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**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS:
A REVIEW**

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Abstract. Public administration in the political system is part of the executive branch and is responsible for implementing policy and achieving the goals set by the government. Public services are the “tangible” results of public administration, and the activity of municipal authorities manifested as the provision of certain benefits to their clients – the public. The theoretical review aims to provide insights into the definition of public administration and services and the reforms carried out in this area in Latvia and Eastern European countries. Issues related to public administration and public service quality are described; trends in the development of public administration and their research in Europe and worldwide are provided. The insights allow us to foresee peculiarities of development and challenges this sector can encounter in various countries, including Latvia.

Keywords: public administration, public services, development trends; reforms; quality of public services; Latvia

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1. Introduction

The existence of society is only possible with public administration. Therefore, its implementation is on the agenda in all countries. The main task of public administration is to implement the laws and regulations issued by the parliament (in the case of Latvia, the Saeima) and the government, as well as to plan and prepare the government’s decisions and future political plans. Public administration under the management of the Cabinet of Ministers (CM) performs the administrative functions of the executive power (functions of public administration), which consist of specific administrative tasks and liability for the performance of such tasks (LR Saeima, 2002). Public administration is the administrative apparatus of executive power and a set of institutions that covers the national, regional, and local levels. It is also where the development and implementation of public policies and the definition and provision of public services occur. The objective of public administration is to implement the public's wishes rationally, effectively and legally. Public administration uses institutions and organizations at various levels, transforming the collective will of society into policies and public services (LR Saeima, 2002). In

legislation, development and policy planning documents, and public communication in Latvia, the term "state administration" is used in various ways. It is used broadly as a synonym for "public administration," encompassing the executive branch's administration and its institutions, including independent institutions, planning regions, and municipalities. It is also used narrowly to denote the state apparatus institutions and very narrowly to include only the state institutions subordinate to the Cabinet of Ministers, referred to as direct state administration (also known as the central government apparatus or central level). The scope of understanding of the term is further expanded by the fact that part of the society sometimes interprets public administration to mean the entire public sector – all institutions financed from tax revenues and other public funds or that use public property, also including other public authorities (e.g., the LR Saeima, the Cabinet of Ministers, courts) and state capital companies.

Public administration institutions in Latvia are divided into institutions of direct administration and institutions of indirect administration. Direct public administration consists of the institutions and officials of the Republic of Latvia, the initial public entity. In contrast, indirect administration includes institutions and officials of derived public entities, such as municipalities, state-founded universities, and public foundations (LR Saeima, 2002). At the same time, the term "public administration" usually refers to the executive power, which comprises the Cabinet of Ministers and its subordinate institutions, as well as the so-called independent institutions. Government institutions and state organizations are public entities operating at the national level to ensure public welfare, enforce the law, and provide the functions of the state.

Government institutions and state organizations are responsible for enforcing laws and regulations. They develop and implement rules that govern various areas, such as health, education, transportation, and the environment. These organizations are of public significance; they operate with public funds and are liable for serving the public interest. They must be transparent and accountable for the money spent and activities. Government institutions and state organizations are funded by the state budget, which, in turn, is replenished by tax contributions from residents and businesses. These organizations employ state employees, state officials, teachers, doctors, police officers, and other specialists to perform their functions. They provide various public services such as healthcare, educational, social, and legal protection. These organizations participate in developing and implementing policies to address societal issues and achieve national goals. Government institutions operate within the framework of democracy. In these institutions, politicians are elected to represent the interests and decisions of the citizens. Government institutions and state organizations ensure national security and protection, including the military force, the police, and the legal system.

Public administration within the political system is part of the executive branch and is responsible for implementing policy and achieving the goals set by the government. Public administration can also be defined as the process by which state policies and legal norms are transformed into specific decisions appropriate for each case. The term "public sector" generally refers to, on the one hand, the civil service, which consists of public administration and various institutions throughout the country (at regional and local levels), and on the other hand, public entities that are wholly or partially owned by the state or regional public institutions, and municipalities. The concept of the public sector is usually understood in its broadest sense, i.e. encompassing all public administration and its services.

The theoretical overview aims to provide insight into the definition of public administration and services and the reforms undertaken in this area in Latvia and Eastern European countries. The paper describes public administration and public services issues to promote an understanding of the challenges the sector encounters.

2. Services and Public Services

The wide range and diversity of services result in a lack of a unified approach to interpreting "service" in scientific literature. Several researchers have provided their understanding of this concept.

