



ALBANIANS AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

Public Administration in Albania: Between Politics and Citizens

Elona Dhembo



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Public Administration in Albania: Between Politics and Citizens



Institute for Democracy and Mediation
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim



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The present study- Part of a set of studies about the actors in the Albanian democracy

At the beginning of the year 2014 the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung brought into life, together with leading experts of six distinguished organizations and Think Tanks, a long term project. The aim of this project is to create and stimulate a political and social discussion in Albania about the EU Integration.

A long-term Project in several stages

The starting point of the contemplation was the perspective that Albania desires to be soon a full EU member, with an economic and social developed society. More than 80% of the population aims at this goal. To reach it Albania must fulfil, *inter alia*, the minimum social standards of the EU — the so called European Social Model (ESM). **These standards can only be reached if all involved parties of the society along with politics and administration act jointly, namely that they foster a trusting and cooperating relationship between each other.** In order to become an EU member the requirements are high and can just be reached through the cooperation of all participating actors.

On this regard, the long-term project was planned in several stages. They should overlap in time to interweave results from the discussions of the actors with the project work. From this point of view the project stays dynamic and is co-designed by those who are participating in the discussions. Starting point — the first stage — was the assumption that a democratic, social and economic successful society can only develop if all actors act on the foundation of trust, democratically orientated and with the willingness to develop an active cooperation. If the cooperation occurs, the EU membership will be achieved easily. This is why all actors respectively were interviewed about their stands, engagement

and commitment the above mentioned principles and the other involved groups. In this manner three different studies were created.

The first stage: Studies about the main actors

The first study is based on a representative survey in the **population**, a fundamental actor for building up democratic relations. The second study is based on a survey with employees of the public administration in all levels of employment and in all regions - with the self-concept of the **administration** as a service provider for citizens and state. The third study enters uncharted territory. With the background knowledge that **political parties** are the backbone of democracy, members of all three main political parties represented in the parliament were interviewed regarding the present situation and about discussions within their parties. In spite of the fact that this survey cannot - because of self-evident reasons – base on representative data, nevertheless allows a clear view on the leading political protagonists.

The second stage: Potential for similarities and oppositions

The results of these studies are supposed to be seen in correlation with each other to shed light on potentials and shortcomings for a future interaction of these three main groups within democracy. In this discussion should be included the findings of the public debate during the first stage. To a certain extent a **“Manual for Public Debate on Democracy in Albania”** is supposed to be delivered. This working title hints that the working book delivers less answers and recommendations but rather poses questions and stimulates suggestions because the process between the actors is not limited by time. The process is a constantly dynamic one, where always new aspects come into play.

The third stage: The public - lectures, debates and discussions

Public debates and information events - based on the first findings - complete the project work. These events take also place to continuously include new stimulations and findings in the project work. Altogether there will be debates in schools and universities as well as in the public media with representatives of all groups. Policy papers will equally contribute to the important political as well as social debate.

This project path is already part of its objective: **active involvement of all actors in one common discourse**. It is not about finding quick solutions or just an exchange of statements, it rather aims at developing and building up reciprocal trust. Otherwise stated: this endeavour tries, with this genre of public debates, to **ameliorate the rapport of actors - Politics, administration and citizens - and to be conducive for a more efficient cooperation in the organization of a social and democratic society**.

The third stage is certainly organized in an open manner, time and content wise. The project is mainly activated by how far the named actors in this society are ready to get involved in the public with their claims and wishes, their visions and fears.

From this point of view, the project will accompany the Albanian politics for a little while on their way to the EU and will support them. An inevitable component of a democratic debate is that this does not always work smoothly. But one thing always got confirmed: the best friend of a positive development is a critical and constructive dialogue between the actors who have mutual respect for each other.

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Executive summary

This survey report pictures the profile of the public administration in Albania. It describes its main characteristics and attempts to measure and analyse trending perceptions, opinions, attitudes and values of the Albanian public administration, at both central and local level. Public administration's role and responsibilities, its relations with citizens and its activity and related developments are seen through the lenses of those currently serving for the Albanian public administration. To grasp this, a quantitative approach is employed. During 2014, a survey was designed and administered with 1352 public administration servants at local and central level agencies and institutions. Methods of data analysis include descriptive and relational statistics presented in tables and graphs. The data gathering instrument (the questionnaire) is attached to this report as an appendix.

The results confirm that the gap between legal and policy framework and its implementation persists for the public administration in Albania. Public administration in Albania is yet characterised by unstable career paths, high turnover rates shown in the limited experienced civil servants, and time to time troubled by malpractice, corruption, abuse of power and influence of politics. This overview is accompanied by an overall scepticism on the implementation of participatory democracy principles which need to be cautiously addressed in an era where collaboration with citizens and civil society is becoming a foundation for public sector reforms and developments.

1. Introduction

The demand for good and open governance has been raising the bar of standards that governments and public administration need to meet. Many citizens around the democratic world are demanding for a governance where principles of good governance such as “accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, inclusiveness, upholding rights and following the rule of law” (Brody, 2009) are the fundamentals of their societies. This trend extends to post-socialist societies too. Since 2011, Albania has officially committed to Open Government Partnership, to promote good and participatory democracy and foster social and economic development (Albanian Government, 2011).

The term ‘open’ encompasses Open Government, Open Data, Open Information, and Open Innovation, all of which demanding among others the changing relation between citizens and authorities (Maier-Rabler and Huber, 2011)¹. As put by the secretary-general of the OECD in the 2011 report on innovative and open government, with the current developments (including the current crisis and technological developments), “citizens and civil society will be empowered to take on greater responsibility and start new partnerships with the public sector. Therefore, collaboration with citizens and civil society will become a cornerstone for future public sector reforms” (OECD, 2011, p. 13). In this context, governments and their civil service, as the administrative arm, is tasked with upholding and, when possible, leading on the principles of good and open governance (UNDP, 2013). This new vision needs for governments and civil service on the one hand as well as citizens and civil society on the other to embrace it and meet expected roles

1. “Open”: the changing relation between citizens, public administration, and political authority Towards researching the Public Value of Open Government

and responsibilities in that respect.

While citizen's expectations on governments and respective civil service have continuously been a subject of research, civil service and public administration at large are rarely targeted and little is explored on how the public administration perceives its roles and responsibilities, its relations with the citizens and their prospects for future developments. This is particularly true for post-socialist countries in general and Albania in particular. Aware of this gap in research and literature in the area (as well as of limitations in accessing small scale research) here attempt to contribute in narrowing this gap by presenting a cross-sectional survey aiming to explore specificities of the Albanian public administration profile and perceptions on roles, responsibilities and relations with citizens.

This short introduction is followed by a brief backgrounder on the public administration developments in post-socialist countries in general and in Albania in particular leaving more room to the methodology, findings and conclusions of the survey.

2. Public administration in post-socialist countries and in Albania – A brief background

Post-communist countries started their transition with numerous needs and priorities, among which the reforming of the public administration. In fact, a widely-accepted model prioritising public administration reform agendas in transition countries has been missing and this has created risks of incoherent reform initiatives, also intensified by the multitude of donors financing reforms in these countries often poorly coordinated (Verheijen, 2002; Jacobs, 2004 p. 330). In Albania, this was coupled with a pretty unstable legal framework on public administration in the country leading to slower and less efficient implementation outcomes.

Regardless of this nuances, in most transitional post-socialist countries, downsizing and fiscal stability have been at the core of public administration reforms (Cepiku and Mititelu, 2010). In Albania, public sector employment has registered a continuous decline since 1993. As in other post-socialist countries, the most basic transformation was the shift of resources from the State to the private sector (World Bank, 1996 p. 6). However, no parallel efforts were made by international institutions and governments to strengthen public administration and management and public support was also weak (Cepiku and Mititelu, 2010).

