

FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE LEGAL RELATIONS IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

CARACTERÍSTICAS DO DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS RELAÇÕES JURÍDICAS ADMINISTRATIVAS NOS PAÍSES EUROPEUS

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Abstract: A well-functioning public administration, together with public governance, plays an important role in many aspects of modern society, such as political, social, and economic outcomes. In this context, it is difficult to overestimate the role of proper legal regulation of administrative procedures. The modern state does not just unilaterally influence passive objects but interacts with citizens and organizations, recognizing their legal personality, and providing an opportunity to participate in the development of administrative decisions. This integral aspect of the development of public legislation and the practice of its application is primary, while all other areas of modernization of public administration (in particular the introduction of electronic technologies) should be considered derivative of it. The research aims to establish the regularity of the current peculiarities of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries, based on the reports of the E-Government Development Index, E-Participation Index, and OECD Digital Government Index by conducting regression analysis. It has been determined that the EU has been leading the world rankings since the beginning of e-government research and has the most homogeneous e-government development. Moreover, it has been established that Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Iceland, and Malta belong to the highest EGDI rating class and are among the world leaders in the development of e-government.

Keywords: Administrative Legal Relations. E-government. European Countries.

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proporcionando uma oportunidade de participar do desenvolvimento de decisões administrativas. Este aspecto integral do desenvolvimento da legislação pública e da prática da sua aplicação é primordial, enquanto todas as outras áreas de modernização da administração pública (em particular a introdução de tecnologias eletrônicas) devem ser consideradas derivadas dela. A pesquisa visa estabelecer a regularidade das peculiaridades atuais do desenvolvimento das relações jurídicas administrativas nos países europeus, com base nos relatórios do E-Government Development Index, E-Participation Index e OCDE Digital Government Index por meio de análise de regressão. Foi determinado que a UE lidera o ranking mundial desde o início da pesquisa de governo eletrônico e tem o desenvolvimento de governo eletrônico mais homogêneo. Além disso, foi estabelecido que Dinamarca, Estônia, Finlândia, Suécia, Reino Unido, Holanda, Islândia e Malta pertencem à classe de classificação EGDI mais alta e estão entre os líderes mundiais no desenvolvimento do governo eletrônico.

Palavras-chave: Relações Jurídicas Administrativas. E-governo. Países europeus.

1. Introduction

European law has remained "one of the pillars of European administrative law" (Sierra, 2005). However, the debate on the possibility of defining European administrative law, and thus EU administration, remains open in the absence of an EU Constitution (Matei, Matei, 2011).

Due to the current context, EU public administrations are facing many major challenges, including rapid technological change, demographic change, skills shortages, increasingly complex political issues, the green transition, and growing pressure on public finances (European Commission, 2021a). Some of these challenges could be addressed by investing EU funds to improve the efficiency of public administration in EU member states. The EU institutions have supported administrative reforms and administrative capacity building. Moreover, they have improved the allocation and management of EU funds through various EU cohesion policy funds and sectoral programs (European Commission, 2021b).

Over the period 2014-2020, 17 beneficiary countries have received around €4.2 billion from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) under Sustainable Development Goal 11 to "enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and good governance". In the new programming period, unprecedented resources will be allocated to EU Member States under the "NextGenerationEU" package, which, among other things, will support investments in reforms and public administration (Nakrošis et al., 2022).

Recent decades in many EU countries have been marked by administrative reforms. The modernization of EU administrative law is aimed at improving not only the system of

internal apparatus relations but also the interaction of public authorities with the population in differentiated areas. Namely, this is seen in the provision of public services, implementation of state control and supervision, ascertainment of information transparency of public administration, and implementation of new electronic technologies in the management process (Aristova et al., 2021).

The use of ICT and digital technologies in public administration has significantly changed the way EU public administrations interact with citizens and led to the development of e-government and digital government (Volik et al., 2019). It includes technological changes as well as the latest leadership styles, innovative decision-making processes, different ways of organizing and delivering services, and modernized concepts for citizens (Gil-Garcia et al., 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2020).

The research aims to establish the regularity of the current peculiarities of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries, based on the reports of the E-Government Development Index, E-Participation Index, and OECD Digital Government Index by conducting regression analysis.

Research objectives of the article:

1. To analyze the reports of the E-Government Development Index, and IMD World Competitiveness Index to determine the state of public authorities and the state of implementation of electronic and digital governance in the EU countries.
2. To analyze the level of public trust in local/regional and national institutions within the EU.
3. To characterize reform initiatives in the field of administrative legal relations development in the EU member states.
4. To assess and conduct a current analysis of the state of development of administrative legal relations in European countries.
5. To differentiate the characteristics of administrative regulation of the construction industry in some European countries.
5. To conduct a regression analysis to reflect the dependence of the state of efficiency of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries on the current results of the IMD World Competitiveness Sub-Indexes "Government Effectiveness" and "Infrastructure".

