ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING AND FISCAL ADJUSTMENT IN GREECE: EVALUATING PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS (2010–2018)

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of the economic adjustment programmes implemented in Greece during the period 2010–2018 on the organisational structure of public administration. Focusing primarily on the central administration, it analyses the processes of administrative restructuring and the abolition and merger of public sector bodies, assessing their quantitative and qualitative outcomes. The study argues that, although the reform agenda largely addressed long-standing structural weaknesses of the Greek administrative system, the conditions of the crisis significantly altered the intensity, pace and mode of policy implementation. Under the pressure of fiscal conditionality, administrative reforms were implemented more rapidly and on a larger scale, often prioritising budgetary objectives over functional and organisational coherence. Drawing on official documents, reform programmes, legislation and reports by international organisations, the article identifies two distinct cycles of administrative reorganisation during the crisis period and evaluates their divergent results. The findings suggest that, while the first cycle led to a substantial reduction of administrative structures, the second placed greater emphasis on qualitative and functional criteria, resulting in a renewed expansion of organisational units. Overall, the article highlights the limits of crisis-driven administrative reform and raises questions regarding the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of structural adjustments in public administration.

Keywords: *public administration; Greece; public sector reforms; fiscal adjustment.*

INTRODUCTION

The fiscal adjustment programs of the period 2009-2018 had significant impacts on the organizational structure of the public administration. The measures that constituted the administrative reform agenda affected all structures, levels and procedures, changing certain critical characteristics of the administrative mechanism. The course and objectives of the administrative reform were primarily linked to budgetary constraints, but also directly affecting the structural parameters of the administration.

A critical issue was the size and cost of the public sector, leading to the introduction of a series of measures to limit its size and improve its economic performance. In the context of these pressures, particular emphasis was placed on the restructuring of the structures of the administration, which were at the center of extensive interventions aimed at reducing and rationalizing them.

This study investigates the impact of economic adjustment programs on the way the administrative mechanism is organized and structured. Focusing mainly on the central administration, the main objective is to capture the process of restructuring administrative

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structures and to assess its results, in quantitative and qualitative terms.

The measures implemented under the pressure of the debt crisis largely attempted to respond to chronic weaknesses and problems in the organizational structure of the Greek administration. However, it is argued that the crisis changed the intensity, pace and conditions for the implementation of policies, mainly as a consequence of the conditionality clause, imposing larger-scale, faster and more inflexible adjustments. To investigate this case, the following analysis covers the changes that took place at the political-governmental and administrative-service levels with reference to two parallel processes: (i) the restructuring of the structures of the central administration and (ii) the abolition and merger of public sector bodies.

Methodologically, the study was based on the study of bibliographical and empirical data that came from reliable academic sources. The material utilized is based on the existing bibliography and mainly on data from the adjustment programs, the Memoranda of Cooperation, the National Reform Programs, the relevant legislation, the Evaluation Reports, the administrative reform programs, independent reports / studies, material from the press and the internet and data from the Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction.

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

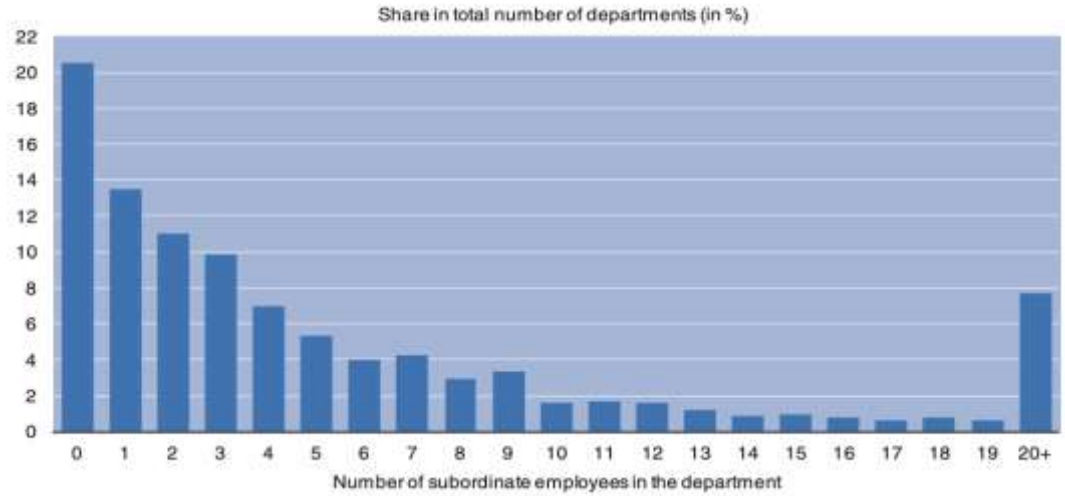
The restructuring of the structures of the administrative mechanism was a key pillar of the administrative reform programs implemented during the economic adjustment programs (2010-2018). However, the problems that the relevant measures attempted to address largely date back to a year before the onset of the crisis. Attempts to address the weaknesses and shortcomings that emerged in the conditions of the crisis, since the end of 2009, are found in almost all the administrative reform programs of the last decades. The main weaknesses can be summarized in the large size of the public sector, the irrational structure of the administrative structures and the high cost in relation to the (low) performance of the administrative mechanism.