Since 2001, in its National strategy for socio-economic development, the Albanian government recognized public administration reform as fundamental for the attainment of the medium-term objectives for growth and poverty reduction (Republika e Shqiperise, 2001 p.53). In the first years of transition, in Albania, the focus was mainly on reforms at the central level to build key democratic institutions, as well as on basic economic reforms, while less attention was paid

to local government reforms. Reforms were addressed mainly by drafting laws and formally establishing new agencies. Different analysts have claimed that such efforts were primarily to reveal donor pressure rather than seriously commit to implementation (see for instance Cepiku and Mititelu, 2010).

Overall, in the last decades, capacity to implement reforms has been weak and political interferences have been a threat for their successful implementation. Much of that legal framework has yet to be implemented particularly at the local level where there is still very limited administrative and fiscal autonomy (Cepiku, 2002, p. 301; World Bank, 2004 p. 6). Most, donors have continuously negotiated their assistance programs and maintained their consultation process essentially through line ministries and have not utterly stepped to the local level governance leading often to a lack of sufficient knowledge of local conditions and a biased suspicion of local administrations, which tend to hinder the decentralization implementation process (World Bank, 2004).

In this context, public administration reform remains yet a key priority. The EU progress reports on Albania (2013, 2012), have continuously stressed this necessity. Although the adoption of the Civil Service Law, one of the measures required for obtaining candidate status, was a major step towards de-politicising public administration timely adoption of the secondary legislation compliant with the principles of the law and proper implementation is yet to happen.

Reforming of the public administration is one of the priorities in the agenda of the new Albanian government (in office from 2013). As presented in the official page of the Minister for Innovation and Public Administration², the reform of the public administration

2. Accessible at <http://www.inovacioni.gov.al/al/prioritete/reforma-ne-administraten-publike1389860226>

will be guided from the requirements of the EU progress report on Albania, 2013. Its main priority will be the implementation of the new law no.152/2013 on “The civil servants” in the Republic of Albania and the respective secondary legislation. New recruitment and carrier procedures as well as an automatic system of human resource management in public administration ranked among other steps to be undertaken. However, a better comprehension of the public administration through research is essential for making these changes happen as a success story.

3. Methods

Population and sample

The survey targeted a sample of 1600 central and local level administration employees out of a total population of approximately 40,000 (excluding the body of employees in the pre-university system, healthcare, law enforcement and armed forces). The sample size was calculated to meet a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 2.4. A multistage sampling strategy was employed including the following main stages:

1. An even number of institutions were randomly selected for the lists of central and local level public administration institutions.
2. After consent from gatekeepers to administer the questionnaires with their staff members, an even number of individuals were randomly selected from each institution list of employees.
3. Only those that consented after being informed became part of the final sample of this survey.

Finally, a total of 1352 respondents consented and became part of the final sample population producing a response rate of 84%. The research team decided not to replace those refusing on the following bases:

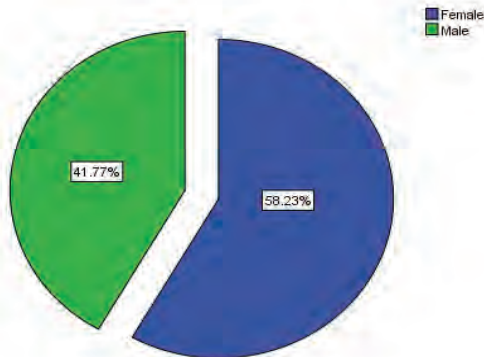
- First, several institutions (particularly at the local level) had small number of employees which would make the replacement process not smooth or even not possible;
- Second, the 16% refusal rate is meaningful to the context based on the reasons of refusal, hence important to be reported and interpreted. The vast majority of those not consenting after being

thoroughly informed reported to be afraid of being identified and risking their job (based on how their responses could be interpreted).

- Third, the final sample population obtained is still big enough to represent public administration population at a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 2.6.

Main demographics of the final sample of 1352 respondents are presented below in terms of gender and level of governance distribution. Overall, the final population sample completing the process included 58% women and 42% men. Nine respondents preferred not to answer the question on gender. Respondents were given the opportunity to respond to as many questions as they felt comfortable given their reluctance of being identifiable through demographic data they were sharing. Missing data on other demographics are primarily due to the same reason.

Graph 1. Gender representation

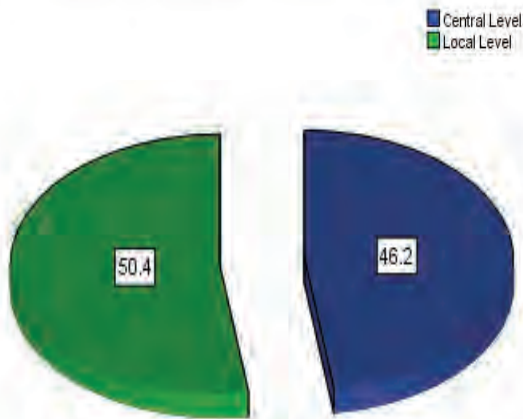


The equal ratio of representation form local and central level was maintained in the final sample population. Even after refusals, the sample manifested an almost equal share across central and local level institutions of the public administration in the country. About 3.4% of the respondents have not declared the level of governing institution they worked in. However, among the majority of those that did report on that, 682 worked in a local level institution/agency and 624 in a central level one. Table 1 and Graph 2 present the respective data.

Table 1. Sample distribution by level of governance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Missing	46	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Central level	624	46.2	46.2	49.6
	Local level	682	50.4	50.4	100.0
	Total	1352	100.0	100.0	

Graph 2. Central and Local Level Representation of the Public Administration



The instrument, data gathering and data analysing

A questionnaire was designed and piloted before being finalised based on the literature review, previously applied instruments, as well as on the local specificities. The questionnaire was organised in 5 sections.

- Section 1 gathered demographic data to be utilised in drawing the Albanian public administration profile. In addition to gender, age, area, education, and income, this section included questions on the political party membership as one of the main sensitivities in the area under research.
- Section 2 gathered data on the perceptions of public administration on their role and mission in society and on their opinions and attitudes on relevant developments and reforming trends with the public administration. A comparative perspective with other sectors of the society was engaged to relativize opinions shared by participants.
- Section 3 aimed to explore on the main influencing factors that are believed to play a role in shaping public administration in Albania.
- Section 4 required information on perceptions and experiences in relating with citizens. Through a combination of individual attitudes and opinions on public administration's general perceptions a more objective measurement of the public administrations' attitudes and opinions on relationships with citizens was made possible.
- Section 5 gathered data aiming to deepen the understanding on public administration attitudes towards participatory democracy. This last section in combination with section 4 are intended to provide a fuller picture of the relation public administration – citizens.

\The data gathered were entered and processed in SPSS 21. Descriptive and relational statistics³ are reported in the chapter of findings in this report.

Ethical considerations

The data gathering process was conducted under institutional agreement between IDM and the randomly selected institutions at the local and central level. The questionnaire was self-administered after informed consent was granted by the respondents. Self-administration was selected as the best approach to enhance respondents' 'privacy' and minimise refusal rates. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured and final findings will be shared with all participants as a courtesy for their contribution.

