

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE TERRITORY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC AFTER 1990

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Following 1989, major changes occurred in political, social and economic spheres in the Slovak Republic. A new system of public administration reflecting the ongoing economic and political changes in society started to be built in 1990. There were also changes in the territorial and administrative organization of Slovakia. The former three-level system of national committees was abolished. The reform of public administration resulted in separate state administration and local self-government. Local self-government and regional self-government were established. The organization of state administration was changed, too. Regional and district national committees were abolished and state administration powers were transferred to newly established district and sub-district offices, later to regional offices. Finally, district offices were restored and regional offices were abolished. Recently, much attention has been paid to having efficient and up-to-date system of public administration and to providing adequate services to citizens and private sector by local state governments.

Key words

Public administration, District, Region, Municipality, Regional self-government, ESO programme.

JEL Classification: H70, H83, N93

Introduction

The events of November 1989 ushered in a period of major changes in the political, social and economic areas. The changes also included the new territorial and administrative organization of Slovakia as part of the Czecho-Slovakia. As stated by Nižňanský and Hamalová (2013), a new system of public administration reflecting the ongoing economic and political changes in society started to be built in 1990. The origins of creating a modern and democratic model of public administration in Slovakia are linked to laying the foundations of a dual system under which the local self-government was restored and strengthened, and a new subsystem of territorial state administration was established.

The former centralized system was replaced by the principle of *subsidiarity*, i.e. the management and administration of public affairs at the closest possible level to citizens. Machyniak (2013) states that the idea of transferring competences to lower levels is a global trend; being apparent in the so called principle of subsidiarity, but its actual implementation cannot be ensured absolutely since it often is in contradiction with the intentions of political elite in power.

1. Development of the public administration system and territorial division of Slovakia after 1990

In 1990, foundations for a new democratic model of public administration were laid in Slovakia. These changes were intended to overcome and eliminate the shortcomings of centralized control of state administration. (Kosorín, 2003) The former three-level system of national committees in which state power and administration as well as part of *local self-government* were concentrated, was abolished in 1990. The public administration reform separated the state administration from the local self-government. Under the Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Administration, local self-government was made up of municipalities – territorial and administrative units. Pursuant to the Act on Municipal Administration and the Act No. 518/1990 Coll. on Transition of the founding function from national committees towards municipalities, central bodies of state administration and local state administration bodies, the rights and obligations of the former local national committees in designated areas were transferred to municipalities, and the basic functions of municipal self-governments were defined. The Act on Municipal Administration made municipalities equal (excluding Bratislava and Košice). It follows that regardless of their size, municipalities have to fulfil the same tasks, which causes problems especially to small villages in terms of personnel, organization and finance. The first municipal elections were held in 1990. Municipalities became independent self-governing units which were not subjected to state bodies, but their activities could only be performed within their own budget, whereas a substantial part of their revenue was made up of the

proportionate amount of collected taxes allocated to them by the central level. During this period, however, no significant change towards the decentralization of state administration to local self-government has taken place.

Changes in *state administration* were governed by the Act No. 472/1990 Coll. on the Organization of Local State Administration. Under the Act No. 472/1990, regional and district national committees were abolished and state administration competences

were transferred to newly established district (okresné) and sub-district (obvodné) offices. District offices were established in seats of former district national committees, and thus 38 district offices were set up (Figure 1). Districts were subdivided into 121 sub-district offices that performed state-administration duties. In addition to these general state administration offices, specialized state administration offices were set up at district and sub-district levels.

Figure 1: Districts of the Slovak Republic (1990-1996)



Source: https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrat%C3%ADvne_%C4%8Dlenenie_Slovenska_v_rokoch_1990_%E2%80%93_1996

According to Mesíková (2008), the system of local self-government bodies was highly complicated in this period of time, and the efficiency of the system performance was questioned. This was when the idea of constituting a more efficient model of local state administration was born. It was intended to integrate horizontally some local bodies of state administration (e.g. school administrations, environmental offices, Fire protection Corps, etc.) into a single unit/office that would perform the substantial number of state administration duties within its territory.

Slavík, Klobučník and Šuvada (2013) refer to this phase of changes in the territorial and administrative organization of Slovakia as a transitional stage in which two levels of artificially created spatial units (completely different from the traditional and natural system of small districts) were combined. The authors maintain that the establishment of sub-district offices was too complicated and costly. In addition, the specialized state administration was created over the years 1991-1993 through gradual disintegration of several state administration offices which performed

their duties without any coordination. By separating the specialized state administration from the general state administration, the local state government was performing its duties and responsibilities in a very complicated and obscure manner for an ordinary citizen. This process resulted in a changed spatial and vertical structure of bodies.

In the following years, efforts to decentralize the public administration were no longer made since the relations between the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic became of primary concern. Different political views on the future functioning of the Czecho-Slovakia led to its demise and the emergence of two independent states.