The issue of reorganizing administrative structures is not new on the administrative reform agenda, as it has been the subject of previous reform efforts, reports and recommendations (Spanou, 1996). One of the main weaknesses that the crisis policies attempted to address is related to the size and irrational structure of the public sector. The exuberant and unplanned growth of the structures of the administrative mechanism in recent decades had led to the expansion of service units and to the heterogeneity of the structural shape between the Ministries (Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government, 2012). The directions of the reforms emphasized the need to reduce the size and increase the efficiency of administrative structures, without however making significant progress.

Problems in the way administrative structures are organized were also identified in the excessive (ex)tension of the top of the administrative hierarchy (general directorates, departments, departments), without a corresponding development of the base of the pyramid. The increase in positions of responsibility was in many cases a result of the abuse of promotions to serve individual (personal) arrangements and not objective service needs. The tendency for an “opportunistic” multiplication of administrative (service and political) ranks

is not a new phenomenon, as it has already been noted since the mid-1990s (Spanou, 1996). The inflation of structures (on average 439 per Ministry) and the mismatch between the (inflated) top and the (weak) base of the administrative pyramid was largely a result of the increase in the number of managerial levels, without having previously ensured the required human resources to support the structures (OECD, 2011). As can be seen from the Chart, at the beginning of the crisis, a large part of the structures at department level, almost 1/5, were staffed only by their managers, indicating the problematic scope of supervision of these administrative units (Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government, 2012).

Figure 1. Distribution of departments based on number of employees



Source: OECD, 2011, 26

The phenomenon of (unequal) distribution of personnel in administrative structures and levels, as a chronic problem of the Greek administration, created further fragmentation of responsibilities and duties and reinforced the fragmentation of services, presenting the image of an administration extremely bloated at the top, but with departments that had a limited number of employees (Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government, 2012). One of the main causes of the irrational way of organizing and structuring administrative structures, which is linked to the issue of the expansion of the size of the administration, was found in the multiplication of administrative units of the Ministries in the pre-crisis decades (especially due to the needs of managing funding programs), as well as in the creation of new structures without abolishing existing ones that no longer had a purpose and reason for existence (OECD, 2011).

Related was the problem of the increase in structures within Ministries and the (im)balance between the political and service levels. In this case, the irrational structure and/or increase in structures was primarily linked to the way the political leadership approached the administrative mechanism and the issue of politicization/partisanship. For example, the phenomenon of distinct administrative sectors, such as Special Secretariats, often led to the confusion of the relationship between the political and administrative levels of Ministries, reinforcing centralization at the political level and weakening the role of non-political staff (OECD, 2011).

In addition to the size of the structures, the organizational scheme of the Greek administration was characterized by significant functional and qualitative weaknesses, which were highlighted in an imperative manner in the conditions of the crisis. The “lack of executive planning and strategic action” in the way services are organized and hierarchically structured, and the irrational nature of the organization of the administrative mechanism, are chronic problems that have been highlighted since the beginning of the crisis. Coordination problems were identified both between agencies and at the intra-organizational level, while they were also linked to the low capacity for operational planning in public administration (Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government, 2012). The fragmentation of structures and responsibilities was a significant cause and manifestation of the observed lack of coordination, communication and exchange of information between administrative units, especially in areas of joint responsibility, creating phenomena of "sealing" and overlaps between the areas of responsibility of central structures (International Monetary Fund, 2012), as well as within Ministries (Spanou, 1996).

