

Evaluation of Public Administration Reforms in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia*

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Abstract

This paper looks at the public administration reforms process in Macedonia. The main purpose of the paper is to present and evaluate the government's strategy for public administration reforms. Based on the principles listed in the Strategy for Public Administration Reforms, emphasis is placed on developments concerning improved transparency and equality of the administration, as well as efforts at introducing and successfully implementing e-government elements in the work of the administration and utilizing ICT for governance purposes.

The paper present a double perspective on the success of public administration reforms in Macedonia: from the government's perspective and as seen from the EU, and compares both noting the differences between both. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations about suggested future steps in public administration reforms, in order to ensure better progress and better quality of services for the citizens.

Defining Public Administration

It is a common practice in social sciences to claim a concept too wide or too contested to provide a single meaningful definition for it. Democracy for example, or nation, or power; there are plenty of definitions for each of these concepts, and some even contradictory to others. Public administration is a similar such case. No single definition appears capable of accommodating the various different views on what PA is. If such definition is found it usually is too wide/general to be useful. For instance, public administration in the widest sense is often defined as "whatever governments do, for good or ill" (Shafritz and Russel, 1999, p.6). Though true, this definition can hardly be applied when analyzing the progress of PAR. It is too inclusive and does

* For practical purposes, throughout the rest of the paper I will use 'Macedonia' instead of 'the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia'.

not allow for a critical look on what the government does. Therefore, other ways of defining public administration are necessary for the task at hand.

Shafitz and Russell advance a multi-part mega-definition of public administration, where they define PA from four different perspectives: political, legal, managerial and occupational. Thus, to summarize shortly their discussion,¹ from a political viewpoint, public administration is what governments do, directly or indirectly, in the public interest through the policy-making cycle. Legally, public administration can be defined as both regulation and law in action; while from managerial perspective, it is seen as the executive branch of government requiring management specialty based on both natural talent and continuous efforts. Finally, public administration is also seen as an occupational category requiring good writing skills, a strong dose of idealism and often formal academic training. Combining the different elements of the definition outlined above one gets a clearer idea of what public administration is, and what to expect when analyzing it. This is what is kept in mind throughout this paper when discussing, evaluating and recommending PAR.

Finally, since the subject of our discussion is the PAR in Macedonia, we should take into consideration the operational definition of public administration that the Government of Macedonia applies when designing and conducting PAR. The 1999 Strategy for PAR, the key document which is the basis for the entire PAR process in Macedonia, does not provide a clear definition of what public administration is. It only distinguishes between the public administration and the civil service (state administration), the narrower concept with which public administration is often confused. Thus, functionally, all those who perform duties related to the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government belong to the civil service, while those working in other public sectors, such as culture, health, education etc. are members of the public administration. (Strategija, 1999, p.11-12)² This is a useful distinction, one to be kept in mind throughout our discussion below.

¹ For a more detailed discussion see Chapter “Defining Public Administration” in J. M. Shafritz and E. W. Russell, *Introduction to Public Administration*.

² For more, see: „Strategija za reforma na javnata administracija vo Republika Makedonija” 1999.

Context and Legacies

When working on a case-study, like discussing PAR in particular society at a specific time period, one must take into consideration the specific context – the political, economic and historical factors that shape the societal environment, before applying theoretical models and arguments or drawing conclusions. Thus, the specific Macedonian political and economic context, as well as the historic legacies, to a great extent shapes the outlook of the public administration as well as the outcome of PAR efforts.

Communist/Historic Legacies

One very important factor informing most of the public administration studies of the East European region is the administrative legacies that communism left on these countries. The specific nature of communism, along with the institutions, ideology and mindset pertaining to it deeply influenced public administration policies and practices in the post communist period that followed. As mentioned often, bureaucracy was one of the strongest pillars of communist power (Verdery, 1996).³ All around Eastern Europe (EE) communist states operated through heavy and massive bureaucracy controlled by the Communist Party. Loyalty (to the Party) was more important than efficiency and transparency, while instead of neutrality there was a deliberate network of personal contacts and favours. Those values, institutionalized as they were for four decades, can not be simply wiped away – they left a lasting mark on EE societies. They also made it difficult to adopt and domesticate Western, democratic values and norms, such as transparency, neutrality, equal treatment etc., once EE embarked upon democratization.