2. Changes in the territorial and administrative arrangement of Slovakia after 1996

Slovakia became an independent state on January 1, 1993. The public administration system did not change until the Act No. 221/1996 Coll. on

Territorial and Administrative Organisation of the Slovak Republic was adopted. The act introduced a new local state administration system, under which regions and districts became new administrative units. Three proposals for a new territorial and administrative arrangement were developed. The first proposed to restore the system of former counties, the second one proposed to establish the system of eight areas (regions), and the third one proposed to restore the system of large regions. While several experts argue that the county option was the most suitable, the second option was chosen and Slovakia was divided into 8 regions (Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra,

Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, and Košice) and 79 districts (Figure 2). Compared to the previous system, the number of districts increased considerably and the cities of Bratislava and Košice were divided into 5 and 4 districts respectively. The state power was exercised by regional and district offices which were set up in the regional and district cities. In this process, bodies of specialized state administration were (only partially) integrated. In this period of time, state administration enjoyed a stronger position than the self-government that was exercised at the municipal level. The second level in the system of self-governing bodies was still missing.

Figure 2: Administrative arrangement of Slovak Republic after 1996



Source: <http://www.minv.sk/?uzemne-a-spravne-usporiadanie-slovenskej-republiky>

The principal stage of the public administration reform commenced after the elections in 1998. First, a government plenipotentiary for the public administration reform was appointed. He set up work teams that were in charge of preparing the public administration reform. Very inspiring were found the discussion fora on the reform of public administration organized for experts as well as in individual Slovak regions. The outcome was the *Strategy of the public administration reform of the SR* adopted by the Slovak Government in 1999 and subsequently the *Concept of Decentralization and Modernization of the Public Administration in the SR* was adopted by the Slovak Government in 2000. (Kolektív, 2012)

In 1999, Slovakia signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The Charter is an international treaty laying down principles of local self-government, thus acknowledging the importance of local government as one of the main foundations of any democratic regime. (Ministry of Interior)

The government continued in decentralizing and deconcentrating the state administration and committed themselves to reconsider the scope, efficiency and structure of district and regional offices, and to put forward a new system of organization of local state administration. The processes were aimed to strengthen the role and responsibilities of local self-government in providing services to citizens by decentralizing public finance,

strengthening tax revenues of municipalities, and determining tax revenues of higher territorial units. The reform pursued the following objectives: to regulate the relationship between the state - region - municipality - citizen so that problems were solved at the level where they could be addressed most effectively. In addition, the reform was designed to alter the administrative division of the SR, to introduce a three-tier model of public administration; to strengthen the autonomy of local government authorities through the transfer of state competences; to introduce a new system of financing, as well as to strengthen the financial independence of local self-governments; and to increase the accountability of self-governments for efficient operation of public administration and regional policy. Having implemented the public administration reform, the Slovak Republic became a decentralized state with a horizontal division of power and vertical division of competences.

In this period of time, independent offices were established within the state administration, system, e.g. school inspection, veterinary administration, fire protection, public procurement, cadastre administration, etc. Bušík (2005) states, that this was a response to strong tendencies of the respective central bodies to atomize state administration as well as the wish for acquiring higher prestige. Some of the state administration duties could be performed by other legal entities, for instance state budgetary organisations (directly controlled by ministries) that were assigned with technical and purposeful tasks. Kosorín (2003) argues that rapid development was observed in the establishment of public corporations as part of the specialized authorities and advisory boards of various types and levels.

The second level of territorial self-administration envisioned by the Slovak Constitution of 1992 was enacted by law – the Act No. 302 of 2001. As of 2002, eight higher territorial units – self-governing regions were established and started to work within the region borders as set in 1996.

According to Vrbinčík (2012), the establishment of 8 regions disrupted the natural regional differentiation of Slovakia. Instead of establishing economically homogenous units, heterogeneous ones were created, which had negative effects on the internal integrity of natural Slovak regions.

In 2001, the Act on Municipalities was substantially amended, whereby the autonomous status of municipalities was significantly strengthened. In addition, acts on public officials were adopted (Act on Public Service, Act on Civil Service). The Act No. 312/2001 Coll. on Civil Service and on the amendments to certain Acts stipulated for the first time the legal relations in the Slovak civil service

performance. The Act regulates the rights and obligations of the state and civil servants resulting from the performance of the civil service or in connection with the implementation of the civil service. Staroňová, Staňová and Sičáková-Beblavá (2014) write that the Act on Civil Service provided the legal framework for the civil service and was aimed to establish professional, impartial, politically neutral, efficient and flexible civil service. The Act made a clear distinction between political (minister, state secretary) and apolitical posts (head of office, directors general of the sections, directors of departments and other civil servants at ministries). The Civil Service Office was set up and was responsible for the implementation of the Act (abolished in June 2006).