The absence of effective structures and mechanisms for horizontal cooperation between services led to the fragmentation of responsibilities and functions within the administration. This fragmentation was also reflected in the geographical dispersion of administrative units and services. In previous administrative reform projects, strengthening the centralization of the state, in political and geographical terms, was the usual practice for alleviating this fragmentation, without however providing an effective response to the problem (Spanou, 2001). The interventions also seem to have had weak results at the level of institutional adjustments, as the efforts at reorganization and modernization were usually limited to formal, institutional-type changes in the organizational structure of the services (amendments/revisions of the Organizational Charters), without reaching the critical organizational weaknesses (Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction, 2017).

The quality of the administrative structure further affected the effectiveness of the organizational units. The administrative structures showed a low degree of adaptation to the changing context of the needs and responsibilities of public organizations, therefore a low capacity to respond to the modern needs of society and the economy (Ministry of Finance, 2011). The old age of the existing Organizations in combination with their opportunistic and fragmented modification was a related aspect of this dysfunction that indicated the problematic nature of the adaptation of the organizational scheme and the lack of overall planning and systematic updating. The insufficient development and diversification of the administrative structures was further one of the main components of the generally low capacity and quality of the administrative mechanism (Makrydemetres, Zervopoulos & Pravita, 2016). Furthermore, it negatively affected other parameters of the administrative mechanism, such as functions and human resources. For example, the problem was reproduced at the level of human resources management and allocation, given the absence of an organizational framework regarding the description of job positions and personnel duties (Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction, 2017).

From the preceding recording, it emerges that the main problems that characterized the organizational structure of the administrative mechanism in the period before the onset of the crisis corresponded to chronic weaknesses of the administrative structures, which had already

been identified and attempted to be addressed by previous or ongoing modernization/reform efforts, without however significant improvements having been made. Given this data, a crucial question is whether the conditions of the crisis changed this course, leading to a higher degree of integration and implementation of (necessary) reforms.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES AND FISCAL STABILITY

The reorganization process

At the administrative level, the process of reorganizing the structures started from the central administration units, following the typical stages of evaluating and adjusting the size and responsibilities of the organic units. Since the outbreak of the crisis, two distinct cycles of reorganization have taken place (2012-2014 and 2016-2018), which correspond (and) to different government periods and choices, and led to the revision of the existing and the issuance of new organizational charts of the central administration structures. The reorganization process was not continuous, as interruptions and variations were recorded not only between government periods, but also during the rotation of the Ministers of Administrative Reform and E-Government / Administrative Reconstruction. The distinction adopted in this study does not overlook these discontinuities, nor the differences between the individual phases of reorganization of administrative structures (which are recorded in detail), but serves to capture the integrated programs that were implemented during the crisis period.

Evaluation of structures and new organizations

1. First reorganization cycle: 2012-2014

The preparation of the process of evaluating and reorganizing the structures and units of the central administration had started in 2011, leading to the submission of a relevant Draft Law in 2012, which provided for the overall revision of the Organizations of 11 Ministries, 2 General Secretariats and certain Legal Entities. However, the process of voting and implementing these Organizations' drafts was not completed, as the change of government and the subsequent replacement of the political leadership of the Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government intervened. The general guidelines, however, were largely maintained and incorporated into the policies adopted and implemented subsequently, aiming at the abolition of redundant administrative structures, the merger of units with similar functions, the simplification of administrative structures through the reduction of hierarchical levels and the establishment/strengthening of support service units (financial, administrative, IT) (Hellenic Parliament, 2012).

