

## Analysis of European experience in improving public administration mechanisms

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**Abstract.** No country is capable of building a progressive society without resorting to systematic modification of the model of public management, as the states of the Baltic Sea region have proven by their own example. The relevance of the analysis of the public administration mechanisms of the Baltic countries is explained by the success of the modernized policy of the administration system in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, whose experience is a vivid illustration of successful reform and the desire for permanent socio-economic growth. The purpose of this scientific work is to study the multifaceted components of the functioning of the updated concept of public administration of the Baltic republics through the prism of European integration processes within the countries, in particular. The leading methods of research work were the methods of analysis and generalization, with the help of which the key means of improving the public sector of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia were revealed in combination with the method of comparison, which made it possible to compare the public management models of the three Baltic states. This article reveals the importance of the implementation of innovative decisions by subjects of power in order to realize the civil liberties of the population and ensure the principles of public administration. It was established that the change in the principles of state leadership in the Baltic states was due to the preparation for joining the European Union. In particular, the idea of interaction between state institutions and the civilian population was introduced, the latest information technologies were involved, and an anti-corruption policy was implemented. It was determined that the reformation of the public sector depends on ensuring its smooth functioning. The practical value of the mentioned scientific work lies in the possibility of using its materials in the process of developing reform solutions for the reconstruction of the public administration system

**Keywords:** transformation, European integration, administrative rebranding, information technologies, principle of public involvement

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### ● INTRODUCTION

The Baltic countries are significantly ahead of any other post-Soviet state economically and in terms of the level of development of democracy [1]. Having regained their independent status in the early 1990s, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia began their own path, which was accompanied by a complete transformation of all state institutions. Despite the long international isolation, the functioning of the ineffective Communist Party-Soviet system of power for fifty years, the Baltic countries confidently began the process of modernization, getting rid of archaic mechanisms for organizing public administration bodies.

Taking into account the European integration policy of the Baltic republics, it is completely understandable that

the leadership wants to ensure a sustainable system of public administration that will meet the European principles of good governance. Most of the spheres of public administration include or affect the principles, regulations and legal norms that must be preserved and constantly developed within the framework of the European Union by all members of this alliance – *acquis communautaire*. Transparency and openness, people-centered approach, accountability, the rule of law and legality – each of these categories has a significant impact on the preservation of democratized power and is the result of a purposeful course to modernize the public sphere of service provision. As S. Halimi rightly pointed out: “Public administration reforms must adapt to

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the general socio-economic and political level in society in order to promote and accelerate the pace of reforms, and this is achieved by presenting reforms as actions, first in the interests of citizens, and then as actions to fulfill EU criteria" [2]. At the current stage of society's development, the state needs continuous changes, constant search for renewal of public administration mechanisms, and it is the Baltic countries that present the flexibility of state management. That is why the purpose of this work was to study the available tools of the administration of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which daily prove the sustainability of the organization of public administration and the productive use of state resources.

Since economic growth, political unity and the development of civil society directly depend on creating an operational and effective administration, the issue of modernization of the public sector is systematically the subject of discussion among scientists. For example, analyzing the foreign experience of the transformation of public administration and the prospects of its application in Ukraine, Yu. Liakh came to the conclusion that increasing the efficiency of public administration can be seen in the development of a system focused on interacting with the public, establishing communication relations, finding a common consensus, and changing the mentality of citizens [3]. O. Volska supports a similar opinion, at the same time emphasizing that partnership relations between the government and the population should be built not only at the central, but also at the local levels, based on a rational political and managerial analysis with an orientation to the public interest, which is revealed through the use of various forms of public participation in the discussion of projects of state and local decisions [4], and G. Starykova proposed to develop recommendations for the introduction of an incentive system for territorial communities that work most effectively with the public [5]. However, in her own research, Yu.-B. Khanyk proved that with the help of means of marketing communications it is possible to positively influence some factors affecting public trust, in particular, transparency or accountability of public authorities [6]. Also, one cannot fail to mention the complex work of O. Romanchuk, Yu. Bysaga, V. Berch, G. Nechiporuk, V. Chechersky, who, having analyzed the experience of Estonia in the application of e-governance, emphasized that the expansion of the field of e-governance as a qualitative mechanism for increasing the level of economic well-being of the state and the expanded network of public services in electronic form are among the fundamental factors of successful implementation of e-administration [7]. Therefore, the mentioned topic attracts the attention of a considerable number of Ukrainian researchers, but nevertheless the category of public administration tools is diverse and quite dynamic, and that is why the purpose of the study was to reveal the impact of the introduction of the latest mechanisms of public sector governance on the functioning of the administration system of the Baltic states.

## ● MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of scientific research is the methods of analysis, generalization and comparison. In particular, the method of generalization made it possible to determine the main components of the transformation

path of the Baltic republics in the process of fundamental renewal of the public administration system. The leading factors of the effective use of information and communication technologies in the activities of state authorities were also revealed. At the same time, the comparison method was used to identify shortcomings in the implementation of innovative administration mechanisms, and also to record the consequences of improving public administration in the Baltic States. Using the general scientific method of analysis, the following normative documents were studied: Comprehensive monitoring report on Latvia's preparation for membership in the European Union dated November 5, 2003 [8], Memorandum on cooperation between public organizations and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia dated January 7, 2014 [9], as well as the Report of the European Commission on public administration and management in Latvia for 2020 [10].

In addition to normative legal acts, scientific works of Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Albanian, and Ukrainian researchers served as materials of the work. For a deeper understanding of the role of public administration in integration processes, the works of O. Volska [4], Reinholde *et al.* [11] and M. Holzer [12] were analyzed. Works by V. Korenkova [13], K.H. Pedersen and L. Johannsen [14], K.K. Ibodullaevich and O. Mahmatkobil [15] and other scientists were useful in analyzing the experience of the transition to a new system of public administration in the Baltic countries. It is worth noting that the work of I. Lakstigala and S. Balina [16] made it possible to consider the implementation of digitalization in the process of changing the course of public administration, to better understand the advantages of this practice and to pay attention at additional requirements to ensure the effectiveness of innovations. Also, among the materials used to form the theoretical basis of the research, scientific works related to the implementation of foreign experience in the modernization of public administration in Ukraine were used. In particular, these are the works of Yu. Liakh [3] and Yu.-B. Khanyk [6]. Together with the published works, the author used statistical data compiled by the American organization Freedom House [17] and the global anti-corruption organization Transparency International [18]. Based on the statistics of the organization Freedom House, the author was able to assess the level of citizens' access to political rights and freedoms and the level of government accountability to the people in post-Soviet countries. Statistics from the anti-corruption structure Transparency International were used to illustrate the effectiveness of implementing transparency and openness together with the concept of e-governance in Estonia [1]. To analyze the economic development of the countries that left the Soviet Union, data on the volume of gross domestic product per capita covering the period from 1990 to 2019 were used.

## ● RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

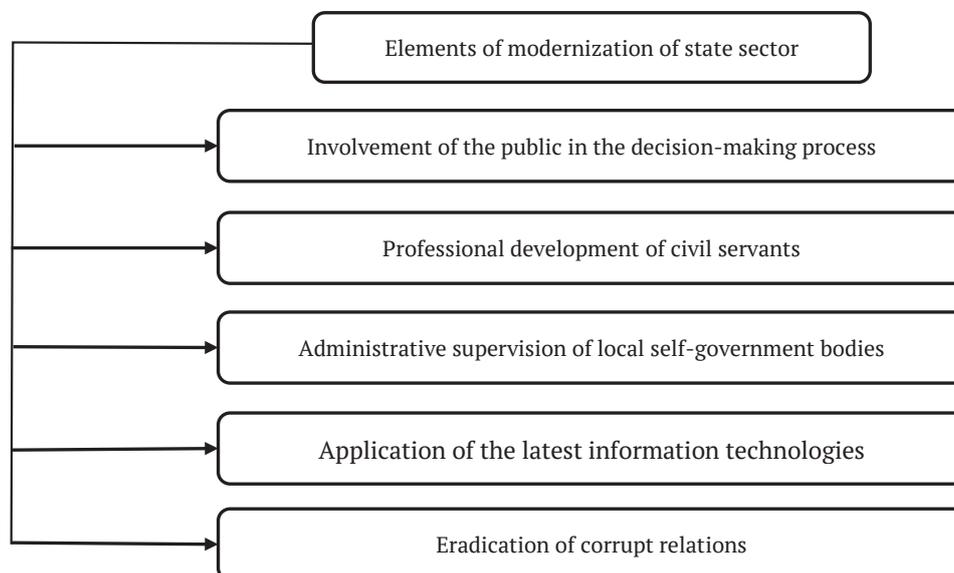
Having chosen the course of rapprochement with the European Union (EU), the states have committed to overcome the outdated Soviet administrative management system, which was primarily characterized by strict centralization, high costs for maintaining the state apparatus and strict control over the activities of public organizations, developing local self-government and civil society

institutions. Currently, it can be said that all three Baltic states, faced with common challenges, managed to reorganize public administration bodies, ensuring sustainable democracy within the state. After all, in the presence of a high level of corruption, a shadow economy, and the lack of necessary transparency of financial flows, it is impossible to ensure neither healthy competition, nor impartial and effective state control, nor effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of participants in public relations [13]. In particular, according to a recent study by Freedom House, which assesses people's access to political rights and freedoms, as well as the level of accountability of governments to their citizens, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are recognized as free states with an overall score of 89/100, 88/100 and 94/100, respectively, leaving behind such countries as Georgia (58/100), Moldova (62/100) and Ukraine (61/100) [17]. And although all the listed states declared their sovereignty almost at the same time, the Baltic countries undoubtedly carried out the most successful political and administrative rebranding in the last few decades.

First of all, it should be noted that the significant progress in the public sector restructuring in the Baltic states was initially preceded by a problematic reform process, which was supposed to bring the mechanisms of state institutions closer to European standards. For example, the Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Latvia's Preparation for EU Membership for 2003 stated that, although Latvia is generally meeting the commitments made during the negotiations, the preparation of administrative capacity for membership remains one of the biggest challenges faced

by the country [8]. The transformation of the model of public management in Latvia and other post-communist countries was even more exhausting than in Western countries, because before the reforms of 1990-2000, there was preserved the "occupational, alien, artificial, completely lifeless Soviet system of administration" [11]. Here it is appropriate to highlight several crucial components that actually formed the foundation for the future renewal of the public administration sector in the Baltic States. First, although the departure from the Soviet administrative model was gradual, and sometimes not completely successful, the European perspectives and experience of the Western neighbors provided an impetus for faster changes in the administrative structure and bureaucratic system of the states. Secondly, it was the stability of state institutions, the rule of law and normative guarantees of the inviolability of civil and political freedoms of society, which were not characteristic of the totalitarian model of management, but formed the basis of the international community, that led to the concept of New Public Management [14], which provided for significant public involvement as a means of increasing efficiency and legitimacy.

Since the updated picture of public administration required respect for citizens and their preferences and condemnation of the superiority of the elite and technocratic government [14], the implementation of innovative policies definitely modified the paradigm of the traditional management system of that time. Figure 1 presents the leading principles and values of the updated concept of public management, which formed the core of the initial transformations.