³ For a more detailed discussion see for example: Katherine Verdery, *What Was Communism and What Comes Next?* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.)

This was the four decade old heritage that administration in EE possessed in 1989. Naturally, the initial impulse of the democratic ‘revolutions’ was to replace the communist with democratic institutions and wipe away all remnants of communist rule. PAR was undertaken as top priority in many EE states. There are many success stories as well, most Central East European states successfully reformed and restructured their public sector before becoming EU members in 2004/7. Although not a legitimate excuse for lack of reforms, communist legacies must not be disregarded when analyzing the progress of PAR and the prospects for the future. Institutions (organizations, rules, habits, mindsets etc.) are resilient, they tend to last. Personal habits, standard operational procedures and inter-personal communication can not be replaced with a single legal act. Those are long-term processes which can sometimes interfere with the PAR process, a caveat which should be kept in mind.

EU integration

The most powerful drive behind the PAR efforts in the last several years in Macedonia is the aspiration for European Union (EU) membership. EU membership is one of the strategic objectives of Macedonian foreign policy and many of the domestic policies in Macedonia are adjusted/harmonized with the requirements for EU membership. Thus, EU membership efforts provide an additional incentive for conducting PAR, as that is one of the crucial areas the EU identified as requiring additional reforms. In other words, if Macedonia wants to become an EU member the government will have to introduce and implement all required reforms. That is what conditionality is all about. And it has proven a very powerful instrument of the EU in its relations with the accession countries.

Yet the EU influence over the domestic reforms in Macedonia is not limited solely on the ‘negative’ aspect – demanding reforms from Macedonia. There is also a positive side to conditionality – the EU offers assistance to Macedonia to better implement the required reforms. All throughout the pre-accession (and even pre-candidacy) period, the EU offers financial and technical/expert assistance to candidate states. Macedonia has so far benefited from the PHARE and CARDS programs of the EU, and from

2007 the new pre-accession financial instrument IPA. All these, regardless of the targeted reform areas, provided necessary funds and often expert assistance aiming at improving capacities of Macedonia.

Thus, the EU provides a double incentive for PAR in Macedonia. First, through conditionality mechanisms, by conditioning EU accession to fulfilling certain criteria, among which successful PAR. And second, by providing financial and other assistance for successful implementation of PAR, through various pre-accession instruments. It is against this background of combined communist legacy in public administration and EU requirements and funds determining the frame of reforms that this paper analyzes and evaluates the progress of PAR in Macedonia.

Strategy for Public Administration Reforms in Macedonia

The Legal Frame

This section is focused on analyzing the existing legislation which provides the frame within which PAR are implemented. The provisions of legislation relating to public administration to a great extent determine the direction and development of PAR – they make the government's strategy for public administration reforms. Therefore, Analytica conducted an archival search and analysis of the available legal texts and documents, which is presented in the overview below. The following documents, chosen on the basis of their relevance and importance for the PAR process, were taken into consideration: Government of Macedonia PAR Strategy from 1999, Program for Work of the Government of Republic of Macedonia, the Annual Progress Report of the European Commission, the European Partnership of 2005 and 2006 and the National Strategy for Adoption of the Acquis of the EU. Also, the Civil Servants Law, Code of Ethics as well a number of reports on research conducted by other organizations which tackle PAR issues.

Public Administration Reform Strategy from 1999, National Strategy for EU Integration and National Strategy for Adoption of the Acquis of the EU

The PAR Strategy of the Government from 1999 was the first such organized effort to conduct overall reform of the public sector in Macedonia. The 1999 PAR strategy also set the key terms of the PAR debate in Macedonia, by distinguishing between civil service (state administration) and public administration, based on the functions performed by the two different sectors of the overall public sector. The PAR identified key areas for reform, set the short- and mid- term priorities, as well as the values the PAR process aimed to achieve. These values, though overly general, can also be used as a set of criteria against which to measure the progress of PAR:

- Rule of law
 - Transparency
 - Competency
 - Stability
 - Responsibility
 - Predictability
 - Equal Treatment
 - Efficiency
 - Ethics
- (Strategija, 1999)

The PAR Strategy clearly stated the link between the PAR and the EU membership aspirations of Macedonia. While quoting domestic reasons as primary, the foreign, EU, factor to the reforms was clearly acknowledged and the two incentives deemed complementary. This is an important moment for PAR in Macedonia, for ever since PAR and EU integration remained linked in the political and public discourse, the one serving as a justification for the other and vice versa. The PAR strategy also served as a blueprint for legal documents adopted later. It outlined a list of laws and acts that were required for successful implementation of the reform.