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

The institutional framework of the European Union is established by Article 13(1) of the Treaty on European Union (hereinafter - TEU), as well as the content of Part 6 "Institutional and Financial Provisions" of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which are at the same time the legal foundations of the administrative institutions of the European Union. Article 17(1) of the TEU upholds the administrative nature of the institutions, of which the European Commission is the main one, which "shall exercise coordinating, executive and management functions as laid down in the Treaties on the Functioning of the European Union" (Matei, Matei, 2011).

The institute of administrative procedures can be a means of the deepest transformations of public administration. It contributes to the achievement of the following tasks: the creation of guarantees for the protection of the rights of citizens and organizations in mutual legal relations on the part of state bodies, and officials (including by ascertaining the possibility to defend their legal position in the process); rationalization of public administration activities; ensuring legality and transparency, accountability of public administration; legitimization of managerial decisions; fight against corruption; formation of the legal framework for administrative discretion; standardization of administrative and judicial practice, as well as stimulating economic growth and creating favorable conditions for investment (Galligan, 2004; Luchterhandt, 2006b). At the same time, the procedures of positive activity of executive authorities, despite the implementation of a significant number of main by-laws, have not received a sufficiently strong and modern legislative basis in European public law (Luchterhandt, 2006a). The formation of a unified and consistent, adequate, increasingly complex socio-economic, legal reality of the theory of administrative procedures, as well as the search for concepts of proper legal regulation of relevant administrative relations is one of the most important problems of modern administrative law.

The main characteristic feature of the development of administrative legislation in democratic countries is the focus of development on ensuring the rights and interests of citizens in relations between the state and its legal bodies. One of the most important guarantees of this process is a clear regulation of the procedural side of legal relations between a person and the state. In such a situation, an employee of the administration does not act arbitrarily but precisely following the established procedure. The above guarantees the equality of persons before the provisions of the law since a common procedure is used

for all such cases. In addition to the above, it should be noted that the existence of the procedure established by law is the basis for exercising control over the legality of the activities of the authorities, including the judiciary (Hofmann et al., 2014). However, the level of regulation is a very important and complex point in administrative law. Hence, there are ongoing discussions in Europe as to whether the efficiency and professional quality of administrative procedures are reduced due to excessive regulation (Luchterhandt, 2006a; Luchterhandt, 2006b). Scientists note that legal regulation harms the administrative law itself.

Nowadays, various authors note that the development of administrative procedures in parallel with the evolution of the entire public administration can no longer be revealed exclusively through the prism of rationalization of the activities of state bodies (Bashtannyk et al., 2021; Bilan et al., 2019a; Bilan et al., 2019b; Bobrovska et al., 2021). Legal regulation of administrative procedures should be based on the ideas of human rights to no lesser extent. It should provide citizens and organizations with the necessary set of guarantees of subjective rights to protect their interests in interaction with the public administration. At the same time, legal regulation of administrative procedures is impossible without an internally consistent system of principles of both the procedures themselves and administrative law in general (Harlow, Rawlings, 2014; Hofmann, Türk, 2006). Administrative procedures act as a "connecting link" between differentiated administrative and legal phenomena: public administration, administrative acts, citizens, and organizations. Being regulated by administrative legislation, administrative procedures "permeate" all its main institutions and ascertain their unity, and coherence (Wierzbowski, 2020). Thus, the theory of administrative procedures is an important part of the theory of administrative law. Whereas, the legislation on administrative procedures contributes to the systematization (codification) of legislation on public administration.

In many EU countries, there are three main models of systematization of administrative procedure law: systematic and detailed procedural rules with a "code" and multi-volume acts, as in Germany; administrative law consisting of general principles concentrated in small acts, as in Italy; administrative legislation dealing only with certain parts of the procedure, such as access to documents, participation, hearings, without framework legislation, as in France (Harlow, Rawlings, 2014; Ponce, 2005; Tridimas, 2006). The diversity of administrative legal systems of the EU countries is an obstacle to a common cross-border understanding of the practice and theory of administrative law in the

European legal space (Kalyayev et al., 2019; Karpa et al., 2021; Kostiukevych et al., 2020; Levytska et al., 2020; Liubkina et al., 2019).