**Figure 1.** Elements of modernization of state sector

**Source:** developed by the author

Each of the mentioned categories is the subject of discussion and reform in any country of the world with a rule of law, however, the experience of the Baltic countries perfectly demonstrates the process of restructuring administrative system in combination with the simultaneous modernization and development of the institution of civil society. A vivid example is the struggle of the Estonian

authorities against corruption, which is successfully integrated into the continuous evolution of e-governance. Certainly, there is no country that is characterized by the absence of favoritism, fraud or nepotism in the public or political sectors. The problem also exists among Estonian public servants, but today the active involvement of information technologies has become one of the main principles

of fighting corruption in this country [15]. Electronic document flow, modernization of communal services through the creation of online platforms for the provision of services, the possibility of submitting tax returns without even leaving home – the country's leadership has almost completely cut off communication between citizens and civil servants in an offline format, significantly reducing the risks of bribery, extortion, or other forms of corruption phenomenon. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021 [18], Estonia ranked 13th among 180 countries, significantly ahead of Lithuania and Latvia. In addition, by developing the concept of e-governance, increasing the level of transparency and openness, Estonia clearly demonstrated the value of the administration's communication with its citizens and their involvement in the functioning of public administration.

Involvement of society in the processes of public administration has also become a priority task of the Latvian government's new public administration development policy. In order to activate the population, maintain a bilateral dialogue and increase the awareness of citizens, the country's leadership has been fruitfully cooperating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for several decades. In particular, with the aim of promoting effective public administration in accordance with public interests, in 2005 a Memorandum on cooperation between public organizations and the Cabinet of Ministers was signed, the text of which was updated in 2014 [9]. As of October 2022, 502 organizations have signed the document. Thanks to the Memorandum, as well as further rule-making activities of the Government of the Republic of Latvia, a number of mechanisms were created to involve society in the decision-making process. Implementation of joint projects, education of the public on issues of state management, financial stability and independence of NGOs, involvement of interested representatives of public organizations in the coordination of regulatory acts – it can be argued that the state leadership gradually but purposefully increased the participation of NGOs in public administration. For example, already in 2010, only a few years after the signing of the Memorandum, the conclusions of NGOs were received for 40% of the documents from the total number of normative legal acts and projects developed by the ministries, which indicates a relatively high degree of initiative and participation of public organizations [19]. The policy of public participation had considerable success and influence on the formation of democratic institutions, as in its 2020 report, the European Commission gave a positive assessment of the process of re-planning the public service in Latvia, noting that the country has generally demonstrated good progress in reforming public administration [10]. Thus, the country's leadership managed to optimize the activities of the executive authorities, ensuring transparency by involving all interested parties.

Likewise, the activities of local self-government in the Baltic States, where municipal bodies are becoming more and more important participants in the administration system, cannot be ignored. Of course, successful democratization directly depends on the degree of development of municipal institutions and their ability to cooperate with local residents, which explains the constant modification of the administrative system of the Baltic republics. Since

the quality of public services, the redistribution of budget revenues or the level of life activity support of a separate territorial unit depends on the functioning of regional authorities, the Lithuanian government actively supports the concept of administrative supervision of local self-government in order to guarantee legality, stability and social equality at the local level. Although this concept exists in both Estonia and Latvia, monitoring of the legality of all legal acts adopted by all municipal institutions is carried out only in Lithuania [20]. Assessing the legality of the use of state assets, regulating the pricing of communal services, checking the systematicity of regional development – in this case, the government's activities cannot in any way be aimed at weakening the autonomy or independence of local self-government, but must necessarily contribute to increasing the productivity of municipalities and ensuring the principle of the rule of law.

So, we can come to the conclusion that each of the analyzed states has introduced its own mechanisms for improving public administration, carrying out operational work on solving complex problems. The minute-by-minute reformation of the public administration model determined both the internal policy of the countries and their place in the international arena as members of the European Union.