The first comprehensive restructuring cycle was implemented in 2012, with a planned duration of two (2) years, until 31.12.2013. It was stipulated that it would be based on meritocratic - scientific criteria, without however being specified by law, and would have as main deliverables the new Organizational Charts, the abolition of service units of limited scope / competence, the transfer of personnel and the abolition of redundant positions. From the content of the measures, it is evident that the policies of administrative reorganization in this phase were primarily linked to the trend of limiting the size and improving the functioning of the state. Based on these directions, the revision of administrative structures had as main objectives (Press Office of the Ministry of Public Administration, 2012):

- the redesign of the responsibilities of administrative units and the abolition of those structures that do not serve society and the economy or whose operation overlaps with other units
- the minimization of the number of organizational units, with the aim of achieving budgetary objectives, such as savings from cuts in operating expenses, economies of scale and staff reductions
- the minimization of administrative procedures, aiming at their acceleration
- the identification of understaffed and/or overstaffed administrative units and the more effective utilization and (re)allocation of the administration's human resources
- the improvement of the public administration's response to the demands of society, through the provision of upgraded and more flexible services with the lowest possible budgetary burden.

In 2012, the first twelve (12) Evaluation Committees were established for the structures of the organic units of the central administration, which were composed of civil servants and had as their object the control and evaluation of the existing structures of eleven (11) Ministries, the supervised bodies and Independent Authorities, the General Secretariat of the Media, the General Secretariat of Information and Communication and their supervised bodies. The Ministry of Information and Communication and the Ministry of Public Works were the first two bodies, which also functioned as pilot cases for the overall process of reorganization of the Ministries (International Monetary Fund, 2012).
The criteria and methodology for the evaluation and reorganization process of administrative structures were determined by the Coordination Group for the evaluation at the Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government, in collaboration with foreign experts (French Government) and members of the Task Force. The criteria set included the evaluation of the following parameters (Press Office of the Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Government, 2012):

- the competencies exercised (creation of added value for citizens and businesses and overlaps of competencies)
- the efficiency of organizational units
- the processes (degree of responsiveness to citizens' requests)
- the compatibility of structures with the initial operational objectives, in particular with regard to budgetary implications (expenditure, cost, transparency)
- the possibility of abolishing and/or merging units or supervised entities (response to mission / overlaps of competencies).

Based on Law 4178/2013 (article 54)[2], the basic elements of the Organizations were provided to specify:

- the mission of the body and the structure of its services in organic units (general directorates, directorates, sub-directorates, departments, independent offices)
- the name and headquarters of the organic units, the strategic objectives of the General Directorates, the operational objectives of the Directorates and Sub-directorates and the responsibilities of the Departments and other organic units

[2] Law 4178/2013 (article 54)

- the personnel branches by category, the number and distribution of positions in branches and specialties and the corresponding formal qualifications for appointment / recruitment
- the general description of the qualifications and duties of each position of responsibility and the branches of the heads of the organic units.

The restructuring of the units was approached not only based on technical organizational criteria, but was also linked to human resource management, personnel distribution and the outlines of positions of responsibility. Through the Organizations, it was foreseen that the abolition/merger of services or organizational units and the transfer of their responsibilities or their abolition, the establishment/abolition of personnel positions, the establishment/merger/abolition of branches and organizational positions, the transfer of personnel positions to other branches and other organizational and operational issues could also be regulated[3].

The process of evaluating the structures was expected to be completed by 31.12.2012, leading to the restructuring of services, the drafting of new Organizational Charts, the abolition of service units, the transfer of personnel and the abolition of redundant positions by the end of next year[4]. The Committees, in collaboration with French experts, prepared plans for the restructuring of administrative structures (structure evaluation reports), which reflected the organizational structure of the central bodies and formulated proposals for the reduction and improvement of existing structures. The central Working Group undertook the definition of the methodology and criteria for evaluating the structures and was at the same time responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the process. The plans prepared by the Committees, after case-by-case processing and adjustments, were submitted, in the form of a proposal, to the Support Group of the Government Reform Council, which approved the final texts. Particular emphasis was placed on the budgetary impact of the proposed measures, which were reflected in the extensive supporting reports of the proposals, together with assessments and proposals for the management of the bodies' personnel.

Based on the recommendations of the groups and the decisions of the CSM and after the technical processing by the Council of State, in November 2014 the new Organizations of sixteen (16) Ministries and one General Secretariat were issued. The new Organizations also affected the status of civil servants, as a maximum limit was set for the positions per Ministry and the numerical distribution in the individual service units was consolidated. Therefore, the employees are now linked to the foreseen (organic) positions of the bodies, in specific organic units (staffing plans).