A surprisingly thorough and resourceful document for the time when it was adopted, the PAR Strategy contained provisions for the implementation of its provisions. It provided for the establishment of cross-institutional Commission for Public Administration Reforms, based in the Ministry of Justice, as a coordinating body for the entire reform process, and several Working Groups to tackle the separate issues and problems areas. Presently, the Commission is replaced with the Unit for Public Administration Reforms based at the General Secretariat of

the Government, after introducing reforms for better horizontal communication within the government.

Other Governmental Documents

PAR was incorporated in many subsequent (strategic) documents of the Government. The National Strategy for European Integration and the National Program for Adoption of the Acquis of the EU, numerous Action Plans and Strategies regarding the Stabilization and Association process (SAP) and European Partnerships and other documents relating to EU integration, as well as Programs for Work of the government, all contained sections or references to PAR. From a legal perspective, PAR was deemed a key reform issue and was well aligned with other government priorities – as such, occupying a very favourable position for potential success.

Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) and European Partnership

While, neither specifically part of the negotiation areas (later chapters) within the European Commission's scope nor embodied in any single piece of EC/EU legislation, public administration is included in all the strategic documents and communication between the EU and Macedonia. As part of the general concern over the development of institutional capacities to undertake the responsibilities of EU membership and apply the EU acquis, PAR receives abundant attention from the EU. The European Partnership documents from 2005 and 2006 outline the priority areas for reform in the short and middle term and both explicitly mention progress in PAR.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) and, later, the European Partnerships are of similar strategic importance for the PAR process in Macedonia as the PAR Strategy itself. Although these documents do not contain specific details about the outlook of PA reforms, they set PAR as a strategic priority for the government and link it to the political and economic criteria for accession. Their PA sections are very brief and contain only specific recommendations about where further efforts are required. Their added value lies in keeping PAR under permanent spotlight. By not letting PAR fall down (or off) the agenda of governments, the EU makes sure that sufficient attention and resources are allocated for it. Moreover, through the Annual Progress Reports and European Partnerships the EU constantly

monitors and evaluates the progress made with the reforms. Thus, it provides an additional incentive for keeping up the pace and quality of PAR. Considering EU integration is Macedonia's top strategic priority, getting good grades on each evaluation entry is in the interest of the government.

Institutional Frame: Transparency and E-government

Another key component of the PAR process is the institutional frame accommodating the reforms. Based on the legal provisions of the strategic documents regarding PAR (PAR Strategy 1999 and subsequent laws) a set of institutions and administrative bodies in charge of PAR has been established. The PAR process is horizontal and reforms must be conducted across different government sectors. We only focus here on the largest coordinating institution involved in PAR: the Civil Servants Agency (CSA) – and follow the progress of reforms aimed at establishing more efficient, equitable and transparent administration, as well as e-government initiatives and their implementation.

Civil Servants Agency (CSA)

The CSA was established in 2000, following the provisions of the Law on Civil Servants, to conduct expert trainings, assist policy-making in human-resources field, protect the rights and liberties of civil servants, promote development of the civil service and collect and manage data regarding the civil servants. The CSA runs several very important components of the PAR process: trainings and hiring policies (HR) of civil servants – which are crucial for creating a small yet efficient and modern civil service. To these aims, the CSA creates Annual Programs for Training, runs trainings of civil servants and participates in regional cooperation initiatives.

A product of PAR itself, the CSA acts as a promoter of further reforms in public administration. It works towards increased transparency and easier access to information for citizens. Through the on-line application process for civil service positions (prijava.ads.gov.mk) as well as on-line resources about upcoming trainings, relevant legislation and required forms and documents CSA aims to bridge the (trust) gap between the governance structures and the citizens. Electronic applications, as well electronic entrance tests, both administered by the CSA indicate significant move towards increased transparency and

accessibility of the services offered by the administration. In addition, their introduction was once of the first instances of implementing e-government elements in the work of the public administration.

