about the level of education, form of study, graduate profile and learning outcomes, literature on the subject, staff involved in teaching and their requirements on passing individual courses. Not all the universities provide easy access to the curriculum of the offered PA programmes and for 51% of the observed programmes is available only in Bulgarian.</p>

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS, POINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS, CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE

5.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The training in PA in Bulgaria is modern, consistent with the achievements of the world and European practice in this interdisciplinary field. The training is extended to all legally established degrees of higher education: broad-based fundamental training in the BA (bachelor's degree); specific administrative-management training (magistrate degree); highly-qualified training with an EA expertise (PhD).

The PA as a discipline has been established in the country since the early 1990s and is currently a separate specialty called "public administration" at 14 Bulgarian universities. Parallel to this, 18 educational institutions offer specialties that are close to the professional field of public administration and public services.

The State Service, as a specific area for the realization of the MA specialties, is subject to regulated access within the meaning of the Civil Servants Act:

- Strict requirements for occupying relevant positions in the public administration system are regulated, including the requirements for an election procedure through a centralized and decentralized phase.
- The conditions for the obligatory professional qualification of the newly appointed and senior civil servants are regulated regarding their professional and professional development.

The PA programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria are not subject of a separate or special accreditation rules or requirements as far as they are part of the understanding that the public administration is one of all possible objects, underlying administration and management, and therefore – included in the scientific and subject area of the professional field of 'Administration and management'.

The law and the overall framework of accreditation of programmes in the Republic of Bulgaria allows the participation of external international experts in the process but from organizational and operative point of view this would burden the NEAA from the current perspective and is probably one of the reasons that usually only national experts are invited into the expert's groups. Next to that the participation of foreign experts would be connected to increasing of the price of the accreditation process (from the HEIs point of view), because of the expectation that the costs of the experts should be covered.

Despite the internal quality assurance in the activities of the NEAA²¹ is room for personal influence on the accreditation process having in mind that the academic community in the country is limited.

NEAA itself is part of the PA of the country and therefore suffers of the same limitations and challenges as all administrative structures – slow, bureaucratic, difficultly underling changes.

There are ongoing changes in the HE sphere in the Republic of Bulgaria on governmental level, which suppose more or less radical changes in the programmes supply corresponding to the national map to be developed. Until the changes are proposed it is difficult to foresee the impact of that changes on the PA programmes and its supply by state and public universities.

²¹National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Procedure for Selection of Experts, <https://www.neaa.government.bg/en/about-us-3/quality-assurance-in-the-activities-of-the-neaa> (accessible on Oct. 30th, 2018)

5.2 POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

From the perspective of strengthening public administration as a science and practice and with view to further enhancing the quality of training in public administration majors, the following points are recommended for discussion:

- The purposefulness of the establishment of the Public Administration as a separate professional field;
- The opportunity to include PA in the list of state-regulated-specialities;
- The need to conduct mapping of the offered PA majors and their correspondence to the needs of PA professionals with different types of qualification;
- The balance between standardization and differentiation in the offered PA programmes;
- The issue of developing a system for further qualification of PA professionals through formal education (LLL courses, MPA, qualification programmes).

5.3 CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE

Regarding the look and content of PA training:

It is obvious that these problems cannot be left solely to the care of the educational institutions. Modern PA is functioning at a time when education must overtake the needs of practice. We have far exceeded the time that education should follow the requirements of practice. It is necessary to reformat the training of the PA and more specifically in a way that it foresees the future necessities of the public service. Based on clear requests from the practice nowadays a prognosis for the necessary competences can be made and laid out as philosophy. Therefore, goals and measurable learning outcomes, might be formulated in a strategical matter and implemented through all traditional forms and appropriate contemporary market-oriented forms (remote and electronic modules, LLL resorts, on-site training, master classes, etc.).

Regarding the attractiveness of the PA education and the further validation of the PA as a discipline:

The main questions are based on the content or set of the necessary competencies that should make it possible to transition from formal student training to the qualification of public servants with the necessary expertise to work in a complex administrative environment.

A strategy towards the importance of the public service should be developed, to increase the interest, respect and importance of the profession among the community and future students. The profession is seen as convenient, but low-income and highly corrupted.

Since the annexation of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EU, which required intensive interventions in the competence of the current public servants' expertise (connected to education), the PA sphere does not seem to be one of the current educational priorities, which on the long run is to create a gap and a lack of qualified professionals.

Regarding the national accreditation:

The present accreditation framework addresses formal criteria, but not concrete competences that are developed within the PA education. Therefore, the focus on the results that the PA education should ensure is lost. The accreditation is based on the overall environment of the HEI but not on the way that the PA education is led.

The supranational evaluation, accreditation, qualification or experience are not considered or hardly validated by institutions and employers. Therefore, this would not contribute to the individual's professional development, except prior recognition by the formally accepted methods (ex.: a PA alumnus in the USA should pass a recognition), so that the validity of the degree is confirmed.

The ongoing changes in the HE system in the Republic of Bulgaria will affect the accreditation rules, by opening it to external professionals which are experts in auditing but not obligatory experts in PA education.

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²² Note by the authors: Krasimir Valchev is the present Minister of Education of the Republic of Bulgaria.

²³ Explanation by the authors: In Bulgaria, one lecturer can have classes at more than one programme, speciality, professional field and/or university, but the acting law requires that he can be accounted for the accreditation of those only if he is employed under the conditions of a first or second main employment contract.

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