3. Relational statistics were accepted as statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

4. Findings

4.1. A profile of the Albanian public administration

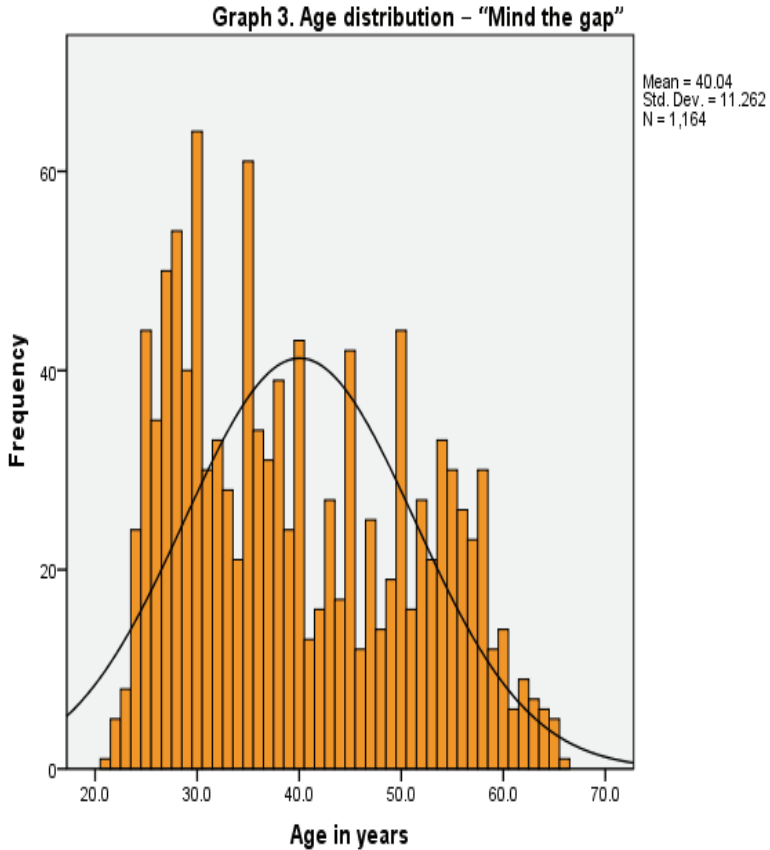
• Age and gender

A total of 1164 participants declared their respective age at the moment of data-gathering. The age varied from as young as 21 years old to a maximum of 66 years old (see Table 2).

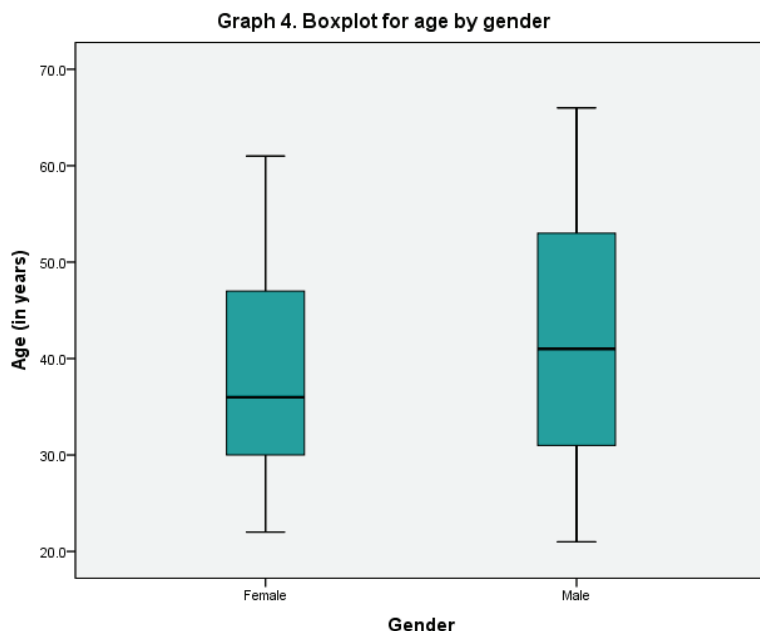
Table 2. Age of administration employees in years

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age in years	1164	21.0	66.0	40.03	11.26
Valid N	1164				

Overall, the results show “a preference” of the public administration for youth and seniority. Public administration seems to be less friendly towards middle ages. The following histogram compares actual distribution of the sample by age to a normal distribution. Apparently, for those planning to enter or have a career in the Albanian public administration, this graph warns “to mind the age gap”.



However, differences are noticed between men and women in terms of age. Men’s age range is wider than that of women. The median age for women is younger than for men and women are rarely found working for the Albanian public administration beyond their early 40s (see the following Boxplot). Further research would be needed to explore on the reasons for these gender differences as well as similarities or differences with other sectors of the Albanian society.



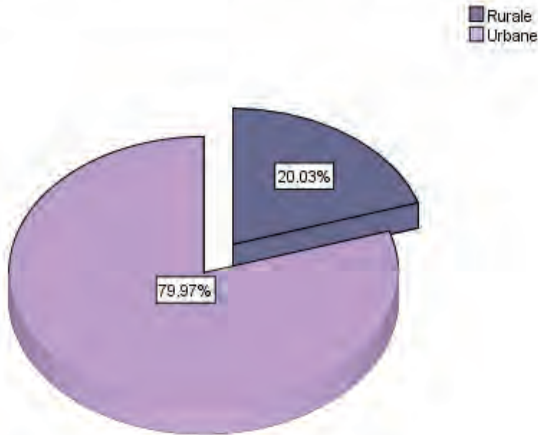
- **Working experience with the public administration**

Regardless of the fact that the sample was evenly distributed across central and local level institutions, as expected, they are primarily located in the urban areas of the country. Only one in five respondents worked in a rural area, amounting to a total of 20% of the sample. Such distribution might affect the access and quality of services citizens of rural areas receive as compared to those of the urban areas. Serious repercussions might be expected in a context where 50% of the Albania population lives in its rural areas. Table 3 and Graph 5 illustrate the distribution of participants according to their working area.

Table 3. Sample distribution by working area

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	19	1.4	1.4	1.4
Rural	267	19.7	19.7	21.2
Urban	1066	78.8	78.8	100.0
Total	1352	100.0	100.0	

Grafiku 5. Pjesëmarrësit në studim sipas zonës së vendit të punës



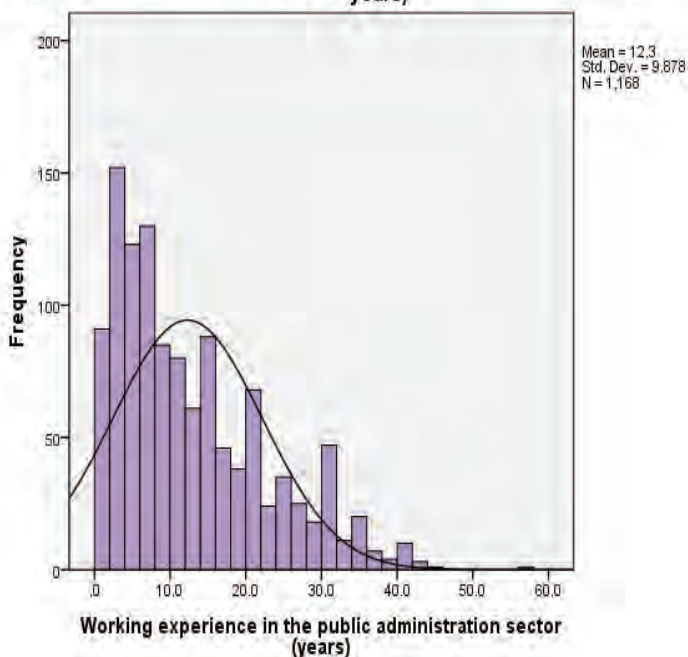
Further findings confirm that Albanian public administration is not only primarily 'urban' but also inexperienced with relevance to the sector. In fact, the distribution of working years within the public administration sector matches age distribution trend. As shown in Table 4, in the Albanian public administration, it is most common to encounter staff with only 1 year (or less than that) of working experience with the public administration (mode = 1). On average, the respondents have an experience of about 12 years with the public administration sector. The mean value is a result of the continuous high turnover rates of the public administration in Albania, often

documented and criticized locally and internationally (EU, 2013)⁴ and the small core of experienced employees often serving as the “institution memory”.