The new Organizations included structures that were linked to the country's obligations within the framework of the adjustment programs, such as the creation of General Directorates with financial responsibilities[5]. Also, independent structures were created in each Ministry, the Internal Audit Units, with the responsibility of controlling the internal functions of the Ministries: fiscal-financial management, administrative control, monitoring of information

[3]art. 54, Law 4178/2013.
[4]art. 35, Law 4024/2011.
[5]Law 4337/2015, Subchapter 4

systems, monitoring and evaluating objectives/performance of service units, identifying corruption phenomena, etc. Although the operation of these Units had been foreseen since 2006[6], in the conditions of the crisis, the control and monitoring functions of the operations were upgraded, while in 2012 it was foreseen that these structures would report directly to the competent Minister[7].

2. Second reorganization cycle: 2016-2018

In 2016, following the change of government in 2015, the new government considered that sufficient time had passed since the 2014 reorganization and re-initiated the process of evaluating the structures of the organic units of the Ministries[8]. The reorganization of the administrative structures largely followed the same stages as the 1st reorganization. The change of the Ministers of Administrative Reconstruction and the persons managing the reorganization policies in November 2016 did not cause significant changes in the process, however, minor differences were observed in the approach and the individual objectives of the reorganization.

As in the first cycle of reorganization, Evaluation Committees of the existing structures were initially established in each Ministry and a central working group was established to monitor and coordinate the work of the Committees[9]. The latter prepared and submitted relevant evaluation reports and submitted their proposals for the restructuring of the existing structures. These reports - suggestions differed from those of the first restructuring cycle in terms of scope and documentation (more limited) but also in terms of targeting, as the emphasis of the attempted changes was given to the organizational and operational parameters of the structures, and to a lesser extent to the budgetary implications, which were dominant in the previous period. Based on these, after approval by the CSM and the processing that followed until their final submission, the draft PDs of the Organizations were drawn up, subsequently approved by the Council of State and published gradually in late 2017 and early 2018.

[6]Art. 12, Law 3492/2006.
[7]Art.1, Law 4081/2012.
[8]No. ΟΜ/Φ.20/οικ.2836/1-2-2016 letter of the Deputy Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction "Reassessment of the structures of the organic units of the Ministries" and ΟΜ/Φ.20/οικ.21424/9.8.2016 circular of the Minister of Administrative Reconstruction ""Reassessment of the structures of the organic units of the Ministries".
[9]AP DIDC/F.38/oik.15836/9.6.2016 Decision of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Restructuring "Establishment and Appointment of Working Group Members for the coordination and monitoring of the re-evaluation procedures of the structures of the organic units of the Ministries".

Figure 2. Stages of the management evaluation process



Source: Spanou et al. (2018)

The central directions for the reassessment of administrative structures have been differentiated from the objectives of the first restructuring, as the emphasis is no longer on the reduction of structures but mainly on qualitative-functional parameters of their structure and operation, aiming to[10]:

- to limit the fragmentation of the Ministries' scope into many General and Special Secretariats
- to distinguish and provide for the positions of Administrative Secretary, Deputy Administrative Secretary, Sectoral Secretary and Special Sectoral Secretary
- to establish unified internal administration structures, especially with regard to support services (Administrative/Personnel, Financial, E-Government, etc.)
- to integrate the responsibilities of the Financial Control Services (FCS) into the General Directorates of Financial Services of the Ministries.

The implementation of the measures was significantly delayed, while several extensions were granted to the deadline for submitting the draft Presidential Decrees and the evaluation reports of the new Organizations. The PDs with the revised Organizations of the Ministries began to be issued in late 2017 and were completed in early 2018. The Table presents the institutional framework of the Organizations of the Ministries and the relevant amendments that occurred as a result of the restructuring of the structures during the crisis.

It is noted that in 2015, mergers of some of the Ministries took place, which however did not affect their internal structures, as they did not lead to organizational-functional unification, but were limited to the (formal) change of the institutional framework. After all, in 2016, most of them were re-established as independent structures, without their internal organization having changed, except for the reference level of political leadership.

[10]Decision No DOM/F.20/oik.21424/9.8.2016 circular of the Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction.