Due to the current conditions in the EU, electronic and digital governance has a high priority in the modernization of public administration (Ardielli, Haláskova, 2015). E-government is one of the measures aimed at applying the benefits of information, communication, and digital technologies across Europe. At a time of significant constraints on public resources, information, communication, and digital technologies can help the public sector find innovative ways to deliver services to citizens while increasing efficiency and reducing expenses (EC, 2015; EC, 2020a). One of the benefits of e-government and digital governance is the reduction of public expenditures on the maintenance of premises. Citizens can apply for services that the relevant civil servants can provide them and get paid for their work (Saab et al., 2019; Ravšelj et al., 2020).

Frost and Lal note that studies on e-government and digital governance emphasize the adoption of these technologies by governments to provide administrative services efficiently. However, the adoption of e-government and the digital government has not been successful in all developing countries, given that the links between them and the actual policy-making process or professional practice in such countries are not taken into account (Frost, Lal, 2018). Twizeyimana and Andersson, focus on the fact that the benefits of electronic and digital governance are not only in improving the quality of public services provided to the population but also in increasing the administrative efficiency of state institutions, local governments, ethical behavior and professionalism of their employees, increasing public confidence in the government and improving the social situation in the state (Twizeyimana, Andersson, 2019).

Thus, based on a review of recent scientific publications, the advantages of e-government over traditional government have been identified. Furthermore, the reasons that impede the implementation of electronic and digital governance in many countries of the world to ensure the development of effective administrative legal relations in European countries have been established (Volik et al., 2019). Hence, the peculiarities of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries are reflected in the publications of scientists in the form of practical research and theoretical studies. The issue, however, is relevant and open for further research.

3. Research design and methods

The realization of the objective of this study involves the following research methods:

- systematization of the E-Government Development Index, and IMD World Competitiveness Index reports to determine the state of public authorities and the state of implementation of electronic and digital governance in the EU countries;

- systematic and logical analysis, method of synthesis of information on the level of public trust in local/regional and national institutions within the EU and analysis of reform initiatives in the field of development of administrative legal relations in the EU Member States;

- generalization of statistical data published by governments and accountable organizations, to establish an assessment and current analysis of the state of development of administrative legal relations in European countries and the effectiveness of the implementation of electronic and digital governance in local governments, based on the reports of the E-Government Development Index, IMD World Competitiveness Index.

- a comparison method for differentiating the characteristics of administrative regulation of the construction industry in some European countries.

To reflect the dependence of the state of efficiency of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries on the current results of the IMD World Competitiveness Sub-Indexes "Government Effectiveness" and "Infrastructure", a regression analysis has been conducted.

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4. Results

The EU has the highest average value for the E-Government Development Index (hereinafter - EGDI) in 2022 (0.8602), as well as the highest average values for the Human Capital Index (hereinafter - HCI) and the Telecommunications Infrastructure Index (hereinafter - TII) (0.9030 and 0.8648 respectively). The EU has topped the world rankings since the beginning of the e-government survey and has the most homogeneous E-

Government development. Of the 27 European countries surveyed, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Iceland, and Malta belong to the highest (VH) EGDI ranking class and are among the world leaders in e-government development. According to the statistics based on EGDI in 2022, Table 1 demonstrates a further improvement in the global trends of E-Government and digital governance development in EU countries and the transition of many countries from lower to higher EGDI levels. All countries have very high EGDI values between 0.66 and 1.00 (Table 1).

Estonia is considered one of the fastest-implementing digital transformation countries in the world. Estonian citizens can do almost everything online, except for a few things like getting married or divorced, and selling or buying real estate. X-road (centralized distributed data exchange layer between information systems), a multi-channel communication protocol developed for online services, enables functions such as digital identity, e-voting, e-taxation, and e-business. Eesti.ee is a one-stop service for government information and e-services. The country also has a Civil Society Development Strategy that includes citizens in the development of policies and legal acts. For example, the citizen initiative portal rahvaalgatus.ee allows citizens to write proposals, hold discussions, compose and send collective addresses with digital signatures to the Estonian Parliament.

Table 1. The 2020-2022 EGDI

Country	EGDI rank	OSI value	HCI value	TII value	EGDI 2022	EGDI 2020
Denmark	1	0.9797	0.9559	0.9795	0.9717	0.9758
Finland	2	0.9833	0.9640	0.9127	0.9533	0.9452
Sweden	5	0.9002	0.9649	0.9580	0.9410	0.9365
Estonia	8	1.0000	0.9231	0.8949	0.9393	0.9473
Netherlands	9	0.9026	0.9506	0.9620	0.9384	0.9228
Malta	15	0.8849	0.8734	0.9245	0.8943	0.8547
Spain	18	0.8559	0.9072	0.8895	0.8842	0.8801
France	19	0.8768	0.8784	0.8944	0.8832	0.8718
Austria	20	0.8827	0.9070	0.8505	0.8801	0.8914
Slovenia	21	0.8666	0.9439	0.8239	0.8781	0.8546
Luxembourg	26	0.8319	0.8245	0.9462	0.8675	0.8272
Germany	22	0.7905	0.9446	0.8957	0.8770	0.8524
Lithuania	24	0.8347	0.9251	0.8636	0.8745	0.8665
Latvia	29	0.8135	0.9284	0.8378	0.8599	0.7798
Ireland	30	0.7796	0.9618	0.8287	0.8567	0.8433
Greece	33	0.7753	0.9405	0.8206	0.8455	0.8021
Poland	34	0.7929	0.9033	0.8348	0.8437	0.8531
Italy	37	0.8659	0.8606	0.7860	0.8375	0.8231
Portugal	38	0.7954	0.8665	0.8201	0.8273	0.8255
Belgium	39	0.6899	0.9614	0.8294	0.8269	0.8047