Each of the ministries and other governmental bodies are required to create an e-version of the 'Citizens' Charter' where citizens can give feedback about the quality of the service they received from that institution. The 'Services' portal (uslugi.gov.mk) informs the citizens which services are provided by which governmental institutions and the consecutive steps of the administrative procedure and required forms.

Foreign Aid

Though initially introvert – focused on internal structure reforms of the administration in view of its being both a subject and object of PAR, further stages of the reform include extensive sector and horizontal projects. Many of the e-government projects and initiatives required financial and technical/expert support from foreign donors and governments, due to the Macedonian government insufficient capacity in those areas. The priority areas for PAR are being addressed through bilateral (DFID, NORMAK), multilateral and EU funds (assistance instruments: PHARE, CARDS etc., and twinning projects) along with continuous efforts to avoid overlapping and omission of areas where assistance is required. In that respect, semi-annual donor meetings are organized by the Government (Secretariat for European Affairs, General Secretariat) to coordinate foreign aid for PAR.

The new financial instrument of the EU for the candidate and Western Balkans states, IPA, also provides assistance for PAR, through the first component – Support for Transition and Institution Building. E-government, and other e- projects, is especially encouraged, as part of the efforts of bringing Western Balkans societies closer to the European knowledge-based economy. The aim of the government is to gradually build the administrative capacities to an extent when the need of foreign aid would be diminished and future reforms will be designed and led by the Macedonian administration. Recently, the government appointed a minister for information society who, along with his team and with the assistance of international donors, designs and implements projects aimed at enhancing e-government.

Equitable Representation and Decentralization

Equality of opportunity and equitable representation of members of minorities in the administration is a guiding principle in the public administration process. Though not predicted by the initial PAR Strategy and related policies, the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) introduced a new principle in PAR (and many other areas) – additional efforts to ensure the equitable representation of ethnic communities in the administrative structure, as well as administrative adjustments aiming to improve the status of minorities such as, language and symbol use, education etc. To this purpose, a Sector for Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (SIOFA) was established in the Government in 2004 – a body in charge of successful implementation of the OFA, which is also responsible for ensuring equitable representation of the members of all ethnic communities in public institutions. Last reports indicate that the desired levels of equitable representation are not yet achieved, as members of minorities are not sufficiently represented in the public institutions. (SIOFA, 2006) Yet, continuous efforts are pursued in this direction, including continuous trainings of young and prospective civil servants from the minority communities.

OFA also reiterated the need for immediate decentralization of political power. Though reforms of the local government were already incorporated in the PAR strategy, the OFA shed an entirely different light on the issue. The increased powers of local structures of governance were linked to the greater prerogatives of communities to self-govern themselves. Thus, the decentralization-related transfer of responsibilities (in fiscal, educational, and urban-planning areas) gained importance, urgency (and political connotation). The Ministry of Local Self-Government is the governmental body responsible for the process of decentralization, including the fiscal aspects of it, along with the Association of the Units of Local Self-Government (AULS).

EVALUATION

Government of Macedonia, General Secretariat: Reports on progress of PAR

Following the 1999 PAR Strategy, the Government is obliged to monitor and evaluate the progress of PAR. Considering it is an extensive and long-lasting process, involving many different institutions and administrative bodies, evaluation of PAR requires significant efforts and resources. The GS, in 2005-6 issued a general overview/report on the progress of PAR in

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Macedonia for the period of 1999-2005. This is an extensive document which, against the priorities and steps outlined in the PAR Strategy, evaluates the progress and the problems of conducted reforms and identifies priority areas for further efforts. This report was also used by the GS to design questionnaires to be distributed among institutions affected by PAR and which feedback would later on be utilized for future measures within the PAR process.

Among the areas of greatest progress of PAR is the improving image of the state – as more transparent and equal. The Government/GS is investing substantial efforts in providing better quality and more available services for the citizens. In that spirit, the CSA has established an on-line applications system for civil service posts (<https://prijava.ads.gov.mk>), on-line portal to clarify the services and service-providers for citizens (www.uslugi.gov.mk), as well as the Citizens' Charter – a printed and on-line guide to evaluating the services citizens receive from the government institutions. Still, one needs to have certain scruples regarding the effect/contribution of these efforts over the improving image of the state among the population. Not many citizens have access to internet and their attitudes and opinions are difficult to change (especially if those are based on decades-long negative experience with the public institutions). Moreover, transparency and neutrality are not ensured only with publishing job advertisements, legal acts and forms on-line. While that does make information more available for some parts of the population, transparency and neutrality are more difficult to achieve.