Based on the conducted analysis, it can be established that the concept of the New Public Administration had a considerable influence on the formation of the development strategy of public administration in the Baltic countries, in particular the Republic of Latvia. The introduction of the appropriate model within the country should primarily contribute to increasing trust in the government among civil society. Here it is important to mention the scientific work of M. Holzer, in which the researcher emphasized that lack of trust undermines the ability of governments to perform and provide services as promised in their founding documents, legislation, agency mission and oath [12]. It is impossible not to agree with this statement, because the trust of the population allows for the successful implementation of new changes and innovations in the activities of public authorities, moreover, lack of confidence in one's government deprives the latter of its legitimacy and legality. According to *Standard Eurobarometer 90*, trust in institutions is relatively low in Latvia: 32% of citizens trusted the state administration in 2018 [21]. Thus, it can be emphasized that, although the involvement of the population in the policy of public administration is indeed a crucial component of the sustainable development of the public sector, which proves the administration's desire for a stable two-way dialogue with society, it has little effect on strengthening trust. There is no doubt that the functioning of NGOs in the public sector clearly demonstrates the position of public authorities regarding transparency and openness, and nevertheless, mostly such organizations seek to respond to manifestations of lawlessness, performing the function of a defender of the population, and by no means an apparatus of public administration.

However, as already noted earlier, the possibility of establishing relations with local residents is a leading mechanism for the modernization of the administration system, and therefore it is equally important to provide appropriate and accessible tools for such cooperation. According to L. Mirlin, the use of the latest information technologies and their

variants during the selection of appropriate forms of communication and the formation of the content of communication is the fundamental means of “connecting” the government and the people [19]. Given the incredible success of e-governance in Estonia, it is difficult to disagree with this statement, but it is necessary to note several important factors.

First, in order to guarantee the efficiency and sustainability of e-government, the public administration needs to create and implement a modern system of electronic interaction. First of all, this concerns the constant updating of technological means, in the absence of which it is impossible to achieve the proper quality of service provision. In addition, as N. Linde rightly noted, the transition to a modern architecture of technological solution will ensure not only the flexibility of systems for the dynamic development of services, but also require data processing with less negative impact on the environment [22]. Thus, the development of digital infrastructure will lead not only to the possibility of using modernized platforms, but also to the improvement of the country’s ecosystem through the introduction of environmentally friendly technologies.

Secondly, one of the most important factors in the effective improvement of the model of public administration is the permanent improvement of the qualifications of civil servants. The author fully agrees with the position of I. Sudziute and A. Jakubavicius: “National governments should focus on politics and investments in human capital and education to prepare the workforce for future work” [23]. Indeed, the lack of knowledge, technical skills and digital literacy significantly slows down the process of adaptation and modernization of the public sector, effectively destroying the prospects for successful digitalization. At the same time, researching the competencies of public administration personnel, I. Lakstigala and S. Balina emphasized that although the rapid information development of recent decades really facilitates the performance of complex work, the work process requires an emphasis not only on digital skills, but also on communication skills, leadership skills, creativity thinking and flexibility, thus adapting to modern demand [16]. Therefore, it can be concluded that the training of management personnel of public authorities should be based not only on the work of information and communication technologies, but also focus on the professional development of each civil servant, since it is the human factor that forms the foundation of any transformations.

Thirdly, although the launch of information systems is aimed at improving the quality of services in a significant way and reducing the costs of their implementation, the success of such a management model depends on both successful strategic planning and the level of demand for service use. For example, in 2009, the introduction of LIMIS (Lithuanian Integrated Museum Information System), a national integrated system of digital information about exhibits in museums, was started. This initiative is certainly a significant finding for increasing public access to scientific research institutions, but according to A. Kimura’s research, the creation of a digitization department in museums is still not popular because many museums are already digitizing without such a department, and also because many museums cannot afford it [24]. At the same time, you can refer to the Estonian example of the use of the ERA (Estonian Road Administration) e-service,

which implements the state policy in the field of road safety. In the author’s scientific work, L. Roots proved that ERA promotes e-services very well, offering socially demanded categories: from registration for a theoretical exam to issuing an instructor’s certificate [25]. Thus, we can say that the process of improving the public sector and introducing the latest models of administration depends on a considerable number of factors. An unchanging course towards digitalization, cooperation with the population and civic support, increasing the level of competence of civil servants – each of the listed categories is designed to contribute to the evolution of public administration.