Croatia	44	0.8108	0.8500	0.7711	0.8106	0.7745
Czech Republic	45	0.6693	0.9114	0.8456	0.8088	0.8135
Slovakia	47	0.7260	0.8436	0.8328	0.8008	0.7817
Hungary	51	0.7465	0.8345	0.7671	0.7827	0.7745
Bulgaria	52	0.7092	0.8221	0.7984	0.7766	0.7980
Romania	57	0.6814	0.8090	0.7954	0.7619	0.7605

Source: 1) Online Service Index – (OSI). 2) Compiled by the authors by official data of the (UN, 2022).

According to the IMD World Competitiveness report, trends that could affect the long-term competitiveness of countries have been identified, namely geopolitical challenges, culminating in the re-emergence of armed conflict in Europe, which could have global repercussions for years to come. For example, the stability of political systems - a fundamental element of government effectiveness - may be under threat in some parts of the world, affecting the ability of governments to promote long-term value creation.

The competitive position of EU member states, as defined in the IMD report, correlates with the ranking of countries based on GDP per capita. The analysis of the dynamics of changes in the IMD index and GDP per capita for the EU member states confirmed that the growth of GDP per capita is accompanied by an increase in the IMD index, which informs about the progress in digitalization and innovation in the economy (Figure 1).