Table 1. Ministry Organizations 2014-2018

Ministry of	Institutional Framework		
	Organizations 2014-	**Mergers/Re-establishments (2015-2016)**	**Organizations 2017-18**
Interior	PD 105-2024	PD 24/2015 PD 123/2016	PD 141/2017
Economy and Development	PD 116/2014	PD 70/2015 PD 123/2016	PD 147/2017
Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Information	PD 102/2014 (to GG) (PD 123/2016)		PD 82/2017
National Defense	(Law 2292/1995)		
Education, Research and Religious Affairs	PD 114/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 18/2018
Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity	PD 113/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 134/2017
Foreign Affairs	(Law 3566/2007)		
Justice, Transparency and Human Rights	PD 101/2014		PD 96/2017
Finance	PD 111/2014		PD 142/2017
Health	PD 106/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 121/2017
Administrative Reconstruction	PD 99/2014	PD 123/2016	PD 133/2017
Culture and Sports	PD 104/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 4/2018
Environment and Energy	PD 100/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 132/2017
Infrastructure and Transport	PD 109/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 123/2017
Migration Policy	PD 123/2016	-	PD 122/2017
Maritime and Island Policy	PD 103/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 13/2018
Rural Development and Food	PD 107/2014	PD 70/2015	PD 97/2017
Tourism	PD 112/2014	PD 123/2016	PD 127/2017
Macedonia and Thrace	PD 108/2014	-	-

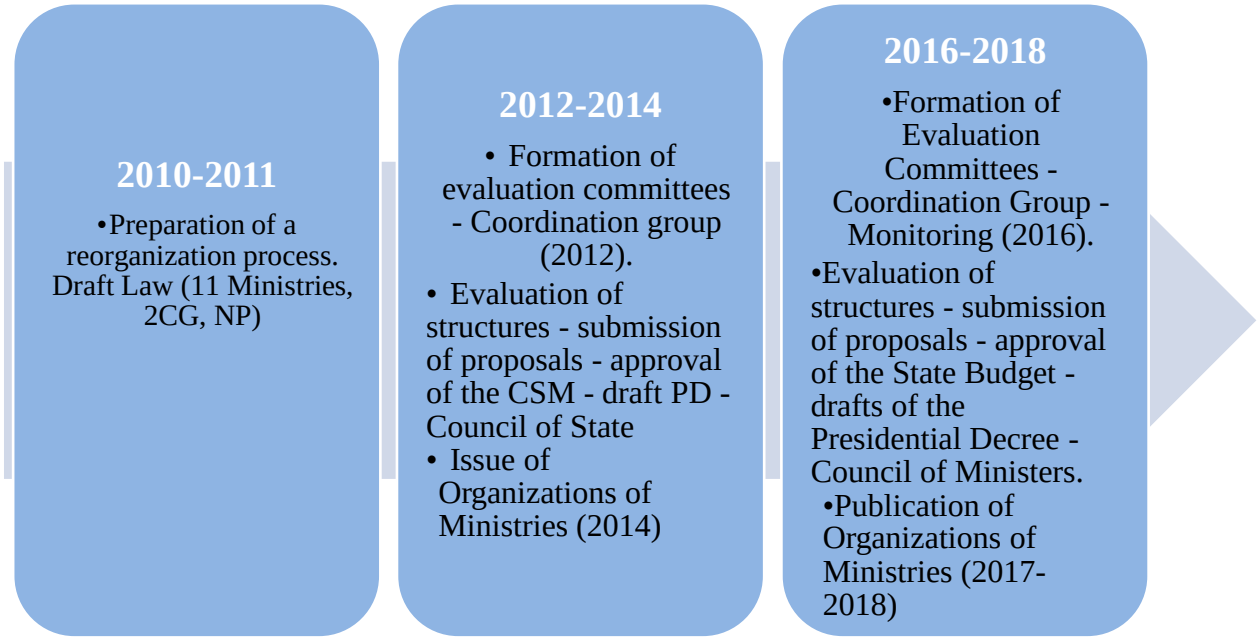
Source: Spanou et al. (2018)

