

**Raluca ANTONEAC (CALIN)**  
The Bucharest University of Economic Studies – Economics Doctoral School  
**Carmen – Elena DOBROTA**  
The Bucharest University of Economic Studies – Economics Doctoral School

# THE MANAGEMENT OF A PROJECT THAT HELPS TO DEVELOP A PART OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CAPACITY IN ROMANIA

Case  
Study

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## JEL Classification

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## Abstract

*A topic of actuality nowadays refers to the implementation of projects using European funds. A more actuality topic, but not so discussed in papers can refer to the IT tools financed in projects, in the 2007-2013 programming period through European Social Fund or European Regional Development Fund, which eventually helps to improve the relationship between citizens and public authorities in Romania. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the project management of such a project implemented by a public authority from Romania through the Administrative Capacity Development Operational Programme and, also, the need for public institutions to use IT tools for an efficient management of activities.*

## INTRODUCTION

2007-2013 Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development (OPACD), as written in the Implementation Framework Document of the Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development, is a relevant programming document that contributes to the implementation of the thematic priority "Building an Effective Administrative Capacity", set in the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). According to the NSRF, the general objective of OPACD was to help create a more efficient and effective public administration, for the socio-economic benefit of Romanian society. The priority axes of the Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development targeted:

- Support for solving the horizontal management problems at all levels of the public administration (centrally and locally), focusing on the key elements that enhance the credibility of the administration, especially, the decision-making process, a better administrative regulation, accountability of public administration and organizational effectiveness;

- Orientation, especially, by improving the process of decentralizing the provision of services in certain priority sectors (health, education, social welfare), improving the quality and efficiency of provision of service.

Developing the capacity of public administrative authorities contributed to the overall goals of the Lisbon Strategy. Through the results suggested by Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development was aimed the increase of the quality of public services provided to citizens, as well as to determine the real changes in the management of creating public policy, which includes changes in terms of skills and behavior of civil servants at all levels.

The interest of the beneficiaries for the Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development was materialized in the large number of projects submitted for funding, respective 1371 projects, the value of which exceeded approximately 3.5 times the allocation of the OPACD. From the information provided by the Management Authority for the Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development, through the site: [www.fonduriadministratie.ro](http://www.fonduriadministratie.ro), as far as the projects compliance goes, only 568 projects were approved for funding, representing 41.4% of all projects submitted, of which only 467 projects were signed financing contracts. The eligible value contracted was of 311.21 million euro, of which 262.73 million euro as European Social Fund (ESF) and 48.48 million euro as national contribution. The over – contracting degree reported to the

community contribution allocated to the program was 126.31%.

Form the analyzed document "Information on contracts given 2007 - 2013", document that is on the OPACD Managing Authority site, [www.fonduriadministratie.ro](http://www.fonduriadministratie.ro), at least 15% of contracted projects (based on the number of contracted projects and not to the amount) had financed one component of IT system, component by which they attempted to improve the governments provision of service, information exchange, as well as operations of communication between government and citizen. In terms of agreed value, these projects represent around 25% of the amount allocated for OPACD (244 mil. euro) and in terms of reimbursed expenditure per project, these projects were completed at a percentage of about 75% - 80% of the agreed value on every project, thereby reaching around 20% of the amount allocated to OPACD.

Starting from the significant share of projects with IT components, financed from European funds through a Programme which aims to create an more efficient administration, we have chosen, as a case study, a project that attempted to pursue increasing of efficiency and modernization of face-to-face and electronic services provided to citizens by the Bucharest Prefect Institution.

### **THE NEED TO FINANCE A PROJECT TO IMPROVE THE INSTITUTION'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CITIZENS**

The quality of the public services and the swiftness of response to citizens is an important aspect of public administration performance. This involves: accuracy, punctuality, personalized relationship with the public, availability and accuracy, easy access, clarity, which means efficient services and increased satisfaction of citizens' needs. This was not possible at the Bucharest Prefect Institution because of the following reasons:

- Lack of staff and charging public servants with many tasks, from registration of documents to writing land titles and archiving documents: the Registry work program with the public implied that for 5 hours, one public servant was receiving complaints, was providing information and answering to the Citizen phone, resulting in long waiting times at the counter and the impossibility of taking over all telephone calls. Given that many petitions were received daily by the Registry, apostille requests, queries on the status of pending cases and phones from citizens, it was clear that urgent measures were needed to increase the efficiency of the workflow within Bucharest Prefect Institution.

- The lack of a system adapted to the needs, both in terms of document management and in terms of its usefulness to the citizen: a significant part of citizens that addresses the counter is seeking information on the progress of the pending cases, and implementation of a computer system by allowing citizens to track in real - time the status of the file (similar to that used by the courts) would significantly reduce both the duration of response and loading staff. Citizens who used the online service petitions did not receive a confirmation from the institution and to be able to find the registration number received, they had to submit the document to the registry. To find out the status of their petition was also required to report to the registry.

- Archiving: if a citizen filed in a petition for which resolve a consultation of the institution archive was needed, the response time was approaching the legal maximum.

- As a result of the above, the institution's relationship with the citizens of the capital has suffered as a result of the long waiting time for information and the processing length of citizens' requests.

Thus, by providing prompt services, project ACCESS - Administration in support of the citizen through quality and services efficiency – aimed at increasing the satisfaction of the citizen, in this regard including a component of internal and external assessment of public services provided to citizens of the capital by the Prefecture Bucharest municipality, completed through a White Book of services (with quality standards for these and for the benefit of staff of the institution). In this regard, the project has contributed to one of the objectives of the Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development, that to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided by government (central and local), by strengthening the administrative capacity of managing, increasing the speed of response in providing information and solutions to citizens and by introducing information technology in business management.