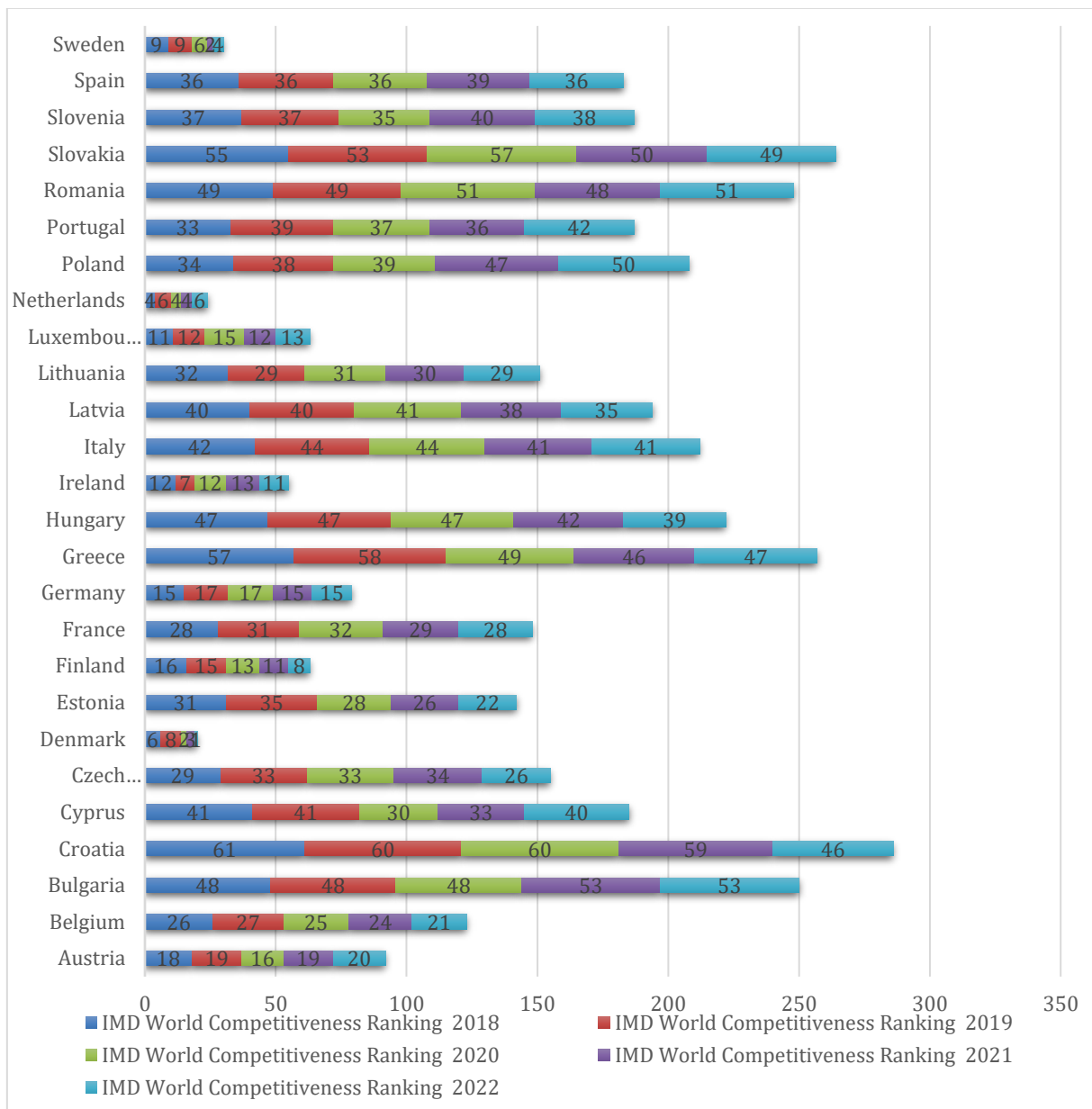


Figure 1. The IMD World Competitiveness Ranking 2018-2022

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of the (IMD, 2022).

The indicator of "government effectiveness" is often used to assess the overall efficiency of government and public administration. Government effectiveness is defined as "the quality of public services, the capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressure, and the quality of policy formulation". As shown in Table 2, overall efficiency varies significantly across EU Member States. The data for 2022 show that the Nordic countries performed better overall, while the performance was significantly lower in Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania. The achievement of a country like Denmark is mainly due to an increase in the International Investment sub-factor and high scores in the

Government Efficiency factor (6th), in particular in the Institutional Framework (2nd), Business Regulation (3rd), and Social Framework (2nd) (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Sub-Indexes of the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking 2018-2022

	Economic performance					Government efficiency				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Austria	17	20	15	20	24	32	28	25	29	34
Belgium	44	37	25	24	14	35	36	35	37	33
Bulgaria	28	47	34	41	49	37	42	39	47	49
Croatia	56	55	45	50	32	56	58	59	57	46
Cyprus	22	19	13	13	38	28	32	21	25	24
Czech Republic	16	17	16	23	18	27	34	36	36	22
Denmark	26	26	21	17	13	6	6	4	7	6
Estonia	32	44	35	29	33	21	27	19	18	15
Finland	43	35	43	34	44	15	17	16	14	10
France	30	34	32	28	17	39	48	46	39	40
Germany	12	9	5	3	5	19	22	24	23	21
Greece	61	60	55	52	51	61	60	52	52	55
Hungary	39	46	19	8	8	48	45	47	40	37
Ireland	11	6	12	22	7	13	11	13	13	11
Italy	47	53	42	39	41	53	53	57	55	54
Latvia	53	52	53	44	54	33	33	32	32	28
Lithuania	36	39	33	33	43	31	29	33	31	23
Luxembourg	4	4	8	10	1	17	10	12	10	13
Netherlands	6	13	1	2	19	8	9	11	12	12
Poland	18	18	29	27	29	40	44	43	56	56
Portugal	42	43	41	43	46	34	37	34	38	43
Romania	34	49	46	40	55	51	51	49	44	47
Slovakia	46	42	49	47	52	55	57	60	51	51
Slovenia	29	33	36	31	26	42	39	38	43	42
Spain	31	29	31	42	35	38	40	44	49	50
Sweden	24	21	22	16	21	11	16	14	9	9

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of the (IMD, 2022).

In 2022, the Western Europe subregion is the leader in Government Effectiveness, Business Effectiveness, and Infrastructure. The Nordic countries are European leaders in terms of business efficiency and adequate infrastructure, with Denmark, Sweden, and Finland in the top three, and the Netherlands and Ireland among the most competitive

European economies. Among the member states, the lowest positions in the ranking were obtained by: Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia (Table 3).