Table 2. Institutional Framework for the Reform of Administrative Structures

- Law 4024/2011, article 35 (creation of Reorganization Committees in Ministries)
- Law 4178/2013 article 54 "Content, approval and amendment of Organizations" [and amendments to art. 27 of Law 4210/2013 (A' 254), 55 of Law 4238/2014 (A' 38), 46 of Law 4250/2014 (A' 574), 26 of Law 4272/2014 (A' 145), 7 of Law 4275/2014 (A' 149), 30 of Law 4305/2014 (A' 237), as replaced by article five of Law 4464/2017 (A' 46) and 34 of Law 4447/2016 (A' 241)]
- Law 4440/2016, article 16 (Digital Organization Chart of Public Administration and Local Government)

Source: Spanou et al. (2018)

Figure 3. The implementation process of the reorganization process



Source: Spanou et al. (2018)

CONCLUSION

Summary of findings

The fiscal adjustment programs implemented in response to the debt crisis had significant impacts on the structures of the administrative mechanism. The measures of the economic adjustment period (2010-2018) largely attempted to address already identified problems and chronic weaknesses in the way public administration is organized and operated, aiming to limit the size (area and cost) of the public sector and to rationalize administrative structures (structure, coordination, efficiency). The main policy axes focused on measures related to the evaluation and reorganization of administrative structures and the abolition or merger of public sector entities. This chapter attempted to record the content and impacts of the process of restructuring administrative structures, investigating whether and how these policies changed the course of (slow and incomplete) structural adjustment up to that point.

The issue of restructuring administrative structures occupied an important place on the agenda of administrative reform during the crisis. The main directions were specified in the texts of the agreements of the financing programs, and in particular detail in the 2nd program, within the framework of which the requirements for the reorganization of the central administration were expanded and took on a more detailed character. The main demands were the reduction of the size of the structures, with the main aim of reducing the budgetary cost, strengthening the coordination mechanisms and the more rational structuring of the units and organizations of the administrative mechanism. The content of the national legislation and the administrative reform programs was shaped accordingly.

The effects of the reorganization measures do not correspond to symmetrical changes, while their final (quantitative and qualitative) effect varies during the period under study. With reference to the political-governmental level, the (nominal) number of Ministries shows

significant fluctuations, between 10 and 18, recording fluctuations without a fixed direction. A special body was established to formulate restructuring policies (Government Reform Council, 2012), while in the same period the existing ones were strengthened and new coordination structures were established at the center of the government. Regarding the process of reorganization of the structures of the organic units of the central administration, two main adjustment cycles can be distinguished in the period 2010-2018: The first is completed with the issuance of the Organizations of the Ministries in 2014, leading to a significant (quantitative) reduction of the existing structures, with almost all the bodies recording a reduction of more than 20%. On the contrary, in the second cycle of reorganization, which was completed with the issuance of the revised Organizations in late 2017 and early 2018, there was an increase in structures, over 10%.

The project of abolishing and merging public sector bodies led to a further quantitative reduction in structures, without however having a comprehensive record of their impact and implementation. It is noted that the measures mainly concerned mergers and/or transfer of responsibilities of existing bodies, rather than independent abolition. Their intensity is higher at the beginning of the crisis, while after 2015 (3rd program) their scope and implementation seem to weaken. However, throughout the period under study, the reverse trend of creating new structures is recorded, mainly in response to the increased (external) demands for management and monitoring of policies, especially in areas related to budgetary functions. This trend of assigning responsibilities to structures with an increased degree of independence or directly subordinate to the political hierarchy constitutes a critical qualitative change in the framework of the structure of administrative structures, as the traditional hierarchical - organizational scheme is broken down. Finally, during the eight years of the crisis, the upgrading and strengthening of the role of the Ministry of Finance vis-à-vis other Ministries, as well as structures with financial responsibilities within the Ministries, was evident, which is again interpreted with reference to the emphasis of the measures on budgetary criteria.

Qualitative parameters and critical assessment

In addition to the direct and quantitative results of the reorganization process, the changes in the way administrative structures are structured were accompanied by qualitative changes that concern not only the form of the structures, but also the way the issue of organizing the administrative mechanism, as a political reform, is approached. An important finding is the observation that, after the outbreak of the crisis, the intensity and the horizon of implementation of the reforms change, as the necessary adjustments are of a larger scale and their implementation is launched in a shorter time horizon. At the same time, the scope of the regulations changes, as the restructuring of administrative structures is attempted in a horizontal and organized manner for all Ministries, while at the same time it is based (especially in the initial phase) on a clear methodology and specific implementation stages.