The Act No. 313/2001 Coll. on Public Service regulated the performance of work in public interest and of work related to the territorial self-government. In addition, specialized laws, which established the civil service of soldiers, policemen, customs officers and firefighters were adopted. In the following years, several legislative changes were made, which meant a gradual demise of the basic principles regulating the law on civil service. (Staroňová, Staňová, Sičáková-Beblavá, 2014)

The Act on Public Service was replaced by the Act on execution of work of public interest in 2003, and was amended several times in the following years (similarly as the Act on Civil Service). Significant changes occurred in this area mainly in 2006 and 2009.

Over the years 2002-2004, within the first stage of fiscal decentralization, selected competences of the state administration were gradually transferred to municipalities and higher territorial units in order to ensure their effective performance. They were mainly competences related to education, healthcare, social services, regional development, road communications, tourism, etc.

Simultaneously, the system of financing municipalities and higher territorial units was changed. The purpose of fiscal decentralization is to make local self-governments decide with utmost responsibility themselves on issues of local nature, whereas making the best use of resources for the benefit of their citizens. Fiscal decentralization was to strengthen the financial position and independence of self-governments and higher territorial units. Kosorín (2003), however, says that the process of decentralization did not bring any significant improvements since the local self-government shared majority of its competences with state administration. Financing of municipalities and higher territorial units depended on central government and they had no direct say in the process of adopting laws.

3. Public administration reforms in the Slovak Republic since 2004

A number of systemic changes were made in the state administration of the Slovak Republic during the years 2003 and 2004. By the government resolution No. 371/2003 of May 14, 2003 the Concept of Organization of Local State Administration was approved. In line with the process of decentralization, district offices of integrated local state administration were abolished. More than 400 state administration competences were transferred to municipalities and higher territorial units to improve effectiveness and quality of state administration management.

From 1 January 2004, separate bodies of general state administration and specialized state administration were set up at the level of regions (8) and district offices were replaced by sub-district offices of state administration (44-50). Thus, regional bodies acted as service offices in relation to persons performing state and public service not only in the scope of district offices but also sub-district offices

within its territorial scope. Sub-district offices were established as local state administration bodies, but had no legal personality. Sub-district offices carried out duties related to general internal administration, sole trading, civil protection, crisis situations, excluding war and state of war. (Mesíková, 2008, p. 93) Specialized district and sub-district offices for road transport (8+46), regional and sub-district land offices (8+44), regional and sub-district forest offices (8+40), regional and sub-district offices for the environment (8+46), regional building offices (8), regional school offices (8) were established. The scope of activities of specialized sub-district offices normally covered the area of several former districts. Districts ceased to be the direct carriers of the territorial state administration, although in most of their seats (as well as in other municipalities) permanent or temporary sub-district offices were established. (Nižňanský, Hamalová, 2013, p. 7) Table 1 shows bodies of specialized local state administration by sectoral scope of activities as of 1 January 2004.

Table 1: Bodies of specialized local state administration by sectoral scope of activities as of 1 January 2004

