Transformative Power of EU Monitoring

Evaluating the influence of EU Public Service Performance monitoring in the accession process

by

Jim Welsink
2965445
j.welsink@student.utwente.nl

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Supervisors:
Dr. V. Junjan, University of Twente
PhD I. Tempels Moreno Pessoa, University of Twente

Jim Welsink:

MSc Public Administration, Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences

Location:
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217
7500 AE Enschede
The Netherlands

Abstract

This thesis has the objective the answer the question: To what extent are the monitoring's effects of EU public service performance indicators demonstrable in the public service performance of selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021? This research question aims to explore the relationship between EU's monitoring of public service performance indicators and the actual public service performance in these countries from 2015 to 2021. In order to answer this question, the public services performance of six candidate member states, currently in the accession process, is analyzed (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia).

The theoretical expectation, found through a literature review, suggests a positive relation between performance monitoring and results, driven by transparent goals and indicators. However, the empirical analysis does not entirely support this expectation. Notably, a common performance pattern emerges: a negative performance trend from 2015 to 2017 followed by a positive trend from 2017 to 2021.

Ultimately, it is challenging to attribute EU monitoring effects on public service performance due to the theoretical expectation being not entirely met. While the positive trend in the latter phase implies potential impact, most countries did not improve in their overall performance. Therefore, the discussion highlights the important limitations of this thesis, and discussed the need for future research.

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1. Introduction

Throughout its historical trajectory, the European Union (EU) has been expanded multiple times by integrating new member states into the Union. Currently, there are still several states that are willing to join the EU. Countries like Albania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine are all in the process of becoming an EU member. The process of EU enlargement involves complex procedures and criteria that candidate member states must meet to join the Union. While this process is often criticized for being too slow and bureaucratic, joining the EU potentially offers significant economic benefits and stability for the countries involved (Dempsey, 2022). Additionally, from the perspective of the EU the enlargement process serves as a transformative tool, enabling the Union to prompt candidate countries to undergo various reforms in areas such as politics, economics, administration, institutions, and regulations (Economides, 2020; Haugthon, 2007). This transformative power the EU has is imposed by the concept of conditionality. Conditionality refers to the EU's requirement for a candidate country to make specific domestic reforms to become a member. In other words, the EU offers a realistic opportunity for membership in exchange for implementing reforms that are largely determined by the EU (Steunenberg & Dimitrova, 2007).

The accession process for candidate countries consists of multiple stages and can take many years to go through. The main objective of the accession process is for candidate countries to adopt all EU rules and regulations, stated in the acquis communautaire (acquis), to its national law. This is formally done within a negotiation process which is done on a subject-by-subject basis. In total 35 negotiation chapters need to be closed before a country is ready to join the EU. Besides these 35 chapters, there are three fundamental chapters called the fundamentals. Negotiations concerning these fundamental chapters will be opened first and closed last and thereby determine the overall pace of the accession process (European Commission, 2020). One of these fundamental chapters is Public Administration Reform (PAR). Despite PAR not being mentioned directly in the acquis it plays a vital role as it contributes to the development of a well-functioning public administration which is necessary for the candidate countries to have a good functioning economy and a political and social system (Akyildiz, 2022; Vidacak & Skrabalo, 2014). "Candidate countries will need to develop their administration to reach the level of reliability of the European Administrative Space and an acceptable threshold of shared principles, procedures, and administrative structural arrangements" (Rutgers & Schreurs, 2000 p.625). In other words, the candidate countries should be able the fill the gap between their current level of administration and the level required by the EU.

To assess the progress of the accession process and adherence to the acquis, the EU measures and monitors the performance of candidate countries on all relevant reform aspects. Besides following the progress which offers transparency, performance measurement and monitoring are also used as an incentive for candidate countries to improve and make progress (de Bruijn, 2007). Therefore, the monitoring of performance within the accession process is vital to follow progress and imply adjustments if necessary. As PAR is a fundamental aspect of the accession process, it is also monitored closely by the EU; In a joint initiative with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the EU has established the SIGMA program. Within this program, the progress of the candidate countries on PAR is monitored closely. To do this, they established six key areas of a well-functioning public administration that candidate countries should reform to get a public administration in accordance with European standards. Based on these six key areas, performance indicators are created on which PAR progress is assessed annually by SIGMA. For the countries in the accession process, it is the task to reform their administration in such a way that it complies with the established indicators and thereby meets European standards.