The expected effects:

- The reduce of the response time to citizen's requests and the need of the submission at the counter by 50%;
- The reduce of the number of presentations at the counter and telephone calls received by 30%;
- The reduce of the time for resolving complaints by 20%;
- 30% reduction in the volume of documents archived by eliminating photocopies;
- 80% reduction in search time in the archive.

### **THE ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT IN FINANCIAL TERMS AND IN TERMS OF IRREGULARITIES IDENTIFIED**

From the financial point of view, the project had a contracted value of 806,738.77 lei, of which 685,727.77 lei worth not reimbursable EU (ESF) and the beneficiary contribution worth 121,010.82 lei, in this case, since it is a fully funded institution from the state budget, beneficiary's contribution is represented by the expense of the state budget. According to the information from the OPACD site, the project was completed (whichever considered eligible and reimbursed by OPACD Managing Authority) at the amount of 588,550.91 RON. Relating to OPACD allocation, the contracted value of the project is 0.07% and the eligible costs reimbursed in the project by the OPACD Managing Authority is 0.04%.

From the information received from Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development Managing Authority (information required in the basis of the law no. 544/2001 regarding free access to information of public interest) during project implementation, the beneficiary has not complied with public procurement rules (deficiencies were identified by OPACD Managing Authority, from administrative checks and management, as well as from reevaluation made as following the recommendations of the Audit authority within the Court of Auditors), such as: *„in the procedure of assigning the procurement agreement, the contracting authority used the qualification and selection mentioned in article 176 of the Emergency Ruling no. 34/2006 as bid evaluation factor though was not allowed; contracting authority requested minimum qualification requirements that could restrict competition between suppliers; the procurement agreement value exceeded the limit provided by national legislation on public procurement for publication in the Official Journal of the European Union”*. In this regard, OPACD Managing Authority, under the laws of public procurement, applied financial corrections on irregular procurement agreements and decreased the amount required by the beneficiary to refund with the amount of the costs that can't be regarded as eligible under Community and national law. On this line, the costs required the reimbursement by the beneficiary were reduced by a total amount of irregular expenditure of 154,292.75 lei (of the contracted value of the project, the amount affected by irregularities represents 19.12%; of the amount requested for refund amount affected by irregularities represents 20.77%; of the amount by which the project was completed - reimbursement of eligible expenses - the amount affected by irregularities represent 26.21%). Thus, it appears that the amount paid by

the beneficiary providers (third party), that of the expenditure conducted by the beneficiary, around a fifth was considered by OPACD Managing Authority, ineligible expenditure, the beneficiary violating public procurement legislation. However, the beneficiary has incurred from its own budget (state budget) the ineligible expense and the project has achieved the indicators and the objective, so it can be considered a success.

## CONCLUSIONS

The main output of the project implementation, judging by the indicators achieved is the increase of efficiency and improvement of service to citizens, being made (information found on the website - [http://www.prefecturabucuresti.ro/?d=institutie&orf=proiectul\\_acces&sub=lansare%20proiect%20acc](http://www.prefecturabucuresti.ro/?d=institutie&orf=proiectul_acces&sub=lansare%20proiect%20acc) es):

- An electronic system for processing applications and internal management of documents modernized and adapted to the requirements of modern public administration;
- Better prepared human resources: 71 people employed to Bucharest Prefect Institution prepared in three areas - project management, communication, use of the computer system, (at each course being a module on sustainable development and equal opportunities);
- Increased accessibility to information for citizens, by deploying online portal and info - points;
- Labor efficiency in Bucharest Prefect Institution by creating an electronic archive of documents, and by reducing search time and minimizing the volume of documents archived by eliminating photocopies;
- Reducing the number of presentations at the counter and telephone calls, and the number of petitions; reducing response time to citizens and the need of submitting at the counter;
- Reducing the time to resolve claims;
- 1 White Book of service to citizens and 3 info-points.

Besides these results reported on activities performed, one of the greatest achievements of this project is to significantly reduce the response time in processing an application, reducing the time spent searching for documents, reducing the time in solving petitions as a result from the use of alternative media (web portal interface public relations, info-points), reducing the time required to

reporting activity regarding working with documents (petitions, requests for access to public information).

The long term impact of the project is improving services to citizens, improving the image of Bucharest Prefect Institution and increasing public confidence in this institution. The Bucharest Prefect Institution continued to offer citizens electronic tracking service in real time, online, regarding the status of solving petitions even after the project implementation. Also, through info - points, citizens have access to updated information and to services provided for them even after project completion, and Bucharest Prefect Institution continued promoting the computer system even after completion of the project in other events.

Given this case study and the number and amount of projects financed from European funds through a program of developing the public administration capacity in Romania, we conclude that public institutions have identified the need to use IT tools for effective management of the activities and used the project management to access European funds. Thus, administration - an area with major social implications, reconfiguring the IT structure is responsible for a number of beneficial changes in the conduct of the administrative process. In addition to streamlining and simplifying the work processes, through the computerization of the administration, will be provided a broad and non-discriminatory access of citizens to quality public services, reduced costs for public services, by reducing operating costs and of personnel.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Implementation Framework Document of the Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development;
- [2] <http://www.fonduriadministratie.ro/>;
- [3] [http://www.prefecturabucuresti.ro/?d=institutie&orf=proiectul\\_acces&sub=lansare%20proiect%20acc](http://www.prefecturabucuresti.ro/?d=institutie&orf=proiectul_acces&sub=lansare%20proiect%20acc)es;
- [4] Information received by e-mail from Operational Programme of Administrative Capacity Development Managing Authority (information required in the basis of the law no. 544/2001 regarding free access to information of public interest).