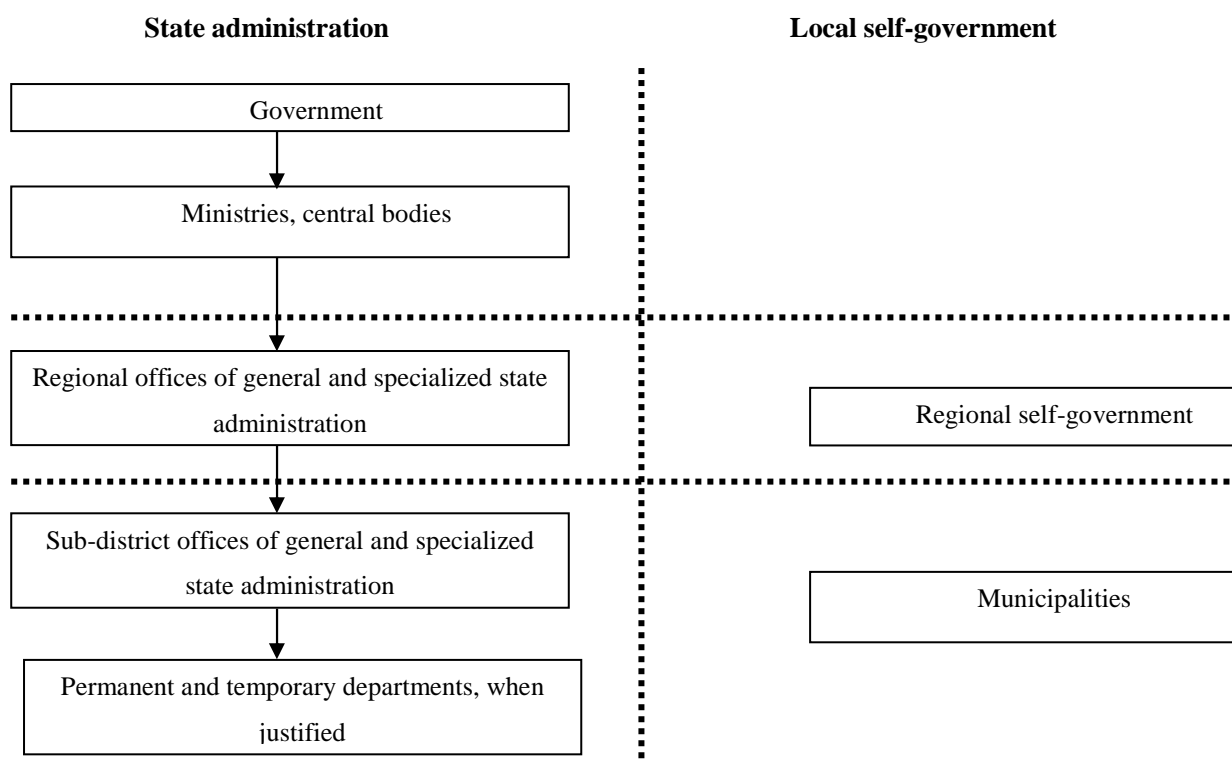
| Ministry of | Name of the specialized local administration body | Number | Name of the specialized local state administration body | Number | Established by Act No. / Coll. |
|--|---|--------|---|--------|--------------------------------|
| Interior | Sub-district Office | 50 | District Office | 8 | 515/2003 |
| Transport | Sub-district Office for Road Transport and Communications | 46 | District Office for Road Transport and Communications | 8 | 534/2003 |
| Agriculture | Sub-district Land Office | 44 | District Land Office | 8 | 518/2003 |
| | Sub-district Forest Office | 40 | District Forest Office | 8 | |
| Environment | Sub-district Office of the Environment | 46 | District Office of the Environment | 8 | 525/2003 |
| Environment | | | Inspectorate of the Environment | 8 | 525/2003 |
| Health | Regional Office of Public Health | 36 | | | 578/2003 |
| Labour, Social Affairs and Family | Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family | 46 | | | 453/2003 |

Source: Elaborated according to Volko and Kiš (2007, p.66)

A too large number of specialized state administration bodies resulted in the fragmentation of the state administration and lack of transparency in the organizational structure of public administration for citizens. Under this system, the costs for administration of public affairs were higher, legitimate procedures were not transparent, and law enforcement was not effective.

From 2004, executive power was exercised by the *Government* (Figure 3). According to the Competency Law, ministries and other central state administration bodies shared executive competences and responsibilities for the execution of state administration. In addition, Ministry of Interior was responsible for coordinating local state administration within regions. In terms of self-government, however, municipalities were not subordinate to regions.

Figure 3: Organization of public administration as of 1 January, 2004



Source: elaborated according to Volko and Kiš (2007)

Municipalities have legal personality at the level of local self-government. They own property, have their own budget, are independent in terms of personnel and finance, may do business, collect local taxes and fees. They may participate in activities related to international, cross-border and national cooperation. Self-government is performed by elected bodies, voting by citizens, local referenda, and public meetings. Within their self-government competences, municipalities may issue generally binding regulations and statements. Additionally, municipalities ensure the exercise of the transferred scope of activities of state administration.

The entry of Slovakia into the European Union had a significant impact on municipalities as the role of self-governments in the system of public administration was strengthened. Thus, municipalities were not only able to start cross-border cooperation, ratify international documents related to local self-government, but they were also competent to make targeted allocations of EU structural funds as well as those of community programs for municipalities and associations of municipalities.

In the context of fiscal decentralization, changes also affected the funding of municipalities building on the comprehensive tax reform and a flat tax on profit (19%) from 1 January 2005. The changes were intended to strengthen fiscal autonomy of municipalities in terms of property and local taxes,

and redistribution of transfers from the state budget using a formula considering the structure of transferred competences.

Higher territorial units also have legal personality. They own property, have their own budget, may do business, and collect administrative fees. They may participate in activities related to international, cross-border and national cooperation. Self-government is performed by elected bodies and referenda. Within their competences, higher territorial units may issue generally binding regulations. Self-government of higher territorial units has self-governing (original) competences, however, they also perform some tasks transferred to them from the state administration (e.g. some competences in areas of education, health, road transport).