EU's View on the Progress of PAR

The EU monitors the progress of PAR in Macedonia and regularly evaluates and reports on what has been achieved and what remains to be done in the area. The two main documents reporting on the general progress of Macedonia towards EU membership, the European Partnership and the Annual Progress Report of the European Commission pay significant attention to the progress of PAR. The European Partnership includes public administration in the key priorities for Macedonia. It calls for further efforts in the following areas of PAR: increased transparency, further depolitization of recruitment and advancement in the civil service, greater cooperation between state bodies and Ombudsman and introduction of internal control and auditing at local level of government. (Council of the EU, 2006)

The remarks of the European Commission in its Annual Report on the progress of Macedonia run predominantly along the same lines. Thus, while noting progress regarding certain areas of reform, the European Commission also outlines areas where additional efforts are required. Those include: greater cooperation between government and opposition regarding implementation of related legislation, complete re-structuring of the police along the lines of the 2003 Strategy for Police Reform, developing mechanisms for internal financial control and auditing in local governance structures and continuing with next steps of the decentralization process. (Commission of the EC, 2006)

The above shows that the evaluations of the Government of Macedonia and the EU do not coincide entirely. While the EU, for example, quotes depolitization of the hiring process and the civil service, in general, there is no mention of this in governmental documents. Yet, if the government is to build truly transparent and neutral administration, there should be no place for political appointees.

Recommendations: What Remains to Be Done?

Legal Frame: Macedonia scores well in adopting required PA legislation. Most of the laws envisaged with the PAR Strategy of 1999 have been adopted. This is an important moment, since legislation provides necessary ground for building an efficient and effective administration. Without an adequate legal frame, there will be no structure upon which to build a professional and efficient public administration. Still, more needs to be done even if we were analyzing solely the legal aspect of PAR in Macedonia. There is no law regulating the status and responsibilities of ‘public servants’ – those working in the public sector but not in the civil service. Therefore, some uncertainties remain regarding their status, which opens room for abuse and politicization.

Though most legal acts concerning public administration reforms have been adopted, implementation is not as smooth. Some laws are not being fully implemented and some are not implemented at all. One such is the Law on Salaries for the civil servants. The law has been adopted but implementation is continually delayed due to budgetary limitations. This has several negative implications for the PAR process. First, this displays a lack of horizontal

coordination within the government, as governmental policies are not properly aligned and one impedes the implementation of the other. Then, lack of implementation causes resentment among the civil servants who are entitled to benefit from the provisions of the law. In the longer run, resentment can turn to disillusionment with the government and administration, which would be a huge step away from an efficient and professional public administration – which is the ultimate goal of the PAR. Finally, dissatisfied civil servants would reinforce the negative image the public has of the administration, thus undermining the government efforts to build a positive image of the state and administration as professional, objective and service-oriented.

Transparency and Image: PAR includes efforts at increasing the transparency of the public administration and thus also improving the image the population holds of the state and the administration. Some very commendable measures have been undertaken to that end: introducing electronic application forms for positions in the civil service, electronic tests for applicants for civil service positions, electronic sources and guides through the institutions as well as feedback forms used to evaluate the service provided by the administration. The Civil Servants Agency has made a notable progress in this area since before its establishment the selection and hiring policies in the civil service were quite obscure. However, all these are rather recent measures and it may (and probably will) take time before the expected results are achieved – and the population gets a new, positive image of the administration.

Two things should be kept in mind when evaluating the success of transparency and publicity efforts. First, as already mentioned, mentalities and habits change slowly. People's opinions may linger well after things have changed. Therefore, there is a danger that those measures could be prematurely abandoned as inefficient. Still, although not yielding immediate results, those measures must not be abandoned. On the contrary, additional efforts are required to accelerate and enhance the desired results. Second, not all (if any) of these measures are grass-root initiatives by the people working in the public administration. Most of these ideas are donor-driven or top-down changes introduced in the public sector. However, considering that the people working in those institutions are the ones responsible for implementing them it is crucial that they understand and accept/approve of them. If that is not the case and the staff show distrust and resistance to these innovations in administrative work, the public

administration staff will discredit the government actions by not implementing the new policies properly. One must remember that occupational concerns are just as important as the legal aspect of PAR. Therefore, measures must be taken to prevent this, by training the civil and public servants and establishing proper communications and feedback channels with the higher management.