According to the interpretation by ISO (the International Organization for Standardization), a service is the result of direct interaction between the supplier and the consumer and of the internal activities of the supplier to meet the consumer's needs (International Organization for Standardization, 2015). This interaction can be implemented in the form of tangible products (material services) but can also be realized as a favourable impact on the person providing the service (intangible services) (Katelo, Kokina & Rasčevskis, 2022).

A service can be the interaction between the supplier and the consumer and the supplier's internal activities to meet the consumer's needs (International Organization for Standardization, 2015). Additionally, a service can be explained as any benefit or activity that one party can offer to another, which is intangible and cannot be obtained as one's property.

Furthermore, a service can be interpreted as an order executed within the scope of an individual's economic or professional activity, either for compensation or without it, or as fulfilling a contract with a consumer. The latter can include leasing an item, creating a new item, improving or modifying an existing item or its properties, performing a task, or achieving an intangible result. A service is a particular product characterized by the following key features, which must be considered when developing a quality management system in the service industry.

There are several types of classification of services. *Services can be classified based on the degree of involvement of tangible assets.* According to this factor, services are divided into intangible and partially tangible services. Considering the specifics of immaterial services, the service is provided solely as a result of the actions of the service provider or producer. Examples of such services include education and insurance services. Partially tangible services are services provided using tangible goods. Examples include retail, fast food, mobile communication services, and public utilities. The service is provided due to the service provider's actions, while the consumer becomes the owner of the material product. *Services can also be classified based on the level of contact between the consumer and the producer.*

Direct services are provided solely due to the service provider's actions, which occur through direct contact between the employee and the customer. This is where the continuous production and consumption of services are most evident. Mixed services involve meeting the customer's needs in "two stages", including direct contact between the producer and the customer and the producer's actions in the customer's absence. *Services can be classified based on the frequency of their provision:* one-time service, rare, systematic, regular, or daily services. *Services are also categorized based on the number of customers:* individual, group, and corporate services (Katelo, 2022). *Services can be classified according to several characteristics:* form of ownership, market type, and service provider. The criteria and types of service classification are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria and types of service classification

Criteria of Service Classification	Types of Service
Degree of involvement of tangible assets	Intangible services Partially tangible services
Level of contact between the consumer and the producer	Direct services Mixed services
Frequency of service provision	One-time services Rare services Systematic services Regular services Daily services
Number of customers	Individual services Group services Corporate services
Form of ownership	State or public services Services provided by private entities Services of mixed-property companies
Type of market where services are provided	Trade services for production resources Commodity trading services Real estate trading services Financial and securities trading services Currency trading services Labour recruitment services Information services, etc.

Source: designed by the author

In Latvia, the Nice Classification (WIPO, 1979) is used: it is an international classification of commodities and services used to classify and search trademarks and service marks. It includes eleven classes of services. The catalogue of public services is available on the state administration service portal Latvija.lv, which serves as a unified access point for services provided by the Latvian state and municipal institutions. The service catalogue there accumulates information on services provided to the population by the state and municipal institutions (LR Cabinet of Ministers, 2017).

The main *types of public services* include services of general economic interest (road maintenance, street lighting), governance (individual) services that include administrative services (registration, certified statements, permits, taxes, social benefits), and physical services (social care, education, healthcare), as well as economic services (management of residential buildings). The public sector includes state and municipal institutions and their commercial companies, companies with 50% or more of state or municipal capital, foundations, associations, funds, and their commercial companies.

Public administration operates within a legal framework defined by external regulatory acts (Katelo, 2022). The types of public services are shown in the figure below (see Figure 1).