It cannot be assumed that the governments of the Baltic republics did not make mistakes along the path of transformation, but the experience of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania proves that a purposeful course to modernize and democratize the model of public administration is a convincing factor in the modernization of the Baltic countries.

## ● CONCLUSIONS

So, summarizing all of the above, it can be stated that the introduction of the latest administrative mechanisms into the public power structure of the Baltic Sea region undoubtedly affected the democratic development of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Each state, pursuing the initial goal of joining the European alliance, laid a solid foundation for a fundamental modification of the state leadership paradigm.

Giving preference to the liberal concept of management, which was primarily characterized by openness and a high level of development of local self-government, the Baltic countries began the exhausting process of comprehensive reformation of the sphere of state policy. Centralized leadership gave way to the latest ideas of interaction between state institutions and the civilian population, which provided an opportunity to establish a strong base for the creation of a renewed doctrine of public administration.

The theory of New Public Administration presented a modern concept of public management, which, in addition to expanding the powers of civil society, emphasized the involvement of advanced information technologies in order to meet the current needs of consumers of public services. Undoubtedly, the modernization of the public sector laid effective mechanisms for fighting corruption, contributed to the implementation of the principle of accountability and transparency of the government, ensured the financial stability and independence of non-governmental organizations, and at the same time, the transformation process of the Baltic countries was accompanied by both unsuccessful strategic decisions and public distrust. At the same time, it should be noted that the success of reforming the public sector does not depend on the very fact of introducing electronic governance or administrative supervision, but on ensuring the proper conditions for its functioning: permanent updating and increasing of digital government tools, mandatory maintenance of professional skills of civil servants, which will include both acquisition of digital literacy and improvement of organizational competences, as well as maintenance of public interest by involving the public in the management of state affairs.

Thus, after analyzing the reengineering process of the administration system in the Baltic States, a number of mechanisms responsible for the improvement of public

administration were identified, but there are still many categories that require additional research, such as deregulation policy or the control system for budget revenues and

expenditures, and therefore the specified scientific work is intended to become a starting point for further study of the specified issues.

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## Аналіз Європейського досвіду вдосконалення механізмів публічного адміністрування

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**Анотація.** Жодна країна не здатна будувати прогресивне суспільство, не вдаючись до систематичної модифікації моделі публічного менеджменту, що на власному прикладі довели держави регіону Балтійського моря. Актуальність аналізу механізмів публічного адміністрування країн Балтії пояснюється успіхом модернізованої політики системи адміністрування у Естонії, Латвії та Литві, досвід яких є наглядною ілюстрацією вдалого реформування та прагнення до перманентного соціально-економічного зростання. Метою даної наукової роботи було дослідження різнобічних складових функціонування оновленої концепції публічного управління балтійських республік, в тому числі через призму євроінтеграційних процесів всередині країн. Провідними методами науково-дослідної праці виступили методи аналізу та узагальнення, за допомогою яких було розкрито ключові засоби вдосконалення державного сектору Литви, Естонії та Латвії, у поєднанні з методом порівняння, що дозволив зіставити моделі публічного керування трьох балтійських держав. Дана стаття розкриває значення впровадження інноваційних рішень суб'єктів владних повноваження задля реалізації громадянських свобод населення та забезпечення принципів державного управління. Було встановлено, що зміна засад державного керівництва у країнах Балтії була зумовлена підготовкою до вступу до Європейського Союзу. Зокрема, було впроваджено ідею взаємодії державних інститутів із цивільним населенням, залучено новітні інформаційні технології та проведено антикорупційну політику. Було визначено, що реформація публічного сектору залежить від забезпечення його безперешкодного функціонування. Практична цінність зазначеної наукової роботи полягає у можливості використання її матеріалів у процесі розробки реформаторських рішень реконструювання системи публічного адміністрування

**Ключові слова:** трансформація, євроінтеграція, адміністративний ребрендинг, інформаційні технології, принцип залучення громадськості