Fiscal decentralization, as mentioned above, built on the reforms of 2002 – 2004 when the first stage of fiscal decentralization was completed as a part of transferring competences to municipalities and self-governing regions. During the first stage, a special and temporary regime of financing the transferred competences was used (the so called decentralization subsidies from the state budget). (Kozovský, 2005). This method of financing caused several problems. For instance, in terms of decentralization subsidies, changes in the transfer of tasks from the state administration to local self-government were not considered, such as payments to employee insurance

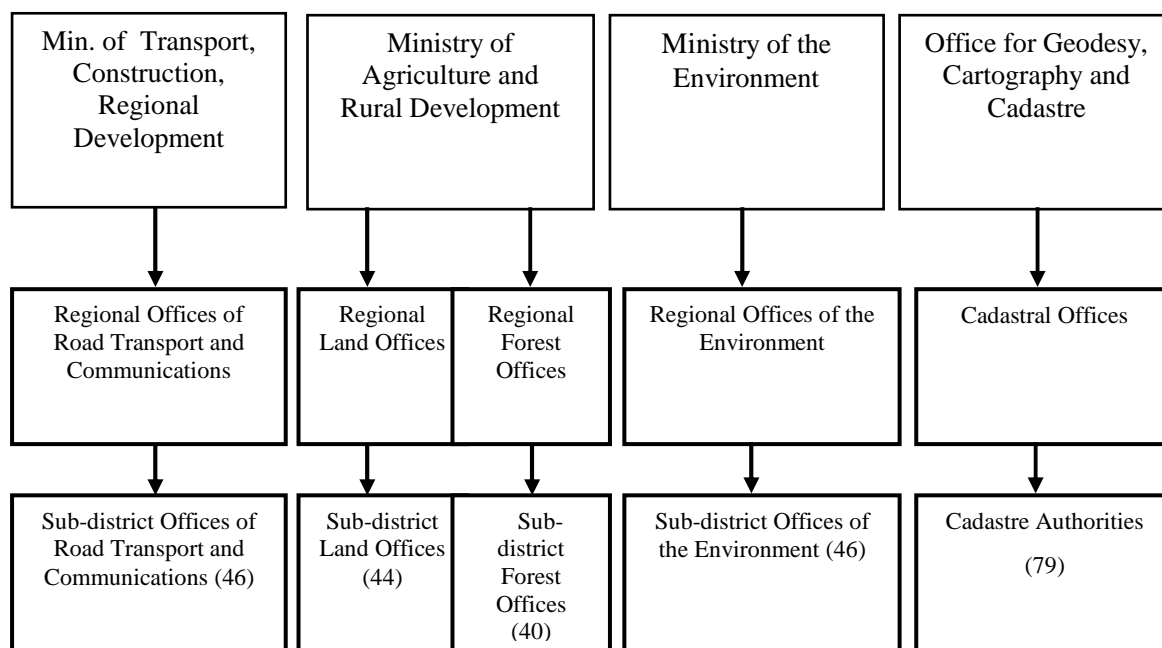
schemes, property insurance, etc. Local self-governments took over not only the tasks but also deficiencies caused by the mismanagement of state property without any financial compensation, such as unsettled properties, lack of documentation or inspection reports, unfinished buildings, etc. Another problem was that the state transferred competences to all municipalities, but the volume of funds transferred amounted to that of fulfilling the tasks in 79 district offices. Moreover, the state did not allow self-governments to manage the assets in a rational and efficient manner as they were obliged to maintain the original purpose of assets handed over (Nižňanský, 2005). Since the problems were not overcome, the issue of funding had to be addressed. Therefore, as of 1 January, 2004 the purposeful subsidies were replaced by the so called global subsidies – capital and current expenditures. Bodies of higher territorial units are in charge of allocating the subsidies. Tasks performed on behalf of the state (transferred competences) remained to be financed by purposeful subsidies. The process of fiscal decentralization continued in its second stage of 2005 in order to improve the financial independence of territorial self-government, increase pressure on more efficient expending one's own revenues, and last but not least, the interconnectedness of range and quality of services provided by self-governments and their effect on tax burden of population. (Kováčová, 2010)

Within the second stage of the fiscal decentralisation, revenue budgets were decentralised. Powers related to the generation of financial resources were transferred to municipalities and higher territorial units. Thus, the financial independence of self-governments was strengthened. As stated by Horváthová (2009), the issue of tax revenue played a critical role in public budget making. Thus, the tax powers and tax determination were divided to individual levels. This applied especially to solid base taxes raising regular and sufficient revenue. Seven local fees turned into local taxes, whose revenue was included in the budget of municipalities. Real estate tax was collected by municipalities, road tax (tax on motor vehicles) became a regional tax, and the income

tax of legal persons was collected by the state. The income tax of legal persons was a proportionate tax, the yield of which was distributed to municipalities, higher territorial units and the state in the ratio of 70.3%, 23.5% and 6.2% respectively. The government regulation set the criteria for further distribution of the income tax to villages and higher territorial units (population, area, population density, population social and age structure, altitude, number of pupils in elementary schools of art and other school facilities, road length). Thus, budget making of self-governments became more transparent and it was easier to plan their revenue and expenses.