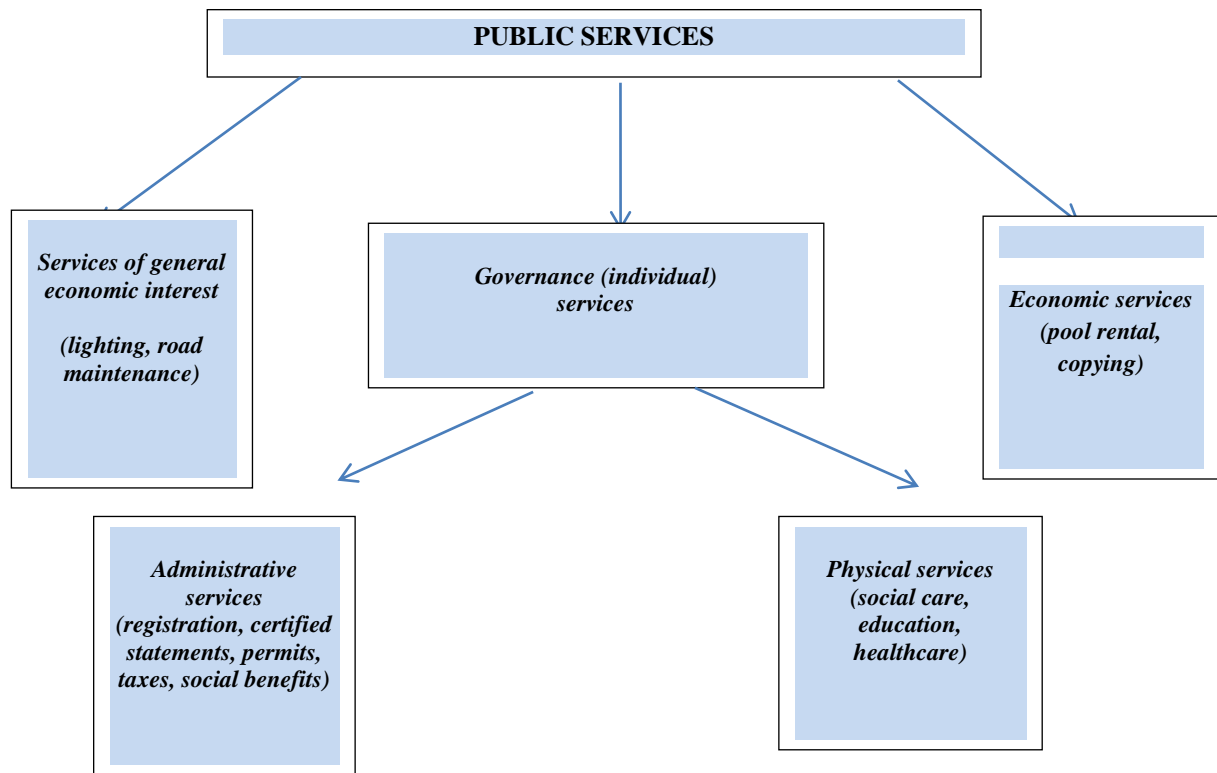


Figure 1. Types of public services

Source: created by the author based on a review of the literature

Administrative services are public (i.e., state and municipal) services provided by public administration institutions and municipalities. The author agrees with the characteristics of administrative services identified by Koliushko et al. (2009):

1. Administrative services are provided upon the request of a natural or legal person.
2. The provision of administrative services is associated with ensuring legally significant conditions for the exercise of the subjective rights of a particular person.
3. Public administration institutions and municipalities provide administrative services through their authority.
4. The right to provide a particular administrative service to an individual and the institution's authority is determined by law.
5. The result of the activities of public administration institutions is an administrative act – a decision or legally significant action that satisfies the individual's request. (Koliushko et al., 2009).

The researcher above proposes the following classification of administrative services:

1. Based on the level of authority determination for the provision of administrative services and the type of legal procedures for the order of their provision:
 - administrative services with centralized regulation (laws, acts of the Cabinet of Ministers);
 - administrative services with local regulation (acts of municipal institutions);
 - administrative services with “mixed regulation (both centralized and local regulation).
2. Based on the payment criteria:
 - fee-based services;
 - free services.

3. Based on the content of public services for the provision of administrative services:

- registration;
- issuance of permits (licenses);
- certification;
- inspection;
- determination of status.

4. Based on the thematic issues addressed:

- business (economic) services;
- social services;
- tax administration services;
- Land office services;
- construction and public utility services, etc. (Koliushko et al., 2009).

The classification of administrative services is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of administrative services

Criteria for the classification of administrative services	Types of administrative services
1. Based on the level of authority determination for the provision of administrative services and the type of legal procedures for the order of their provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - administrative services with centralized regulation (determined by laws and acts of the Cabinet of Ministers); - administrative services with local regulation (determined in the acts of municipal institutions); - administrative services with “mixed regulation (in case of both centralized and local regulation).
2. Based on the payment criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fee-based services; - free services.
3. Based on the content of public services for the provision of administrative services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - registration; - issuance of permits (licenses); - certification; - inspection; - determination of status, etc.
4. Based on the thematic issues addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - business (economic) services; - social services; - tax administration services; - Land office services; - construction and public utility services, etc.

Source: designed by the author using a review of the literature

The above-presented classification may be applied to the conditions of Latvia (Katelo, 2022).