An important aspect of the reorganization process is the effort to adopt a unified approach and coordinate the implementation of changes across all Ministries, indicating a change from the previously followed practice of individual review of structures, per Ministry/agency. Another element of differentiation compared to previous reform projects is the connection of the administrative restructuring process with human resources policy, for example through the

description of job positions (outlines) and, especially in the conditions of the third program (2015-2018), the civil servant mobility program, which are analyzed above.

The content and approach to the issue of reorganization of structures was directly (and primarily) influenced by the budgetary conditions but also by the political situation. In the first cycle, the -often unilateral- emphasis on the fiscal impact of the measures, through the reduction of structures, is clear, while in the second there is not such a direct connection with the fiscal cost or external direction of restriction, hence the focus was on qualitative and functional criteria of their structuring and operation, leading to the opposite result, namely to the quantitative increase of the structures.

The pressure of economic conditions and the connection of the restructuring measures with the process of fiscal adjustment acted as a deterrent for the implementation and acceptance of the policies. The association of the reorganization with measures that had taken on a negative content, such as the dismissals of civil servants and availability, also had a negative effect. Furthermore, the required rationalization of structures was largely perceived as a consequence of budgetary constraints, with the aim of reducing the size and cost of the public sector, while the suffocating time pressure acted as a brake on the development of an organized plan for the preparation, implementation and integration of the necessary changes.

Furthermore, the introduction of the measures was initiated without ensuring the readiness and capacity of the administrative mechanism, on the one hand, to support their implementation and, on the other hand, almost simultaneously, to absorb and adapt to the required changes. Often, due to the lack of trust and the questioning of the capacity of the public administration by the external bodies involved in the relevant procedures, the measures were implemented under conditions that did not take into account the capacity of the administrative mechanism to respond to the requirements that were imposed. The provision of expertise by external experts attempted to address to some extent the domestic weaknesses in the design and implementation of policies, however, their final contribution remains doubtful, as in several cases it appears that the understanding of the implementation conditions and the compatibility of the proposed measures with the data of the Greek administration were not sufficiently ensured.

In addition to the objective difficulties and the economic situation, the impact of chronic weaknesses of the domestic political and administrative system was significant, which continued to reproduce and undermine the implementation and performance of the reforms (and) in the conditions of the crisis. Crucial in this regard is the issue of continuity and the long-term approach of policies, where significant failures occurred. The objectives and mainly the results of the reorganization, as already analyzed, differ significantly between the distinct government periods defined by the 2015 elections, while individual discontinuities are also observed during the rotation of Ministers, although to a lesser extent. The impact of these changes on the integration prospects and the sustainability of the adjustments is negative. Furthermore, in addition to the external pressure for the immediate (and rather hasty) implementation of the measures, it is doubtful that there was sufficient time between the two restructuring cycles to assess the performance of the first reorganization (approximately one year), intensifying the lack of continuity in the policy of reforming the structures.

Based on the findings of the analysis, an issue that needs further investigation is the

effectiveness and capacity to manage the new coordination requirements at different levels, due to the tendency to create structures outside the service hierarchy and/or with direct reporting to the political leadership: between the Ministries and the structures that were made independent, between the horizontal monitoring structures within the Ministries and between the distinct services that are subordinate to the center of the government. The strengthening of these structures for coordination and support of government work, although formally aimed at strengthening inter-ministerial cooperation, on the one hand led to centralization and expansion (or even inflation) of the structures of the center of government and on the other hand created additional coordination needs of the new units, burdening the already weak capacity of the administration in this regard.

In conclusion, the assessment of the reorganization project, beyond quantitative indicators, has not yet yielded clear results in terms of its qualitative impact on the way public administration is organized and operated. The requirements of fiscal adjustment clearly changed the intensity and pace of implementation of the measures, responding to a certain extent to chronic weaknesses in the organizational characteristics of the administrative mechanism. However, the final performance of the changes that took place during the eight years of the crisis appeared to depend not only on the technical specifications and implementation conditions, but also on the combined effect of the measures that constitute the overall and long-term agenda of administrative reform, while, clearly, the assessment of their final impact exceeds the period and objectives of fiscal adjustment.

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