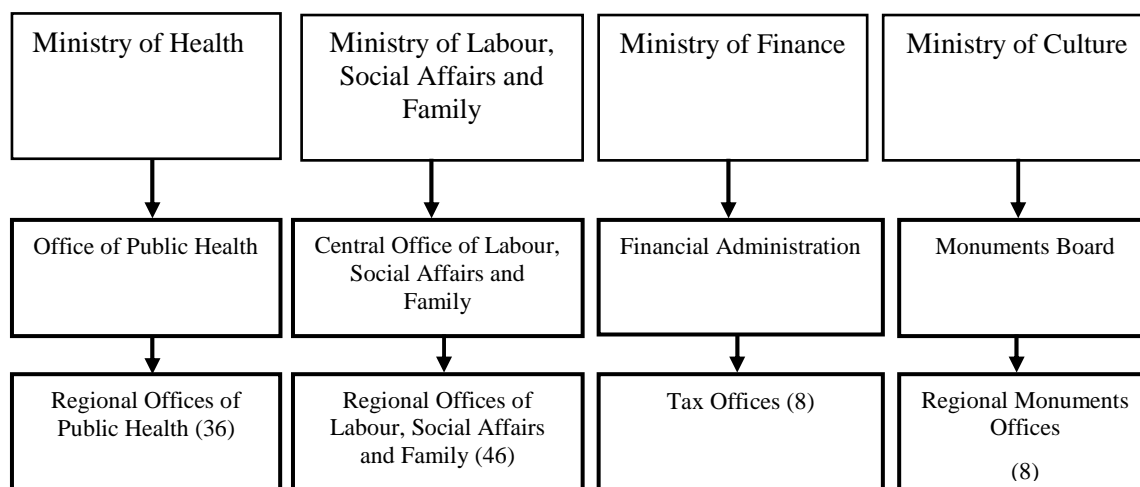
The follow-up *reform of 2007* built on a series of reforms implemented after the admission of the Slovak Republic to the EU in 2004. Pursuant to the Act 254/2007 Coll., regional offices of the sectoral scope of the Interior Ministry were abolished as of 30 September, 2007. The scope of their activities was passed to the sub-district bodies and relevant ministries, i.e. all the rights and obligations were transferred to sub-district offices based in regions with adjusted conditions. (Marišová et al. 2013, p. 77) Thus, the independent position of sub-district offices was strengthened since they became legal entities. Additionally, they became budgetary organizations and financially linked to the budget of the Slovak Ministry of Interior. Sub-district offices were led by mayors who were appointed to and removed from the office by the Slovak government upon the proposal of the Minister of Interior. Mesíková (2008, p. 24) states that some responsibilities related to civil registries, public collections and national symbols were also transferred to sub-district offices (50). The matters regarding the issuance of special licenses and vehicle markings for the disabled, integrated rescue system, civil protection and crisis management were handled by 8 sub-district offices. Part of responsibilities regarding the citizenship procedures, registries and sole trading were transferred to the Ministry of Interior. Concerning the scope of activities, some ministries were to exercise a two-level state administration (Figure 4-6).

Figure 4: Specialized state administration bodies working at regional and sub-district level under the control of respective ministries



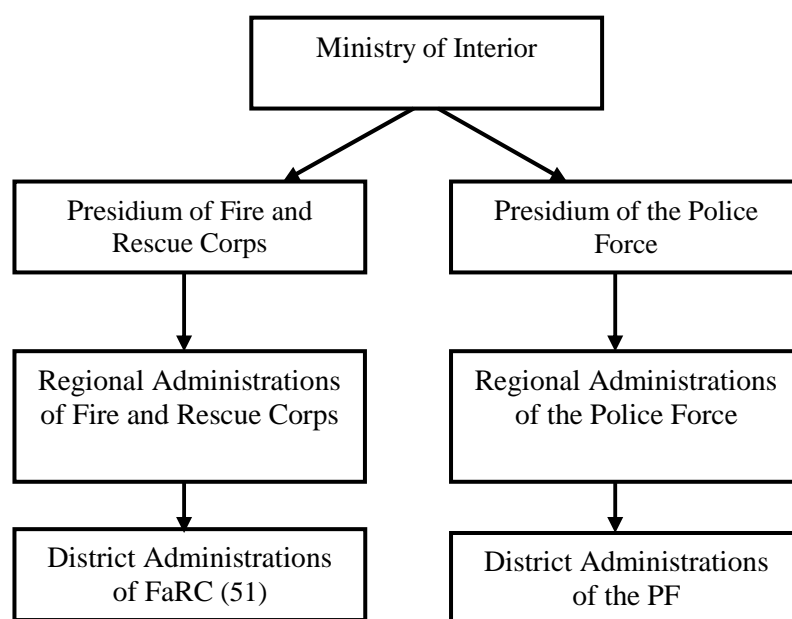
Source: elaborated according to Marišová et al. (2013, p. 78)

Figure 5: Specialized state administration bodies established at the level of central office and sub-districts under the control of respective ministries



Source: elaborated according to Marišová et al. (2013, p.78)

Figure 6: Specialized state administration bodies established at the district level under the control of respective ministries



Source: elaborated according to Marišová et al. (2013, p.79)

Figures 4 and 5 show that the local state administration consisted of sub-district offices only (the so called general ones) at regional level from October 2007. The implemented reforms placed heavy material and political responsibility on ministers and ministries. There was also a decrease in the number of offices and public employees by which the set goal was achieved, i.e. streamlining the entire state administration system at the level of regions, municipalities and villages.