3. Public administration and quality of public services

In the European context, discussion about the trends of public administration development is often linked to the ideas of the new "European Administrative Space (EAS)" – a concept commonly treated as a gradual convergence of administrative structures, processes, and values towards a standard European model.

The development of public administration is related to the level of development of the country as a whole and, of course, to the old and new trends in the development of public administration. Along with implementing public administration reforms, great importance is attributed to the quality of public services (Katelo, 2022).

The issues related to the quality of public services have been analyzed through decades by many researchers (Kondrotaitė, 2012; Mazur et al., 2018; Christensen, Laegreid & Rovik, 2020; Androniceanu, 2021; Singh & Slack, 2022; Androniceanu & Georgescu, 2023).

The research on the quality of public services in *Lithuanian municipalities* by Kondrotaitė (2012) concludes that in terms of quality in the context of public services, the most critical aspect is consumer satisfaction with the services provided. However, Lithuania has not yet used a "client-oriented" model of public service management. According to the author of the research, the process of ensuring the quality of public services should be divided into two parts: 1) quality assessment, which includes process analysis, summarizing the results of that analysis, and feedback; 2) the implementation of the results of process analysis in the reform of education, healthcare, and social care systems (Katelo, Kokina & Rasčevskis, 2021).

The study on Poland's state governance's development and status quo was conducted by Mazur, Moždžen and Oramus (2018). The research was elaborated for the European Commission with technical assistance from the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), the Hertie School of Governance, and Ramboll Management Consulting (Katelo, Kokina, & Rasčevskis, 2021). The report highlights the following most essential areas for improvement:

1. Enhancing public trust in the civil service and improving its image. Increasing the society's awareness of the benefits of the civil service and its role by focusing on citizen needs and using modern communication methods.

2. Quality of management and human resources in the civil service. It is essential to update the systems and management standards offices use to ensure greater flexibility in human resource management through a long-term strategy.

3. Remuneration levels and appointment limits in the civil service. Relatively low wages combined with appointment limits create the risk of causing highly trained staff to leave and make it harder to attract new specialists. In recent years, this has manifested in declining employment and increased staff turnover in the civil service.

In very recent research, Romanian researchers David et al. (2024) claim that the future public administration quality will depend on the adaptivity of public administration managers and employees to changes caused by digitalization processes.

In the context of the public sector in Turkey, quality management is identified not only as an approach and system for improving the quality of public services but also as a tool for addressing problems within the Turkish public administration (Katelo, Kokina, & Rasčevskis, 2021). The results of surveys conducted in two ministries indicate that employees in both ministries have a positive attitude towards quality management. Most respondents agree on the necessity and usefulness of quality management in Turkey's public sector. Most respondents also agree with the definition of quality management as an approach aimed at citizen satisfaction by continuously improving services and processes.

Pareek and Sole (2022) analyzed the development and quality of public administration in India, including the Citizen's Charter formulation and implementation, social audit, e-Governance programme, and Public Service Guarantee Act.

Ntshangase and Msosa (2022) and Shava and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023) tackled the quality of public services provided by municipalities of South Africa. Some authors express harsh criticism and call the quality of services especially unsatisfactory. Mamokhere (2023) names public services so bad that they trigger protests from their users; Tsheola, Sebola and Mamabolo (2023) see the reasons for the low quality of services in a scandalous governance crisis and societal leadership vacuum. Haurovi and Chilunjika (2023) describe unethical behaviour in the South African police service. Zikhali, Lungwengwe and Komisane (2023) stress the importance of value-based leadership on local economic development. Therefore, the public administration must develop tools for evaluating service quality and setting priorities (Katelo, Kokina & Rasčeskis, 2021).

Christensen, Laegreid and Rovik (2020) have compiled several new research programs and theories of public administration. The authors mention interdisciplinary studies, such as life sciences or environmental studies. They also highlight research on public administration accountability and reputation management. Another potential trend of research is opened up by data analysis on the evaluation of public services by both the public and public administration participants. These data are obtained from various social studies and compared with the perceptions of officials and politicians.

In recent years, the digitalization of public services has been the focus of researchers and practitioners. Radivojevic et al. (2024) stress importance of intelligent public administration. Brzozowska-Rup, Nowakowska and Zdradzisz (2024) stress the importance of the impact of cloud computing on the quality of public administration. Androniceanu (2023) and Bakhmat et al. (2024) point to challenges to public administration caused by the advancement of artificial intelligence.

The trends in the development of public administration and their research in Europe and globally directly impact the development of this sector in Latvia).