Table 3. The Sub-Indexes of the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking 2018-2022

	Business efficiency					Infrastructure				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Austria	14	17	16	18	18	14	11	10	12	10
Belgium	23	28	22	20	19	20	21	19	19	20
Bulgaria	57	54	53	59	59	51	50	50	54	51
Croatia	62	63	64	64	49	46	49	48	50	45
Cyprus	53	52	35	43	44	41	42	38	41	40
Czech Republic	32	37	38	41	29	30	31	32	31	28
Denmark	3	7	1	1	1	3	3	2	3	2
Estonia	27	33	27	31	22	32	34	33	30	27
Finland	16	13	13	12	5	6	5	4	5	4
France	31	38	43	36	35	12	9	13	15	15
Germany	19	26	25	23	21	11	10	11	10	9
Greece	59	58	51	44	46	40	41	39	39	41
Hungary	58	56	59	56	48	39	39	41	37	36
Ireland	10	3	5	11	11	21	23	23	20	23
Italy	44	42	45	35	34	31	32	30	29	31
Latvia	40	43	44	42	37	37	35	37	35	35
Lithuania	30	23	24	30	25	29	30	34	34	32
Luxembourg	8	12	17	13	20	24	25	24	24	24
Netherlands	6	4	4	4	3	9	8	9	7	5
Poland	37	36	40	57	58	34	36	35	42	43
Portugal	33	45	41	38	42	26	29	27	27	30
Romania	52	51	54	52	50	49	48	47	48	48
Slovakia	60	60	61	55	54	45	44	46	44	42
Slovenia	47	40	39	45	43	28	27	29	33	33
Spain	42	39	42	39	40	27	26	26	26	25
Sweden	4	6	3	2	2	5	4	1	2	3

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of the (IMD, 2022).

Statistics from several Western countries show that residents who are satisfied with public services are nine times more likely to trust the government as a whole. To study the interaction between the scale of civic action and trust in political actors, an illustrative indicator is a difference between the share of citizens who claim to trust local and regional institutions, on the one hand, and national institutions, on the other. This difference is

presented for each EU member state over seven years (2013-2020) in the map shown in Figure 2.

The analysis shows that for all Member States, local and regional institutions are still more trusted than national institutions. The average trust gap between local/regional and national institutions within the Union is 15 percentage points. This difference is highest in the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovenia, and France. In France, the trust gap between local/regional and national institutions is the largest and amounts to 31.89%. In Sweden, Italy, Croatia, and Ireland, on the contrary, the smallest difference is observed, ranging from 4.57 to 5.57%. However, even in these countries, we see a significant gap in trust between local/regional and national institutions.

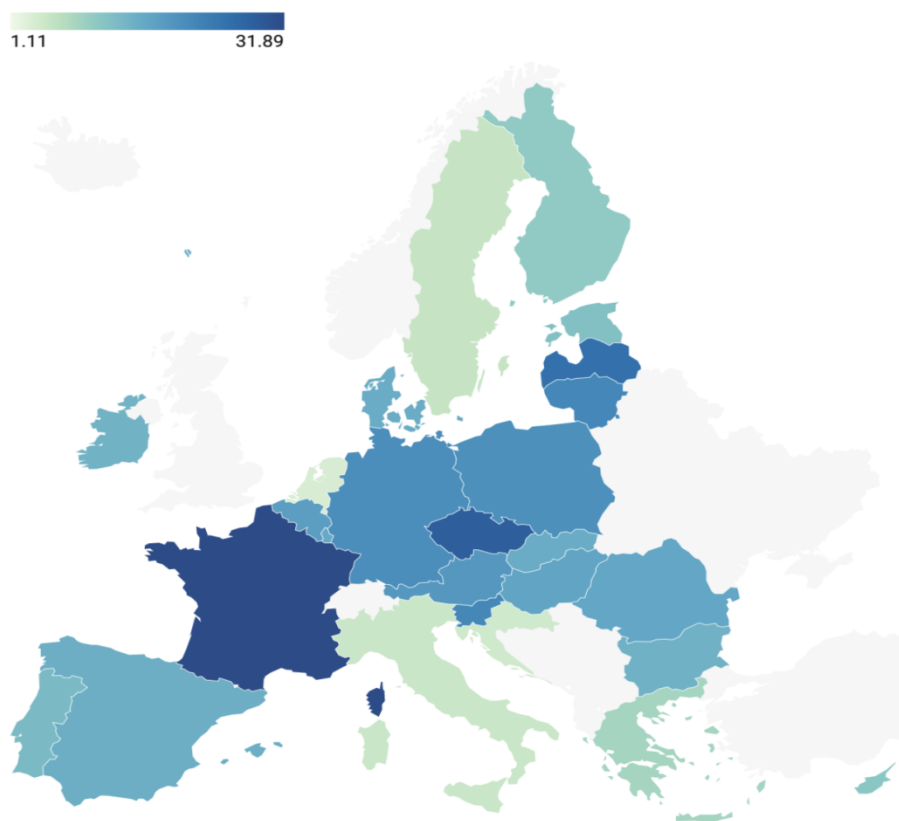


Figure 2. Local institutions are more trusted in EU 2013-2020

Source: 1) Compiled by the authors by official data of the (Le Groupe d'études géopolitiques, 2022); 2) Trust gap between national institutions (parliament and government), and regional/local institutions, in percentage points.