Table 4. Statistics of years within the public administration

N	Valid	1168
	Missing	184
Mean		12.29
Median		10.00
Mode		1.0
Std. Deviation		9.87
Range		55.5

Graph 6. Distribution of working experience in the public administration sector (in years)



4. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/brochures/albania_2013.pdf p.8

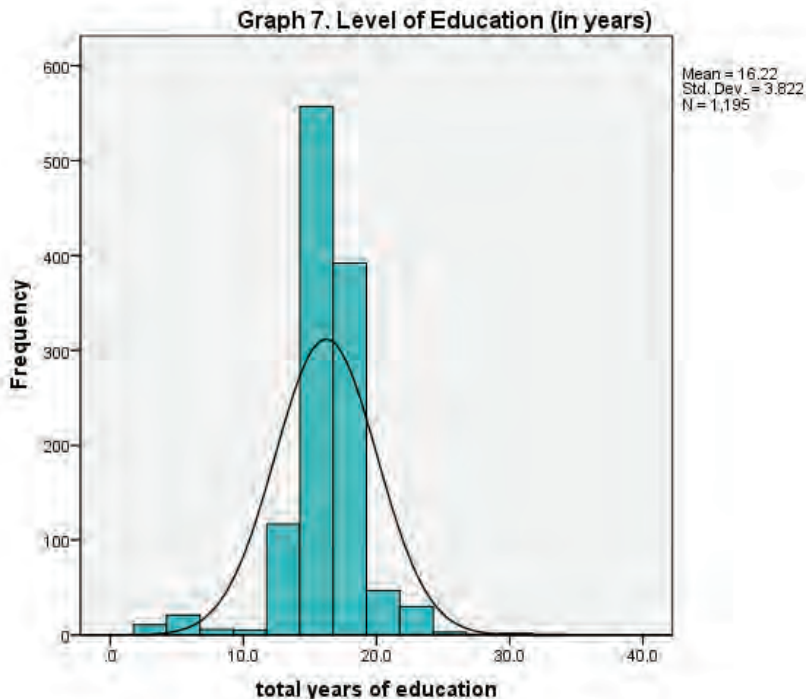
• Education and salary

The public administration appears to be well-educated in terms of the total of education years completed. On average, the respondents have completed 16 years of education. In addition, roughly 10% have completed some kind of post-graduate studies (18 years of education). This positive development is also a highly predictable finding considering the trend that has characterised higher education in Albania in the recent years – the increased access to public universities and the booming of the private sector.

Table 5. Education of public administration staff (in years)

N	Valid	1195
	Missing	157
Mean		16.21
Median		16.00
Mode		16.0
Std. Deviation		3.82

Regardless of the high average education level of the public administration, some outliers do appear. In fact, these outliers are not to be excluded as they reveal an important fact – yet under some public administration sectors/positions non-qualified staff is being hired. Among the participants, 14 of them report of having completed only five years of schooling and other 18 between five to ten years (see Graph 7). It is not clear how this is made possible or justified when a minimum of 8 years has been for decades compulsory.



No difference was marked in terms of poorly educated staff concentration in urban and rural areas or in local versus central institutions. However, on average public administration staff in urban areas reported higher levels of education, with a mean of 16.4 years as compared to 14.9 years in the rural areas. Likewise, central government institutions on average reported one more year of education in comparison to the local level (see tables 6 and 7).

Table 6. Years of Education and working area

Working area	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
	14.533	15	4.4379
Rural	14.933	232	2.2983
Urbane	16.438	942	3.0327
Total	16.120	1189	2.9885

Table 7. Years of education and institutional level

Working level	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
	15.475	40	3.2264
Central level	16.711	524	3.2187
Local Level	15.666	625	2.6728
Total	16.120	1189	2.9885

As with urban and central level public administration servants, women are found to be on average better educated. They report on average 16.3 years of education as compared to 15.8 years for men. Regardless of this, top and best rewarded positions are held more often by men. Within the small category of those with salaries of over 100.000ALL (see Graph 8 for the general distribution of the sample by monthly salary) 1.6% of the male respondents work at this levels as compared to only 0.9% of the female respondents (see Table 8).

Graph 8. Monthly salary

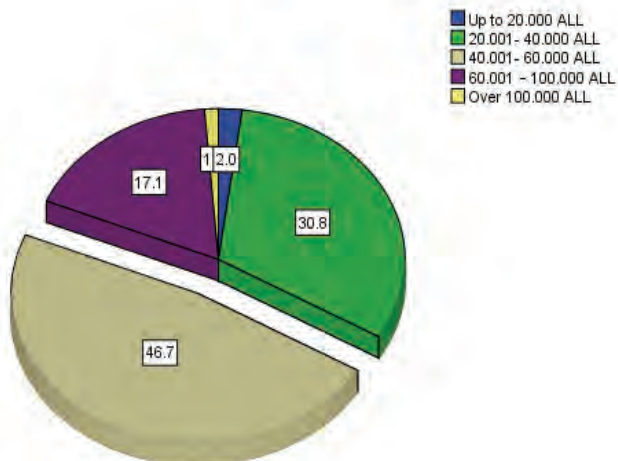


Table 8. Crosstabulation of monthly salary by gender

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Monthly salary	Up to 20.000 ALL	11	16	27
		1.4%	2.9%	2.0%
	20.001- 40.000 ALL	212	200	412
		27.1%	35.7%	30.7%
	40.001- 60.000 ALL	401	230	631
		51.3%	41.0%	47.0%
	60.001 – 100.000 ALL	136	95	231
	17.4%	16.9%	17.2%	
	Over 100.000 ALL	7	9	16
		.9%	1.6%	1.2%
	Missing	15	11	26
		1.9%	2.0%	1.9%
Total		782	561	1343
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Top salary positions are occupied by staff with more than 16 years of education, hence with some kind of post-graduate studies. Better educated staff occupies 93% of the over 100.000ALL category

and 90% of the next top category (Table 9 shows counts per each category).

Table 9. Crosstabulation of monthly salary by education

		Education level		Total
		Up to 16 years	More than 16 years	
Monthly salary	Missing	11	18	29
	Up to 20.000 ALL	19	8	27
	20.001- 40.000 ALL	137	280	417
	40.001- 60.000 ALL	128	504	632
	60.001 – 100.000 ALL	21	210	231
	Over 100.000 ALL	1	15	16
Total		317	1035	1352

• **Public administration and political party membership**

The vast majority of the respondents (72%) report of not being members of any political party in the country. Some 22% admit their membership in one of the Albanian political parties; while about 6% chose not to provide an answer to the question (see Graph 9).

Graph 9. Political Party Membership

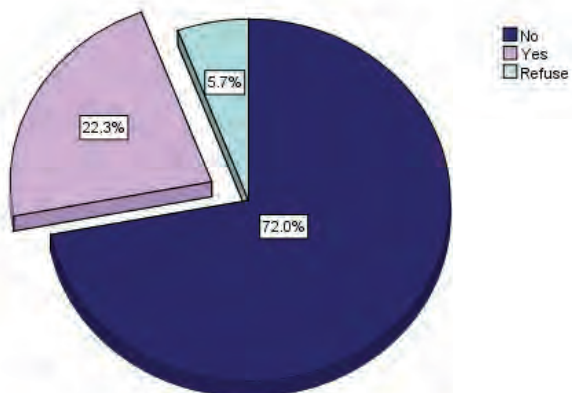


Table 10 provides information on the association of salaries and political party membership status. Political party members are primarily concentrated in the middle salary/position levels. One could speculate for these positions as the best ones combining decent salaries for fewer qualifications and skills being mandatory. However, further explorations are necessary for a deeper understanding of this trend.