Regarding changes in the system of local self-governments, the Government of the Slovak Republic took note of the Concept of modernisation of the local self-government system in 2009. Its objectives include the economization and computerization of local self-governments and human resource development. Special attention was paid to making the performance of local self-governments more efficient, and of better quality. In addition, transparency, openness, engagement and responsibility were of interest and importance. In the area of human resources development, various forms of education of local self-government employees, in particular those funded by the European Social Fund have been dealt with.

By adopting some legislative changes over the years 2005 – 2012, municipalities were assigned new duties. However, the principle of subsidiarity was not respected and major discrepancies between the municipal scope of competences and sources of their financing occurred. Several changes had a negative effect on municipal financing, e.g. decreasing the share of local self-governments in tax revenue from

income tax of natural persons, expanding the scope of exemptions from local taxes, extending the scope of state-determined compulsory municipal expenditures, etc. (Nižňanský, Hamalová, 2013)

4. Changes in the public administration system of the Slovak Republic after 2013

The public administration system has undergone further changes since 2013. The most significant ones include ESO Programme, electronic public administration, and changes in the way how self-government works.

In their Program Declaration for 2012 through 2016, the Slovak Government committed themselves to adopt measures to make public administration performance more efficient and advanced. The *ESO Programme* (Efficient, Reliable and Open state administration) was approved by the Government of the SR in April 2012. Its implementation should simplify the provision of services ensured by the state to the citizens. From the point of view of citizens and business entities, general government should be simple, well-arranged and accessible, it should work sustainably, transparently and with efficiently spent financial means. There have been three stages to achieve this target. One of the main pillars of the reform is the integration of specialized local state administration into a single state office. Pursuant to the Act No. 345/2012 Coll. on Certain Measures concerning State Administration, the existing regional

offices of specialized state administration were abolished and their responsibilities were transferred to integrated bodies in the respective territory. Pursuant to the Act implemented in the first stage of the reform, 64 specialized regional offices were abolished as of January 2013 and their competences were passed on other state institutions.

The aim of the second stage was to create a uniform system of local state administration bodies. Effective from 1 October, 2013, the sub-district offices of the Environment, sub-district offices for road transport and communications, sub-district forest offices, sub-district land offices and cadastre administrations were abolished. Pursuant to the Act No. 180/2013 Coll., the district offices of integrated local state administration were re-established in 72 locations (Bratislava and Košice had one district office each, with the territorial scope covering all the districts of these cities). Only some of the state offices in the respective territory were affected by the changes. Several of them (Police Force, Fire and Rescue Corps, Mining Office Board, Labour Inspectorate, Financial Administration, Monuments Board, State Trade Inspection, Veterinary and Food Administration) should continue performing their duties under special arrangements.

The third stage of the reform was aimed to integrate specialized local state administration bodies into a district office, restructure and transform other specialized bodies at regional level, make the performance of central bodies of state administration as well as self-government more efficient, establish client centres for citizens. *Client centres* have been established to ensure contact of the citizens with the integrated local government. They operate within the organizational structure of district offices. Their purpose is to ensure communication with the respective offices and to deliver final products to citizens.

The centres provide services according to individual agenda branches: Trade Licences; Registry; Residential; Section of Road Transport; the Environment; Documents and Registration of Vehicles; Commercial Register – extract from the Commercial Register; Offences; Education Section; Forest and Land Office; Labour, Social Affairs and Family; Social Insurance Agenda; Tax Agenda; Health Insurance Agenda. It follows that client centres provide inter-ministerial agendas. Therefore, it is necessary to optimize processes of all the institutions concerned. The quality of services will be provided in line with the Voluntary European Quality Framework.

Self-governments continued to work under fiscal decentralization processes. During this period, the ratio of the income tax of natural persons for municipalities changed several times (in 2012: 65.4%,

2014: 67%, 2015: 68.5%) and for higher territorial units (2014: 21.9%, 2015: 29.2%). From 2015, the revenue from the motor vehicle tax goes to the state budget, not to the higher territorial units as was the case before 2015. Frequent changes in self-government financing cause not only financial difficulties to municipalities and higher territorial units but also enlarge the discrepancy between the scope of powers and duties and own funding options.