4. Public administration system development peculiarities in Latvia

At the end of 2022, there were 149 direct administration institutions in Latvia (LR Ministru kabinets, 2020). In total, these institutions employed 43,512 people, with the most significant portion, or 12,280 people, being used in the Ministry of the Interior (State Police, State Fire and Rescue Service, State Border Guard, etc.) (LR Ministru kabinets, 2023). In the Ministry of Justice sector (Court Administration, Prison Administration, etc.) at the end of 2022, there were 5,631 employees; in the industry of the Ministry of Welfare – 5,024; in the Ministry of Health – 4,536; in the Ministry of Finance – 4,467; in the sector of the Ministry of Agriculture – 2,387; in independent institutions – 2,035; in the Ministry of Culture – 1,838; in the Ministry of Defence sector – 1,342; in the Ministry of Economics – 1,144; in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development – 954; in the Ministry of Education and Science – 875; in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – 566; in the Ministry of Transport – 283; and in the Cabinet of Ministers – 150 people. At the same time, it should be taken into account that the number of institutions of direct administration is variable – the Cabinet of Ministers makes decisions on the establishment, reorganization, or liquidation of institutions of direct administration (for example, a new institution, the Ministry of Climate and Energy, was included in the register of institutions of direct administration at the beginning of 2023) (LR Ministru kabinets, 2023). Reforms in the state administration in Latvia began after the restoration of independence on May 4, 1990, with the adoption of numerous laws. From the mid-1990s until the approval of the Public Administration Reform Plan (LR Ministru kabinets, 2017), several significant stages of reform were implemented in the development of public administration policy. The development of public administration has also been influenced by the state's economic crisis that necessitated structural reforms in 2009.

The list of key policy documents regulating the public administration reforms since 1995 and their objectives is provided below:

1. The Concept of the Latvian Public Administration Reform (1995) aimed to develop a state administration system envisaged in the Constitution to effectively and fairly fulfil the functions entrusted by the society (LR Ministru kabinets, 1995).
2. State Administration Development Strategy until 2000 (adopted in 1998) – to ensure systematic and consistent implementation of measures aimed at improving the operation of public administration by promoting the development of the state development strategy, sectoral formulation, and resource allocation according to the priorities set by the government (LR Ministru kabinets, 1998).
3. Public Administration Reform Strategy from 2001 to 2006 and Action Plan for Strategy Implementation (2001) – to establish a government-approved basis for medium-term (until 2006) development of the public administration, as well as to coordinate individual initiatives in the field of public administration, aligning them with political goals for the development of the state (LR Ministru kabinets, 2001).
4. Guidelines for the Development of Public Administration Policy 2008–2013 (2008) aimed to ensure a legal, effective, and high-quality public administration that ensures that the services it provides meet the needs of the society (LR Ministru kabinets, 2008).
5. Action Plan for the Optimization of Public Administration System and Civil Service (2009) – aimed at developing small, professional, and citizen-oriented public administration working for the benefit of society (LR Ministru kabinets, 2009).
6. Concept of the Development of Human Resources in Public Administration (2013) – professional, motivated, and honest employees in public administration (LR Ministru kabinets, 2013).
7. Guidelines for the Development of Public Administration 2014–2020 (2014) – effective, accessible, innovative, professional, and results-oriented public administration (LR Ministru kabinets, 2014).
8. Public Administration Reform Plan for 2020–2017 – effective, responsible, and flexible state administration (LR Ministru kabinets, 2017).

When evaluating the indicators of public administration efficiency in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Finland, it can be concluded that since 1996, the World Bank's measurements demonstrate that Latvia has not experienced significant upward trends or notable improvements compared to other countries. Finland, frequently mentioned in the State Audit Office reports (LR Valsts kontrole, 2022), is a noteworthy example of enhancing national welfare.

The slow progress in Latvia is also evidenced by the State Audit Office's report regarding the public administration reform plan. Evaluating the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Plan, approved by the government in 2017, which aimed to build "an effective, accountable, and flexible state administration", "the audit findings allow us to conclude that the governance of the Reform Plan was carried out according to the laws and regulations in general but it has not been effective". Furthermore, using the term "reform" raised great expectations for qualitative changes throughout the public administration, but these have not occurred (LR Valsts Kontrole, 2022). Audit findings allow us to conclude that the governance of the Reform Plan was carried out according to the laws and regulations in general, but it has yet to be effective.