Tabela 10. Paga mujore (pozicioni i punës) sipas anëtarësimit në parti politike

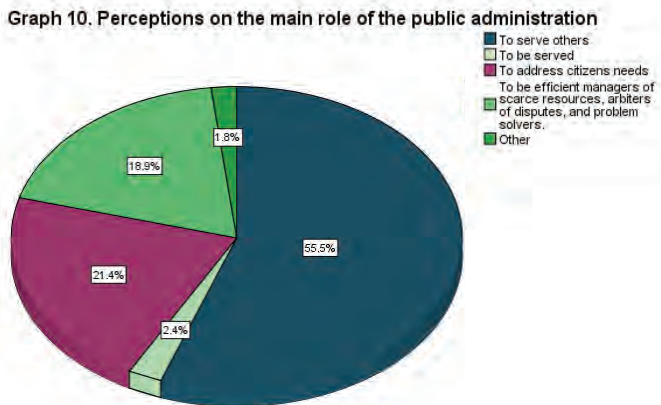
		Jeni anëtar i ndonjë partie politike?				Total
		Mungojnë	Jo	Po	Refuzoj	
Paga mujore	Deri në 20.000 ALL	0 .0%	15 1.6%	11 3.7%	1 1.3%	27 2.0%
	20.001- 40.000 ALL	4 22.2%	255 26.6%	136 45.6%	22 28.9%	417 30.8%
	40.001- 60.000 ALL	7 38.9%	469 48.9%	120 40.3%	36 47.4%	632 46.7%
	60.001 – 100.000 ALL	1 5.6%	190 19.8%	27 9.1%	13 17.1%	231 17.1%
	Mbi 100.000 ALL	1 5.6%	14 1.5%	0 .0%	1 1.3%	16 1.2%
	Mungojnë/pa përgjigje	5 27.8%	17 1.8%	4 1.3%	3 3.9%	29 2.1%
	Total	18 100.0%	960 100.0%	298 100.0%	76 100.0%	1352 100.0%

4.2. Public administration perceptions on their role and mission

• Perceptions on the role of public administration

Participants in the survey were asked to share their perception on the role public administration should be playing. More than half of the respondents (approximately 56%) believe that their role is to ‘serve to other citizens’. The rest share opinions of being there ‘to address citizens’ needs’ (21%) or ‘be efficient managers of scarce resources, arbiters of disputes, and problem solvers’ (19%). However, a tiny but not insignificant portion of about 2% does see public administration as a way of serving one’s self interests.

This is in full contradiction with the legal requirement of the Law No.9131 date 8.9.2003 demanding on its Article 3.dh that a public administration position may never be used for individual, private interests.



Those reporting to be using their public administration position for their individual interests weigh twice as much within public administration representatives with political party membership (4%) as within non-members (2%). Seemingly, a relation between party membership and misuse of power and position could be claimed.

• **Perceptions on the nature of work and workload**

Almost 80% of the respondents report considering their work as strictly professional. However, around 10% report for it to be dependent on the leadership attitudes. In addition, 9% of the respondents report for their work to be a balanced mixed of professionalism and politics. Such evidence might be showing that

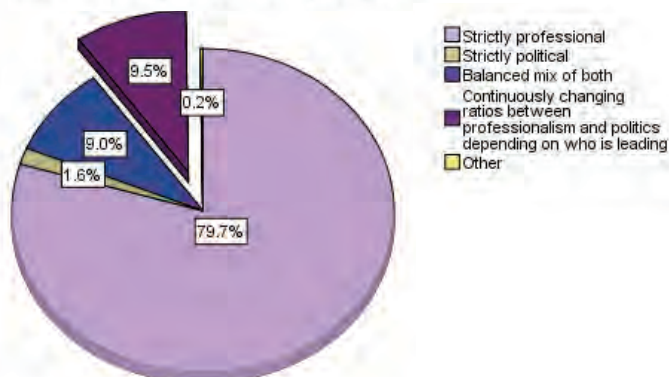
some institutions have poor systemic approach in defining the border between politics and professionalism in their working environment. Again, such an approach violates Law No.9131 date 8.9.2003 which states in its Article 3.b that public administrations staff must fulfil its duties and responsibilities independently for the political view.

Table 11. Individual considerations on the nature of respective work / position.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Missing	15	1.1	1.1	1.1
Other/ just do my job	1	.1	.1	1.2
Other/Supportive	1	.1	.1	1.3
Balanced mix of both	120	8.9	8.9	10.1
Strictly institutional	1	.1	.1	10.2
Strictly professional	1065	78.8	78.8	89.0
Strictly political	22	1.6	1.6	90.6
Continuously changing ratios between professionalism and politics depending on who is leading.	127	9.4	9.4	100.0
Total	1352	100.0	100.0	

A qualitative approach would better benefit to the aim of exploring and understanding how this shift between professionalism and politics is shaped by a variety of actors and factors as well as on what makes public administration employees vulnerable and resilient towards political pressure.

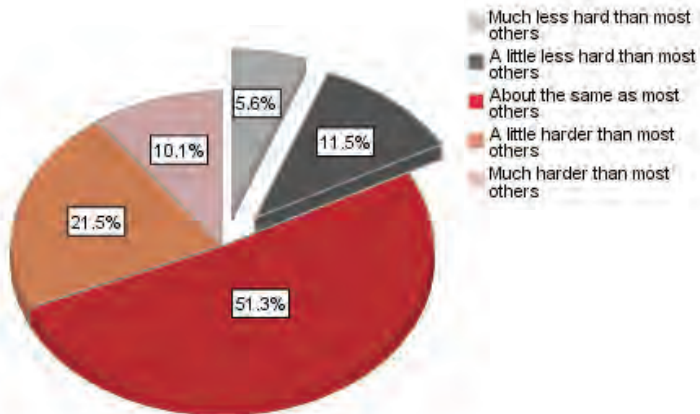
Figure 11. "How do you consider your work?"



Exploring more on the politics influence, a cross-tabulation between political party membership and perceptions on the nature of work within public administration reveals that those who see their work as strictly political account for only 1% of the non-members as compared to 4% of political party members. This finding confirm the loyalty of party members to political parties agendas but leaves us with the doubt if this is a result of their concentration in the political positions of the public administration or their readiness to use other positions to pursue their personal political interests.

When asked to compare public administration to other sectors of the Albanian society, around 17% of all participants admit that, in general, the public administration works ‘a little less’ or ‘much less’ than the rest (see Graph 12.).

Graph 12. Comparative perspective on the workload of the public administration vs other sectors.

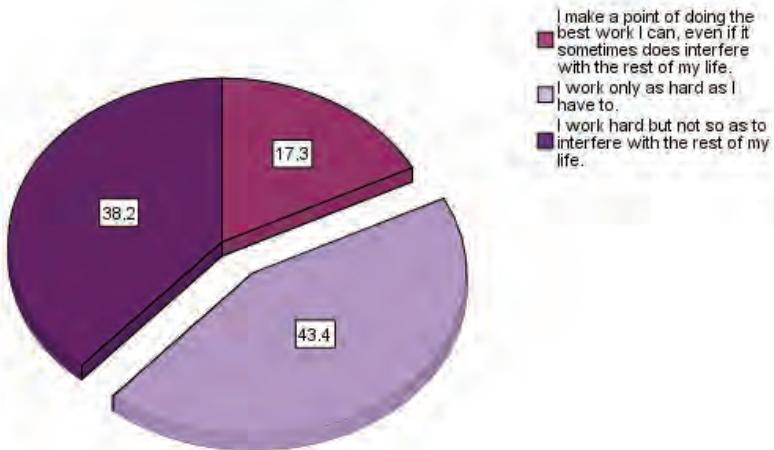


Those who share the opinion that public administration in Albania works “much less” than the other sectors of the Albanian society account for 8% of the respondents from the local level as compared

to 3% among those of the central level. This finding would require further research to see if this is primarily a result of a lower self-esteem among local level employees or a result of a substantial difference in the work-load between central and local level public administration institutions and agencies.

On individual terms, most of our respondents feel that they personally work “as hard as they have to” (43%) or “hard but not so as to interfere with the rest of their lives” (38%). Some 7% feel that their workload goes beyond these boundaries and sometimes it does interfere with the rest of their lives (see Graph 13).

Graph 13. Individual feelings on the workload



- **Reforming of the public administration: scenarios for the development of the public administration**

Respondents were presented to 4 different scenarios (see the box below) with the aim of measuring their opinion on what they believed would be most appropriate as measures to be taken to help improve public administration performance in Albania.

