

The institution of city manager in Romania – from professionalization to politicization

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Abstract: The institution that in Romania goes by the name of "public administrator", the equivalent of city manager, was introduced into the Romanian administrative system through some amendments brought to the Local Public Administration Law (215/2001) in 2006. The intention of the legislator was to promote in the local public administration structures a position that would contribute in the future to the professionalization of the activity within the local public authorities. In order to avoid the risk of an adverse reaction by politicians against this new institution, its promoters did not establish precise attributions for it, leaving it up to each local authority to decide what the competencies of the person who will be appointed to the position of public administrator will be. Thus, the institution of the public administrator should have proven its usefulness for the functioning of local authorities, and after that new legislative amendments should establish clearer attributions. Although 17 years have passed since the establishment of the position, there are no signs from the politicians that they would like to change its status. Also, although there is an association of public administrators, it has not exerted any kind of pressure in the public space to obtain changes in their legal situation.

The paper will have the following content:

1. Introduction;
2. A short theoretical part and a literature review relating to similar positions in the US and Western Europe;
3. A qualitative research carried out through semi-structured interviews with figures from the political environment (mainly mayors or presidents of county councils) and with public administrators; the study will have the following research questions:
 - a. What is the professional profile of public administrators, respectively the environment from which they are recruited? What is the level of politicization of public administrators in Romania?
 - b. To what extent has the institution of the public administrator proven its usefulness and should it be strengthened/developed in the future?
 - c. Is there, at least in an incipient form, a profession of the public administrator, or it is extensively politicized?
 - d. Is there an aversion among politicians to this profession?
 - e. What would be the measures that could support the development of this institution and increase its professionalization in the future?
4. Conclusions and possible recommendations.