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 outlines six fundamental directions or priorities for national development: investments in human capital, a change of paradigm in education, an innovative and eco-efficient economy, nature as a future capital, spatial development perspective, innovative government and public participation, and the development of the culture space. The implementation of most of these strategic goals, from both the aspect of the policies and the element of sectoral development, falls under the supervision of the public administration (LR Saeima, 2010).

As public understanding of the role of the state and municipalities in society's life changes, there is an increasing demand for higher quality services provided by the state and municipalities. To ensure that public administration

can adapt to these requirements and not hinder the overall development, a series of public administration reforms must be implemented at the national (state), regional, and local levels. Effective public administration, based on the efficient use of state and municipal resources, is a significant factor in enhancing Latvia's competitiveness in Europe and the whole world. The development of public administration reforms in Latvia is focused on ensuring a rational distribution of state and municipal functions, a clearly defined system of responsibility and accountability for the state institutions and municipalities, its effective coordination, a professional civil service, an efficient public financial management system, and predictable operations of the state institutions.

To enhance the development of public administration reforms, in May 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia adopted the Public Administration Modernisation Plan 2023-2027 (LR Ministru kabinets, 2023). Public Administration Modernisation Plan 2023-2027 is a medium-term planning document that determines the trends for the development of direct public administration in Latvia until 2027. The Modernisation Plan has been developed to continue, deepen, and expand the reforms initiated in the “Public Administration Reform Plan 2020”. At the same time, the future trends discussed in the Modernisation Plan are determined by new global challenges (including the post-Covid-19 situation, the war in Ukraine, and the energy crisis), as well as the low level of trust of Latvian citizens in public administration (LR Ministru kabinets, 2023).

The goal of the Modernisation Plan complies with the action direction “Rule of Law and Governance” set out in the National Development Plan 2027 (NDP2027). It aims for the state administration to become more professional – more open, modern, and capable of achieving better and faster results (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, 2020). The measures included in the Modernisation Plan are subordinated to the fulfilment of the objective outlined in NDP2027, which envisions the implementation of intelligent, efficient, and open governance that prioritizes human needs, implements evidence-based solutions, and promotes coordinated cross-sectoral cooperation by using new methods and digital opportunities, ensuring meaningful public participation (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, 2020). The National Development Plan for 2021-2027 (NDP 2027) is Latvia's primary medium-term development planning document (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, 2020). It has been developed in compliance with the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvija, 2030) (LR Saeima, 2010) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015), aiming to improve the quality of life for every Latvian citizen and the society as a whole over the next seven years.

Implementing the National Development Plan for 2021-2027 is planned to achieve fundamental changes and growth in four main directions: equal rights – ensuring the implementation of fundamental rights of Latvian citizens through the state-provided services; quality of life, which features the enhancement of overall well-being and growth of opportunities for every Latvian citizen; knowledge society, which is a common trend that fosters changes in education, science, civic awareness, media, and the economy; responsible state as a response to current and future challenges posed by climate and demographic trends (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, 2020).

Concluding insights

Public administration is defined as an administrative apparatus and a set of institutions of the executive branch, encompassing national, regional, and local levels, where the development and implementation of public policy and the definition and provision of public services occur.

Administrative services are public services (of the state and municipalities) provided by public administration institutions and municipalities. The operation of any service is oriented towards satisfying the customer's needs. Research into needs is also necessary to understand the service area's mechanism.

The public sector comprises government and municipal institutions and their corporates, commercial entities with 50% or more of state or municipal capital, foundations, associations, funds, and their corporates. In the public sector, an essential criterion of effectiveness is the symbiosis between such efficiency criteria as economy and quality of public services, where a certain degree of savings is achieved while maintaining the quality of service at an adequate level. The quality of European public administration institutions directly impacts the economic environment and plays a crucial role in promoting productivity, competitiveness, economic cooperation, growth, and employment.

The improvement of the organization of on-site service delivery will contribute to achieving the goal of improving the public service system – creating and organizing delivery of services that meet the needs of residents, entrepreneurs, and other service recipients, at the same time reducing administrative burden, improving the business environment, ensuring the availability of services in regions, and promoting more efficient public administration.

Evaluating the efficiency indicators in public administration in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Finland, it must be concluded that Latvia has yet to show significant improvement or advancement compared to other countries.

The quality of public administration is the key to its economic performance and the well-being of its citizens. An efficient and productive public administration serves the needs of its citizens. Government institutions and their leaders need to adapt to changing circumstances, especially during times of crisis and change.

The development of public administration is related to the level of development of the country as a whole and, of course, to the old and new trends in the development of public administration. The future challenges of public administration will be related to service quality benchmarking and digitalization processes.

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