Politicization concerns: This is one of the areas where Macedonia has made only a limited progress with PAR. The Government has been continuously criticized over high levels of politicization and staff turnover in the public administration. The legal frame of PAR (including all legal acts related to administration) does not contain mechanisms that can prevent politicization. The provisions enabling horizontal and vertical mobility of staff are sometimes (ab)used to justify political reshuffling of administration staff. The CSA is responsible for neutral and apolitical selection of civil servant, but only to a certain degree. After the initial stages of selection and testing, the list of five best candidates is submitted to the institution in charge (a special selection committee) which then on the basis of interviews chooses the best candidate. The final selection is still at the discretion of the top management of the hiring institution. Regarding promotion, degrading and horizontal reshuffling of staff the CSA has no authority. It acts as a secondary committee for appeals and complaints but with no active legitimacy in those disputes.

The implications of politicized public administration are widely known and often repeated. Politicization retards reforms and capacity-building processes by neglecting the principles of neutrality, efficiency and competency. This causes negative reactions from the EU and also reinforces the public perceptions of the administration as unprofessional, inefficient and corrupt. Moreover, politicization also causes disillusionment among current members of public administration bodies who lose faith in the merit-based system of advancement and promotion and see political engagement as the only source of career progress. This may prompt some of the best civil servants to leave public administration thus decreasing the overall quality of staff and service. Lower quality service and staff would decrease the efficiency and professionalism of the public administration, thus undermining the success of PAR. Furthermore, this would discourage young graduates from joining the public sector thus perpetuating the vicious circle of bad image and low quality staff and services.

Institutional Weight and Import: While PAR is always mentioned as a top priority on every government's agenda, in institutional terms it lacks importance. The current body responsible for coordinating the PAR process in Macedonia is the Public Administration Reforms Unit within the Sector for Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis of the General Secretariat of the Government. The Unit has a staff of three. And while the Unit's staff is overall satisfied with the communication and cooperation levels with other institutions involved in the PAR process, enhancing the institutional weight would increase the capacities of the coordinating body. Other countries from the region that also conducted PAR had entire ministries dealing with public administration (Bulgaria for example). Greater institutional weight means more attention and more resources devoted to PAR, which would ensure greater progress and quicker results.

Finally, the public and civil servants along with the population at large need to gain an understanding that PAR is not a short-term project but rather a long-term process. Even when Macedonia receives positive evaluation from the EU, it would not mean that the reform is over for good. Public administration should not be associated with pre-1989 'rationalization' experiences in public administration which amounted to layoffs and frozen salaries. The most politically and economically developed states also conduct administration reforms and modernization projects (and that is where the latest trends in public administration originate from). Therefore, change needs to be accepted and recognized as an integral part of administration.

Conclusions

This report outlines the main structure and strategy of the public administration reforms (PAR) in Macedonia. Starting with a brief overview of potentially useful definitions and the contextual setting of the reform process, the report goes on to analyze the legal frame that sets the foundation for the reform process. Drawing mostly on the PAR Strategy of the Macedonian government and the SAA and European Partnership, as the main EU documents in the area, PAR in Macedonia have followed the prescribed legalistic path. The majority of the required

laws and secondary legislation have been adopted. There is limited progress with implementation of some laws, and some still need to be adopted.

Building on the legislative basis of reforms, the paper analyzed the progress achieved with efforts aimed at increased transparency and equality within relevant institutions. Moreover, the paper follows the increased efforts at introducing e-governance in the administrative structures and comments on the mutual relation between e-government and increased transparency and neutrality of the administration. While some institutions implement reforms better than others, more efforts are required to overcome past practices and mindsets and truly move towards an efficient and modern public administration.

Finally, both the Macedonian government and the EU conduct evaluations of the progress of PAR. Considering EU membership is among the highest priorities of the Macedonian government, those evaluations need to be taken seriously and the enclosed recommendations to be applied. Naturally, the EU is more critical of the reforms than the government, yet substantial progress has been achieved in some areas (ex. civil service reforms). The report also outlines several areas where further efforts are needed and overall advocates faster and more thorough reforms of the public administration in Macedonia, in view of creating a small, efficient and flexible administration as a prerequisite for EU accession.

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