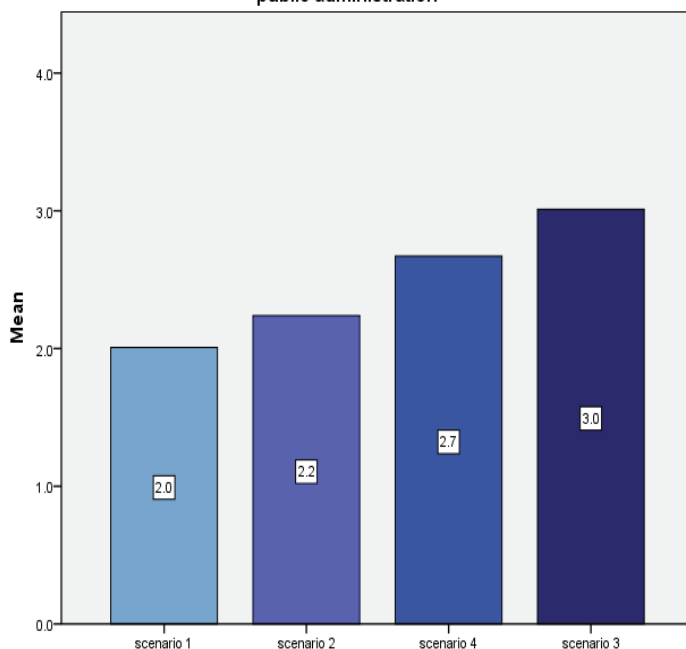
Potential scenarios:

1. *The main argument in favour of life-time tenure is that it compensates for the generally higher private sector salaries and, even more, enhances job protection for those employees with a regulatory or enforcement function and with jobs needing protection against individual and political pressure.*
2. *The possibility of firing staff for poor performance may lead to higher performance levels, since staff would believe they are subject to sharper discipline.*
3. *The individualisation of pay and the introduction of high, performance-related pay bonuses have mostly negative effects: employees feeling that they are treated incorrectly or unfairly because of problems in measuring performance, less loyalty of employees and less motivation to work among those who do not receive a bonus.*
4. *Total privatisation of the civil service would lead to a decline in organisational loyalty, more ethical problems and more politicisation. In addition, it would increase mobility between the public and private sector and lead to less continuity and stability in the public service.*

The following graph presents the level of agreement (on average) for each of the scenarios, in a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 represents full agreement and 5 total rejection. It results that respondents count on the job protection within public administration and that is why scenario 1 has a mean of 2 or “agree”. Less support gets scenario number 3 leading to the need of further exploration of why

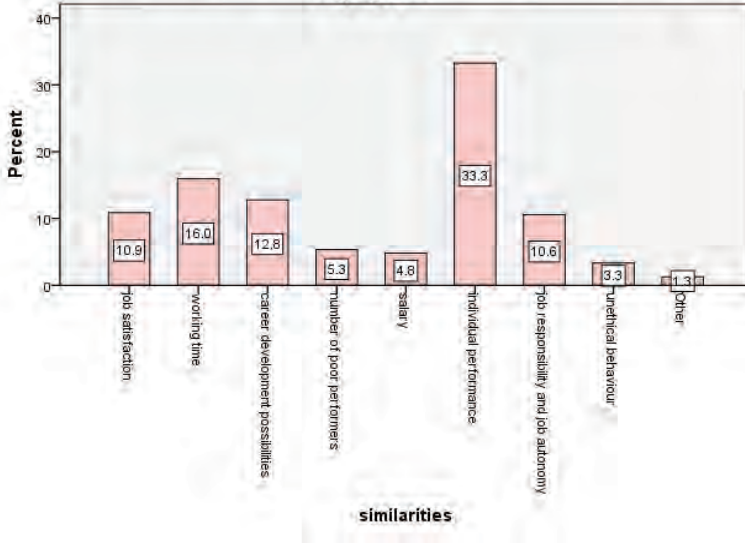
individualised assessment and rewarding of the staff performance would not find much support among them in a context where most of the respondents do consider public administration to be working more than others or even letting work interfere with the rest of their lives (see Graphs 12 and 13 above).

Graph 14. Level of agreement with potential developments/scenarios for the public administration

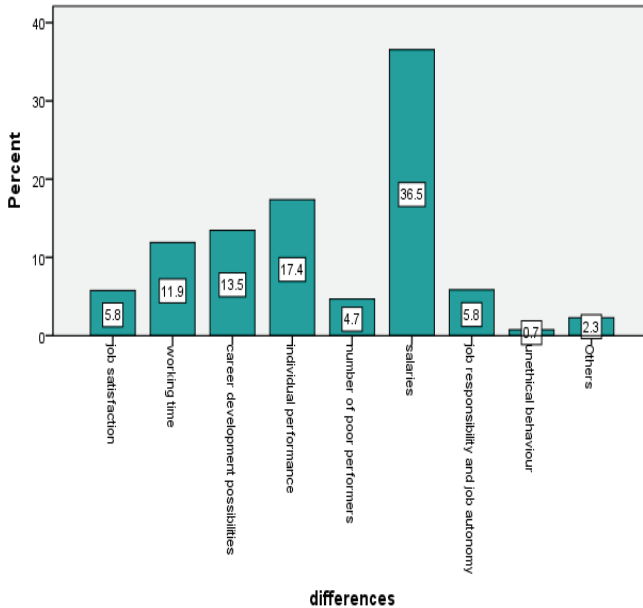


Further, in comparative terms, our respondents believe that they are similar to private sector employees when it comes to individual performance and working time schedules but they differ when it comes to rewarding (the majority of 37% believe that the main difference of public and private sectors are the salaries).

Graph 15. What is the main similarity between civil servants and private sector employees?



Graph 16. Main difference between civil servants and private sector employees



In fact, low salaries have been a continuous challenge in terms of both attracting the most qualified professionals and keeping them away from bribery and corruption in the public administration sector and other non-private sectors in the country.

4.3. The politics and its influence in public administration

Even though only 22% of the respondents reported political party membership, it is found that members or non-members, public administration employees believe that politics is the most influential factor affecting their work within the public administration. In a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 being the most influential, representatives of the public administration rated political instability first with an average score of 3.7 out of 5.

Graph 17. What influences Albanian public administration?

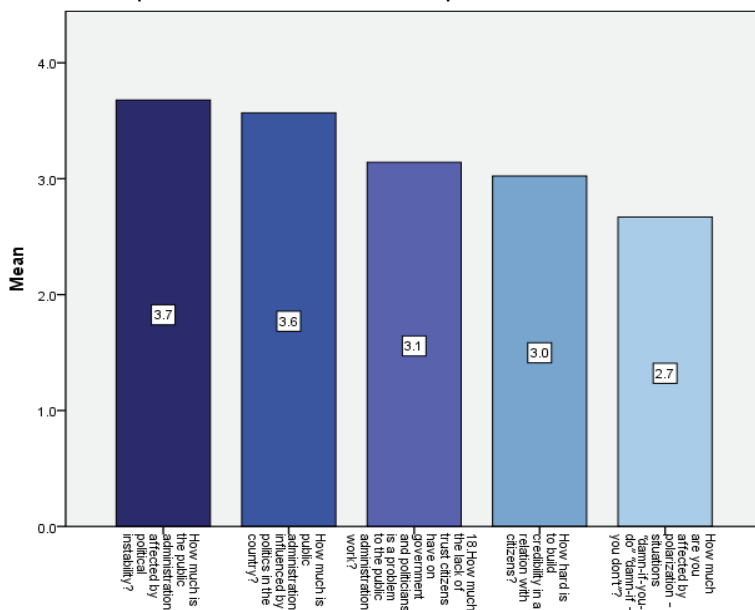


Table 12 presents the results of crosstabulating scores of the perceived influence of politics in public administration works with considerations of respondents on the nature of their work. Those who have reported to consider the work they do as “strictly political” and “continuously changing ratios between professionalism and politics depending on who is leading” in great majority gave 4 or 5 (maximal) to politics as a main influencing factor. However, scores do not differ much also among those who report for their work to be “strictly professional”. About 42% of them gave to politics a score of 4 and around 16% a score of 5 leading to the conclusion that politics is influencing public administration work (sometimes) regardless of individual will and integrity of the employee.