Representatives of civil service and local self-governments oppose the transfer of other competencies to local self-governments in terms of the application of subsidiarity principle. A marked *fragmentation* of the Slovak settlement structure is another obstacle. Slovakia is characterized by a strongly fragmented settlement structure, and a poor structure of municipalities. As stated by Tichý (2005), the present form of the Slovak settlement structure is affected by several factors, such as broken terrain, history of settlement, development of economic activities and their concentration in selected locations, and especially the integration of municipalities under socialism and their disintegration due to the introduction of democratic elements into the administration of the state following 1990. The number of small municipalities kept decreasing until 1989, whereas there was an increase in the number of municipalities following 1990 as a result of forced integration of municipalities during the centralization period. Today, more than 65% of municipalities have a population of less than 1,000 people. Small municipalities have limited budget revenues, and therefore unable to ensure effective implementation of original and transferred competencies, and provision of local services. On the other hand (in light of effectiveness), voluntary merging of municipalities cannot be envisaged due to concerns about losing one's identity and autonomy. A partial solution to the issue of fragmentation is the association of municipalities in order to perform certain municipal functions as well as inter-municipal cooperation.

Electronic public administration

Electronic public administration refers to the application of information and communication technologies in the public administration activities, which represents a natural part of the informatisation process of society. The informatisation of public administration is referred to as e-Government. With this regard, it should be born in mind that informatization plays a critical role in the development of knowledge society. In addition, it is one of the most significant stimuli for economic growth and productivity, supporting the creation of new jobs and economic activities, increasing added

value and concentrating the best innovation potential. (Kolektív, 2012) E-Government means the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to execute public administration electronically. E-Government includes the following types of on-line communication:

- G2E – Government to Employee,
- G2G – Government to Government,
- G2C – Government to Citizen,
- G2B – Government to Business,
- G2A – Government to Administration.

The main task related to the development of the information society is to enhance the quality of e-Government services, increase the efficiency of public administration through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in accordance with the objectives set in the Digital Agenda for Europe. Following the Strategy for the Public Administration Informatization, selected agendas were made electronic in the programming period 2007 – 2013. All the efforts were focused on providing e-services to citizens by using public administration information systems. The operational program Public Administration Electronization is designed to eliminate shortcomings and adjust the quality of processes and systems. In the previous programming period, public services failed to provide comprehensive solutions to life situations of citizens. Therefore, this issue will be addressed under the operational program Public Administration Electronization in the new programming period. Processes related to e-Government development in Slovakia by 2020 envision active implementation of the transition to a well-functioning information society and smart government. (Operational Programme Effective public administration 2014-2020).

It is essential that the e-Government infrastructure in Slovakia be able to satisfy above the average demand as the computer and Internet literacy of citizens are rapidly increasing. There are several widely used services of high priority within the strategy of e-Government services development, such as job search, filing of income tax return, motor vehicle registration, or social security.

Hvozdíková, Hošoff, Jeck (2011) say that the e-Government implementation in Slovakia shall also bear in mind the EU priorities, such as building Internet-based open platforms and standards, creating a new model for the internet administration, strengthening the EU position in international fora affecting the global ICT development and projects leading to green infrastructure.

Measures aimed at public administration streamlining were also incorporated into the Program

Declaration of the new government, which was approved in April 2016. The previous reforms continue to be carried out in 2016 (ESO Programme, e-government). The Act on Civil Service is to be adopted in 2016 in order to ensure the civil service reform and eliminate the shortcomings and problems identified by the Council of the European Union.

Conclusion

In 1990, foundations for a new democratic model of public administration were laid in Slovakia. The former three-level system of national committees in which state power and administration as well as part of local self-government were concentrated, was abolished in 1990. The public administration reform separated the state administration from the local self-government. Under the Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Administration, local self-government was made up of municipalities – territorial and administrative units. In state administration, regional and district national committees were abolished and state administration competences were transferred to newly established district (okresné - 38) and sub-district (obvodné - 121) offices.

In 1993 Slovakia was divided into 8 regions (Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, and Košice) and 79 districts. The state power was exercised by regional and district offices which were set up in the regional and district cities. The second level of territorial self-administration - self-governing regions (higher territorial units) – were established and started to work within the region borders as set in 1996. Over the years 2002-2004, within the first stage of fiscal decentralization, selected competences of the state administration were gradually transferred to municipalities and higher territorial units in order to ensure their effective performance. Simultaneously, the system of financing municipalities and higher territorial units was changed. The purpose of fiscal decentralization is to make local self-governments decide with utmost responsibility themselves on issues of local nature, whereas making the best use of resources for the benefit of their citizens.

In 2003 district offices of integrated local state administration were abolished. More than 400 state administration competences were transferred to municipalities and higher territorial units to improve effectiveness and quality of state administration management. In 2007 regional offices of the sectoral scope of the Interior Ministry were abolished. The scope of their activities was passed to the sub-district bodies and relevant ministries, i.e. all the rights and

obligations were transferred to sub-district offices based in regions.

The public administration system has undergone further changes since 2013. The most significant ones include ESO Programme, electronic public administration, and changes in the way how self-government works. In 2013, the district offices of integrated local state administration were re-established. Client centres have been established to

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