Table 4 displays the results of regression modeling to establish the dependence of the state of effective development of administrative legal relations in European countries, based on the results of the IMD World Competitiveness Sub-Indexes "Government Effectiveness" and "Infrastructure":

Effectiveness of development of administrative legal relations

$$= (0,001) + 0,774 * \text{Government efficiency} + 0,799 * \text{Infrastructure}$$

Thus, the effectiveness of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries depends on the current results of the IMD World Competitiveness Sub-Indexes "Government Effectiveness" and "Infrastructure". The model parameters are statistically significant, as indicated by t Stat of 10.643 and 21.460 and P-values of 0.000002 and 0.0000000049.

Table 4. Results of regression modeling

Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0,03							
R Square	0,001							
Adjusted R Square	0,89							
Standard Error	0,27							
Observations	27							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	1	0,0001	0,0001	0,0080	0,9307			
Residual	25	0,1138	0,0126					
Total	26	0,1139						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95,0%	Upper 95,0%
Intercept	0,001	0,011	0,089	0,931	-0,023	0,025	-0,023	0,025
Government efficiency	0,774	0,073	10,643	0,000002	0,609	0,938	0,609	0,938
Infrastructure	0,799	0,037	21,460	0,0000000049	0,715	0,883	0,715	0,883

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of the (IMD, 2022).

The value of the coefficient of determination indicates that the regression model by 89% reflects the direct dependence of the state of efficiency of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries, based on the results of the IMD World Competitiveness Sub-Indexes "Government Effectiveness" and "Infrastructure". This analysis indicates that there are other factors influencing the efficiency of administrative relations in European countries that are not included in the regression model.

It should be noted that the EU countries apply a comprehensive approach to state regulation of the construction industry, taking into account the basics and principles of

state programming. In particular, the most optimal is the mechanism of state regulation of the construction industry in such countries as Sweden and Austria. The experience of state regulation of the construction sector in France is laid down in the state management of the development of the construction industry, and in Finland, the state regulation of the construction industry is carried out at the highest level by issuing state orders and coordinating the activities of construction organizations.

It is considered appropriate to systematize the comparative characteristics of state regulation of the construction industry in individual EU countries in Table 5. It should be noted that in such EU countries as Spain, Italy, Germany, and France, the main institutions of regulation of the construction industry are non-governmental organizations and professional associations of builders. The peculiarity of administrative regulation of the construction industry in Portugal is the mandatory qualification (accreditation) of construction companies and builders.

Table 5. Comparative characteristics of state regulation of the construction industry in selected EU countries

Country	Legislative regulation of the construction sector	Implementation of legislation by construction companies
Spain	A diversified system of national legislation in the construction industry introduced mandatory accreditation procedures for construction companies implementing a project of more than 120,000 euros.	Construction companies are issued with a qualification (accreditation) certificate, valid for 2 years, and presented at the request of the state customer. Licensing of construction companies is carried out by the Ministry of Economy and Finance.
Italy	The mandatory qualification procedure for a construction project within a public contract.	Construction companies are issued with a qualification (accreditation) certificate, valid for 5 years with a mandatory inspection after 3 years. The SOA regulates and certifies activities.
Portugal	Mandatory certification system for construction organizations and builders according to established levels.	The need for a certificate of eligibility for construction workers is issued by the Association of Civil Engineering and Public Works Industries.
Germany	Lack of mandatory requirements for a certification system for construction organizations and builders in the field of standard construction works.	Regulatory and supervisory functions are performed by the state and private customers.
France	Introduction of a voluntary certification system for construction organizations.	Certificates are issued for 5 years with the possibility of annual verification, issued by non-profit organizations in selected areas.

Source: Compiled by the authors on official data of (Nepomnyashchy et al., 2022).

The latest key reform initiatives in the field of administrative legal relations in the EU member states, either individually or as part of broader governmental strategies, are

summarised in Table 6. In general, these initiatives focus on organizational restructuring, modernization, efficiency, transparency, and simplification of administrative procedures.