Table 12. Crosstabulation of attitudes towards work and influence of politics

		Influence of politics					Total
		1.0 Not at all	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0 Most influential	
How do you consider your work?	Continuously changing ratios between professionalism and politics depending on who is leading	4 3.2%	6 4.8%	18 14.3%	56 44.4%	42 33.3%	126 100.0%
	Strictly political	1 4.5%	1 4.5%	7 31.8%	9 40.9%	4 18.2%	22 100.0%
	Strictly professional	75 7.3%	104 10.1%	250 24.2%	436 42.2%	167 16.2%	1032 100.0%
	Balanced mix of both	2 1.7%	14 12.1%	31 26.7%	42 36.2%	27 23.3%	116 100.0%
	Other/ strictly institutional	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%
	Other / supportive	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%
	Other /I just do my tasks	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%	0 .0%	1 100.0%
	Missing	0 .0%	1 6.7%	7 46.7%	5 33.3%	2 13.3%	15 100.0%
Total	82 6.2%	126 9.6%	314 23.9%	550 41.9%	242 18.4%	1314 100.0%	

4.4. How does Albanian public administration relate to the citizens?

Transition and reforming from ex-socialist reality and mind-setting has proven to be a lengthy process in many areas. In this section we try to explore on current public administration opinions, attitudes and experiences in relation to the citizens they are expected to relate, serve and actively involved in their everyday work. To this aim, respondents were asked to share their opinion on their perceptions on general attitudes of public administration as well as on individual stands for a comparative dimension.

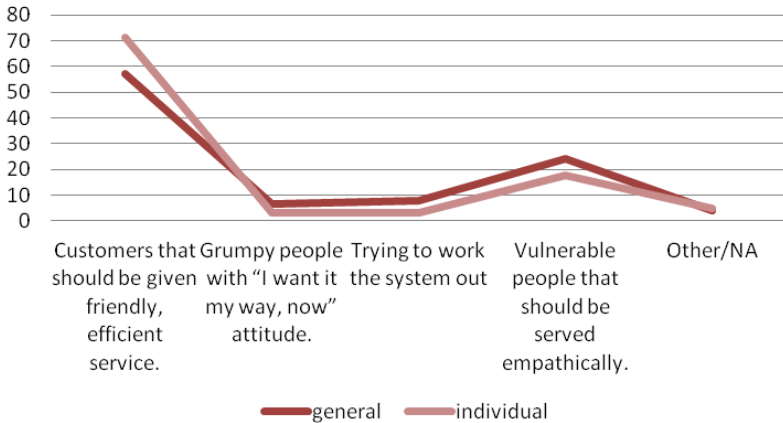
In general, respondents believe that citizens being served by public administration in nowadays are perceived as either “customers that should be given friendly, efficient service” (57%) or as “vulnerable people that should be served empathically” (24.2%).

Treating citizens as customers is a much more spread belief at individual, personal level (71%). Unfortunately, almost 15% of the respondents believe that in general citizens being served by public administration employees are regarded as “grumpy people with ‘I want it my way, now’ attitude” or as people who are “trying to work the system out”. Some 6% share these last two statements also as their main personal attitude towards citizens. Table 13 and Graph 18 provide more details on these attitudes.

Table 13. How are citizens being perceived by the public administration?

	others	self
Customers that should be given friendly, efficient service.	57.1	71.4
Grumpy people with "I want it my way, now" attitude.	6.7	3.1
Trying to work the system out	7.9	3.3
Vulnerable people that should be served empathically.	24.2	17.6
Other/NA	4.1	4.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Graph 18. General vs. individual perceptions of citizens being served.



Further, participant in this survey were asked to report on their experiences in serving citizens and the feedback received in return as well as on their expectations. Table 14 provides the results generated from their responses. Overall, more than half of the respondents have primarily received and would also expect to receive recognition and gratitude (52% and 55% respectively).

Table 14. What is experienced and expected in return of service?

	Experienced	Expected
Recognition and gratitude	52.3	55.4
Reciprocity	39.1	34.1
Arrogance	2.9	.6
Other	5.7	9.9
Total	100.0	100.0

However, more striking information is revealed when the data of Table 14 are further broken down. Exploring on what respondents had specified among the “other” category, we find that 2% deliberately specified that they did receive a reward/payment while some 5.3% would have expected to be rewarded in such terms but were deceived.

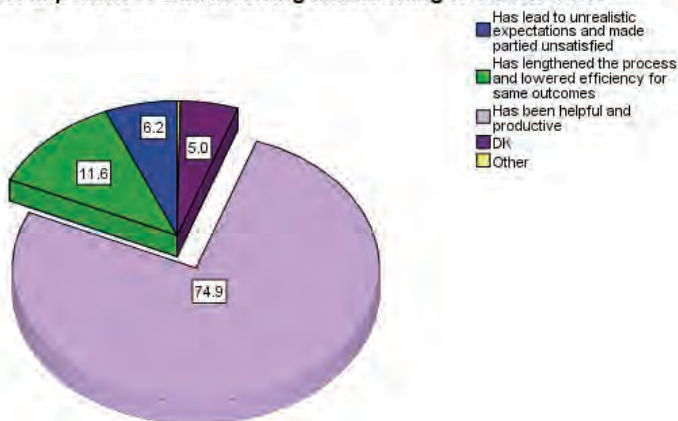
On the other hand, when it comes to citizens active role and involvement in democratic policy- and/or decision-making processes those who are totally supportive of such a principle do not go beyond 36% even at the individual level attitudes. It results that among public administration there dominates a mentality that the principle of citizens’ participation can be best put into practice only with the “right” people (see Table 15). In addition, almost 15% of the respondents, at the individual level, believe that citizens’ participation is simply a loss of time (2.5%) or not relevant to their context (12.1%).

Table 15. Attitudes towards citizens’ participation

Does public administration believe in citizens’ participation principle?	General perception	Individual perception
No, just a loss of time and raises their expectations	1.6	2.5
Yes, but not for our context, that’s for an ideal world	15.8	12.1
Yes, but participation of the “right” people	51.6	46.7
Yes, totally	29.1	36.5
Missing	1.9	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0

When experienced, involvement and stakeholder’s participation have been rated as “helpful and productive” for 75% of the participants. Apparently, these positive experiences have not always been enough to cause a greater shift of the respondents towards attitudes of total support on citizens’ participation as shown in the data from the previous table.

Graph 19. Experiences with involving and listening to stakeholders



Regardless of the variation in opinions and attitudes based on individual experiences or perceptions regarding citizens’ participation and involvement, in principle, most of our respondents greatly value citizens’ agency in democracy. Around 38% of the respondents believe citizens’ agency in democratic societies is essential and for another 49% of great importance (see Table 16).

Table 16. Value of citizens’ agency in democracy.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Missing	23	1.7	1.7	1.7
Important, but not always necessary	127	9.4	9.4	11.1
Significantly important	662	49.0	49.0	60.1
Not important	18	1.3	1.3	61.4
Very much, it is essential	522	38.6	38.6	100.0
Total	1352	100.0	100.0	

This last finding, besides ending the results section on a positive note, calls for further research on the ways that could improve these processes making them more effective and valuable for both public administration and citizens.

5. Conclusions

This survey report presented findings that help picture the current profile of the Albanian public administration as well as opinions and attitudes in terms of its role and responsibilities, relations with citizens and other influencing factors in the recent public administration activity, reforms and developments. Being little exposed to previous nationwide surveys with a similar scope might have contributed (among other reasons) to a not so smooth process of data-gathering in terms of passing gatekeepers to access institutions and agencies and achieving high response rates by overcoming feelings of fear and frustrations among civil servants.

Overall, the findings presented in this report lead to the conclusion that Albanian public administration profile is continuously changing as it still manifests characteristics of unstable career paths, with many new entries (accompanying government change), and on average short-career civil servants. Public administration in Albania results to be biased particularly towards youth and men. Working culture and relevant policies and procedures need to be further explored to be able to recommend more specific changes to foster equal opportunities within the public administration as well as clearer, more transparent and consistent recruitment and promotion procedures and practices.

Further, being geographically closer to urban areas, Albanian public administration service might differ in how it relates and delivers services to citizens in urban and rural areas. Such potential differences need to be further studied and accordingly addressed, particularly in a time when the reforming of the administrative division of the country (currently under process) might deepen the discrepancy or produce new ones.

Nevertheless, there is a general growing tendency of the public administration to relate and serve to the citizens as customers, looking in return only for recognition and gratitude; even though perceptions and opinions related to malpractice, corruption and use of power for individual benefits are not simply sporadic. Principles of participatory democratic processes are widely embraced. However, scepticism on their implementation and relevance to the context persist. The large influence of politics, widely acknowledged among Albanian public administration, has had its dominant contribution in shaping and maintaining most of the problematic accompanying public administration in Albania.

Regardless of what might have characterised public administration developments in Albania in the last decades, a fast progressing reform of the Albanian public administration does look close. At its current state, the Albanian public administration is (formally) well-educated and qualified, with high self-esteem also in comparison to other sectors of the Albanian society. Their commitment might be further incentivised by policies that keep strengthening the most valued characteristics of the public administration such as job security as well as by addressing more efficiently its weaknesses such as the poor financial incentives that civil servants claim constitute most of what differentiate them from other sectors (private sector in particular), rendering them often vulnerable to the persisting problems of corruption and political influence in public administration agenda.

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7. Appendix



QUESTIONNAIRE

on

Public Administration Perceptions on the Relation State/ Administration - Citizens

Information for participant's informed consent

You are invited to participate in a research study in on “Public Administration Perceptions on the Relation State/Administration – Citizens”, being conducted by Institute for Democracy and Mediation in Tirana with the support of FES Albania. We are interested in your opinion and perceptions on the role of the public administration and their relation with the citizens.

To feel this questionnaire:

1. Remember that there are no right or wrong responses. We are interested only in your opinions.
2. All answers will be treated confidentially.
3. Please mark your answer in the space provided with an (X)
4. Please try to avoid the no comment column as far as possible.

If you agree to participate in the survey, the survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. We do not foresee any risks associated with your participation. We anticipate that any benefits derived from this study will be those that help increase our understanding about attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions regarding public administration in Albania. If you choose to participate we cannot offer you any compensation or benefit for your participation other than our sincere thanks and appreciation.

Your participation in this project is purely voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not change your future relations with the FES and/or IDM nor other partners of the initiative. If you do decide to participate you may choose not to answer any individual questions for any reason. If you decide to participate you are also free to completely withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact IDM at info@idmalbania.org

Thank you!

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1. Demographics

1. Gender

Male	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Female	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

2. Age _____ (in years)

3. Working place area

Urban	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Rural	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

4. Years of experience with public administration _____ (years)

5. Completed years of education (total) _____ (years)

6. Salary range:

0- 20.000 ALL	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
20.001- 40.000 ALL	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
40.001- 60.000 ALL	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
60.001 – 100.000 ALL	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

7. Are you a member of any of the active political parties in the country?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Refusal	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

Section 2. Role and mission of public administration

8. The primary role of the public administration is:

To serve others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
To be served	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
To address citizens needs	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
To be efficient managers of scarce resources, arbiters of disputes, and problem solvers.	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

9. How do you consider your work:

Strictly professional	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Strictly political	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Balanced mix of both	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Continuously changing ratios between professionalism and politics depending on who is leading	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

10. Would you say that you work harder, less hard, or about the same as other employees of other sectors in the country?

Much less hard than most others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
A little less hard than most others	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
About the same as most others	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
A little harder than most others	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Much harder than most others	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

11. Which of the following statements best describes your feelings about the job?

I work only as hard as I have to.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
I work hard but not so as to interfere with the rest of my life.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
I make a point of doing the best work I can, even if it sometimes does interfere with the rest of my life.	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

12. Would you agree with the following statements about public administration possible developments:

Statement	Level of agreement				
The main argument in favour of life-time tenure is that it compensates for the generally higher private sector salaries and, even more, enhances job protection for those employees with a regulatory or enforcement function and with jobs needing protection against individual and political pressure.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly disagree
The possibility of firing staff for poor performance may lead to higher performance levels, since staff would believe they are subject to sharper discipline.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

The individualisation of pay and the introduction of high, performance-related pay bonuses have mostly negative effects: employees feeling that they are treated incorrectly or unfairly because of problems in measuring performance, less loyalty of employees and less motivation to work among those who do not receive a bonus.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Total privatisation of the civil service would lead to a decline in organisational loyalty, more ethical problems and more politicisation. In addition, it would increase mobility between the public and private sector and lead to less continuity and stability in the public service.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

13. If studies were to be conducted in your country about the attitudes and behaviour of civil servants as compared with private employees, the results would show that they are more similar in terms of:

individual performance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
job satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
working time	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
career development possibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

salary	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
job responsibility and job autonomy	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
number of poor performers	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
unethical behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
other (overwork, sickness rates)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9

14. If studies were to be conducted in your country about the attitudes and behaviour of civil servants as compared with private employees, the results would show that they are more different in terms of:

individual performance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
job satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
working time	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
career development possibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
salary	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
job responsibility and job autonomy	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
number of poor performers	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
unethical behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
other (overwork, sickness rates)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9

15. In the most recent human resource management reforms you have experienced what has been the impact?

Impact options	Yes	No
They improved organisational performance		
They improved individual performance		
They reduced the number of poor performers		
They improved work satisfaction		
They had an impact on knowledge, skills and educational profiles		

16. In your experience, do persons applying for jobs in the public service have a different profile than those applying for positions in the private sector?

Profile characteristics	Yes	No
They are more flexible and open-minded		
They are more security minded, more inflexible and risk-avoiding		
They are more idealistic		
They are more motivated by extrinsic incentives		
No difference between the public and private sector		

Section 3. The politics and its influence in public administration

In a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 stands for ‘very little’ and 5 for ‘very much’ please value the followings:

Statement	Level of influence				
1. How much is public administration influenced by politics in the country?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Very little	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Very much
2. How much the lack of trust citizens have on government and politicians is a problem to the public administration work?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

3. How hard is to build credibility in a relation with citizens?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
4. How much are you affected by polarization – situations “damn-if-you-do” “damn-if – you don’t”?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5. How much is the public administration affected by political instability?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Section 4. The public administration – citizens relation

22. In general, citizens being served are seen by public administration as:

Customers that should be given friendly, efficient service.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Vulnerable people that should be served empathically.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Grumpy people with “I want it my way, now” attitude.	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Trying to work the system out	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

23. I personally believe that they should be seen as:

Customers that should be given friendly, efficient service.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Vulnerable people that should be served empathically.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Grumpy people with “I want it my way, now” attitude.	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Trying to work the system out	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

24. In your working experience, you have learned to expect in return for your service to citizens:

Recognition and gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Reciprocity	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Arrogance	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other (specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

25. In your work, you would have wanted to see from citizens more of which the following?

Recognition and gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Reciprocity	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Arrogance	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other (specify)_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Section 5. Attitudes on democracy and citizens’ participation

26. In general, how would you define the public administration attitude towards citizens participation, do they believe in it?

Yes, totally	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, but participation the “right” people	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Yes, but not for our context, that’s for an ideal world	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
No, just a loss of time and raises their expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

27. Do you personally believe in citizens’ participation?

Yes, totally	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Yes, but of the “right” people	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Yes, but not for our context, that’s for an ideal world	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
No, just a loss of time and raises their expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

28. In my work, I have learned that involving and listening to stakeholders:

Has been helpful and productive	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Has lengthened the process and lowered efficiency for some outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Has led to unrealistic expectations and made parties unsatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

29. Overall, how much do you value citizens’ agency in democracy?

Very much, it is essential	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Significantly important	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Important, but not always necessary	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Not important	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Thank you!