Table 6. Reform initiatives in the development of administrative legal relations in the EU member states

Member State	Title of strategy/approach
BG	State Administration Development Strategy 2014-2020
CZ	Strategic Framework of Public Administration Development 2014-2020
	Reform strategy 'Client-centered public administration 2030'
DE	Modern State as part of the Implementation-Strategy Digitalisation 2019
EE	Estonia 2035
	Strategy 'Estonia 2035'
IE	Civil Service Renewal Plan
	Our Public Service 2020
EL	National Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2017-2019
ES	National Programme of Reforms (NPR) for Spain 2020
	National Programme of Reforms for 2020
FR	Public Action 2022 (launched in 2018)
HR	Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020
	E-Croatia 2020 Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation
	Anti-corruption Strategy for the Period 2015-2020
	Biannual strategic plans of the Ministry of Public Administration (2018-2020; 2019-2021)
IT	Project RiformAttiva
	Piloting a new implementation method
CY	Europe 2020 – Cyprus National Reform Programme
LV	Reform Plan 2020
	Law 'On administrative territories and populated areas' (adopted on 10 June 2020) foresees implementing reform by the municipal election in 2021
LT	Public Governance Improvement Programme 2012-2020
	Implementation plan of the government program
	Government Priority Action for 2018-2020
	Portfolio of strategic projects
HU	Public Service Development Strategy 2014-2020
MT	Public Administration Act 2019
PT	Government's Reform Priorities 2020-2023
SI	Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020
SK	2020 Framework for Reform Strategy
FI	A section on governance within the 2019-2023 Government Programme

Source: Compiled by the authors on official data of the (EC, 2020b).

5. Discussion

The study shows that e-government and digital governance of public authorities today are essential to provide fast and quality services to citizens and companies. Therefore, the EU has recognized the importance of e-government and digital governance and their

possible beneficial impact on the business environment in its latest development strategies (EC, 2016; EC, 2020a).

A review of the available literature shows that the EU has improved the level of electronic and digital governance of public authorities in recent years. The digital progress of European countries in improving the development of electronic and digital governance of public authorities is the highest among the regions of the world. Digitization of public and administrative services has several benefits for citizens and businesses, namely, digital public services can significantly reduce the administrative burden on citizens and companies, which in turn increases the transparency of decision-making and reduces the risk of corruption. Accordingly, the development of electronic and digital governance of public authorities in the EU countries thus has a positive impact on government efficiency, quality of regulation, and ease of doing business (Ravšelj et al., 2020).

In European countries, administrative law is defined mainly through the normative regulation of legal relations between the state (public) authorities and the individual, as well as through the provision of guarantees of the legal protection of the individual. These aspects are crucial, as the rights and interests of citizens are the *raison d'être* of a free democratic state. The procedure for organizing the activities of public authorities or the administrative system can significantly affect the relationship between public authorities and citizens, but cannot affect the very essence of administrative legal relations. Administrative procedures are recognized as one of the most important institutions for building effective interaction between individuals and executive authorities in democratic states (Aristova et al., 2021).

Progress in e-government and digital governance is correlated with other factors such as citizens' preferences and digital skills, government policies, and characteristics of the digital context. Most relative indicators correlate with absolute indicators of digitalization and permeation, except the openness indicator. Eastern European countries still lag behind Nordic countries, so they need to implement structural adjustments in public administration to catch up with the development of these countries (UN, 2022).

Thus, the development of administrative legal relations and electronic and digital governance of public authorities in European countries will face new challenges. The potential in the information technology and digital space is quite high, but not sufficiently realized. Its in-depth study will lead to increased attention to improving the process of administrative service delivery.

6. Conclusion

As a result of the analysis of the development of administrative legal relations in European countries, it has been determined that the legal consolidation of the democratic principles of public administration in administrative and legal relations between public administration bodies and individuals should be based on the position of a person as a subject to whom the State is responsible for its activities. To date, the legal norms regulating administrative procedure are contained in legal acts of different legal forces, which, however, does not eliminate a large number of gaps in the legal regulation of administrative and procedural relations, which can be eliminated only by adopting the EU Constitution. One of the reasons for the long codification of administrative procedure legislation is the wide range of relations that will be included in the subject of legal regulation of the relevant law in the EU member states. However, the wide spectrum of relations that will be included in the subject of legal regulation of law should not be considered an obstacle to the codification of EU administrative procedure legislation. Instead, the possibility and necessity of adopting a single legislative act to regulate administrative procedures are confirmed by the rich foreign experience of both continental and common law systems. It has been established that electronic and digital governance of public authorities is a useful tool for reducing the financial costs of public administration, as well as a benefit for citizens in the form of time-saving.

The practical significance of the study is that the conclusions and recommendations developed by the author and proposed in the article can be used to: avoid institutional and national challenges during the implementation and introduction of unified administrative legal relations in European countries through electronic and digital governance.

Further research can be aimed at the implementation of unified administrative legal relations in European countries through electronic and digital governance. This will stimulate and improve the activities of state institutions in the information technology and digital space, ensuring the provision of quality administrative services to citizens and businesses. Empowerment and widespread use of innovative, research-based approaches and avoidance of institutional and national challenges to ensure quality administrative legal relations can become the basis for countries' strategies for the future.

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