While the importance of performance measurement and monitoring is stressed, the scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of EU monitoring lacks behind. Especially with a focus on the indirect consequences of monitoring. Over the last decade, the EU has made several changes to the structure of the accession process and the corresponding monitoring procedures (European Commission, 2020). This resulted in PAR being a fundamental aspect of the process with a specific monitoring strategy. This thesis will assess what the effects of PAR monitoring within the accession process are. Thereby the impact of performance monitoring on the actual performance of the candidate countries in the accession process. Since the scope of this thesis is limited, only one of the six key areas of PAR will be investigated namely the Public Service. The public service is a vital part of a Public Administration as it involves all employees within the administration, the civil servants. Their contribution towards PAR is vital as they have the executive task in the reform of the public administration.

1.1 Research aim and research/sub-questions

This thesis aims to analyze whether the monitoring of PAR by the EU in the accession process is effective and has an impact. Since the scope of this thesis is limited, only one of the six key areas of PAR will be studied, namely the public service. Therefore, this thesis explores the relationship between the monitoring of public service performance by the EU and the actual public service performance in selected candidate member states. In other words, does the monitoring of public service performance influence the performance of the public service in selected member states throughout their accession process? In order to do this, the following research question has been formulated: "*To what extent are the monitoring's effects of EU public service performance indicators demonstrable in the public service performance of selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021?*".

To answer the research question four sub-questions are formulated. The first sub-question will be addressed in the next chapter (theoretical framework), whereas the other sub-questions will be answered in the empirical analysis.

1. What is the theoretical basis for using performance measurement and performance indicators in public service management?

Aim: This sub-question aims to describe the theoretical perspective of performance measurement and the use of performance indicators in the context of Public Administration Reform/Public Management Reform. By examining the theoretical concepts of performance measurement, performance indicators, and performance monitoring, a theoretical basis for answering the research question will be formed.

2. How does the EU monitor the performance of public services in candidate countries during the accession process?

Aim: This sub-question aims to analyze the monitoring and measurement process of public service performance of the EU used in the accession process. In other words, which methods does the EU use to collect and analyze data for evaluating the public service in the candidate member states? Understanding the methodology used by the EU can help with interpreting the findings of this research.

3. How have the selected member states performed in terms of public service performance from 2015 until 2021?

Aim: This sub-question aims to assess the performance of the selected candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia) in terms of public service performance during the period of their accession process. This sub-question aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the progress and outcomes of public service reforms in these countries. This sub-question will provide the empirical data that will be analyzed in the fourth sub-question.

4. ‘To what extent does the public service performance in the analyzed candidate member states exhibits similar patterns or differences, and how do these findings align with the theoretical expectation posited in the theoretical framework?’

Aim: The primary objective of this final sub-question is to determine the extent to which the observed public service performance exhibit similar patterns or differences across the selected candidate member states. Therefore, the data presented in sub-question 3 will be analyzed. The findings from the analysis will be compared to the theoretical findings presented in sub-question 1. Moreover, this sub-question serves as a link between the empirical findings (sub-questions 2 and 3) and the theoretical expectations (sub-question 1). By examining how the identified patterns and/or differences align with the theoretical expectations, this sub-question aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between the observed empirical data and the theoretical propositions of this thesis.

1.2 Scientific and societal relevance

From an academic perspective, this study can contribute to the academic literature regarding the effectiveness and impact of EU monitoring in the accession process since this is, as already stated, limited. The research will provide insights into the dynamics between monitoring efforts and the actual performance outcome. Furthermore, it offers insights into the methods and approaches of performance monitoring by the EU. Overall, this research will contribute to the assessment of the effectiveness of PAR monitoring and whether the role of the EU is of significance in this process.

From a societal perspective, this research has relevant implications for the EU, candidate member states, and their citizens. PAR is an important aspect of the accession process, and a well-functioning public administration is necessary for candidate countries to have a good-functioning economy and political and social system. Therefore, it is necessary to comply with all aspects of the accession process. This research will provide more inside into how monitoring of public service performance indicators by the EU affects the public service performance of candidate member states and can thereby inform policymakers and stakeholders on the effectiveness of the EU accession process and the importance of PAR. Furthermore, it contributes to driving the necessary reform required for EU accession, because of the insights in the effectiveness of the monitoring process.

1.3 Reading guide

Chapter 2 consists of an extensive literature study with the aim of answering the first sub-question. In chapter 3 the methodological choices for this study will be explained. Chapter 4, 5, and 6 will focus on the empirical questions and consists of the analysis. Finally in Chapter 7, the conclusion, the research question will be answered based on the results of the sub-questions.

2. Theory

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for this thesis and addresses the first sub-question: 'What is the theoretical basis for using performance measurement and performance indicators in public service management?'. To accomplish this, first the concepts of Public Administration Reform and Public Management Reform will be explored. Thereafter an examination of performance measurement, performance indicators, and performance monitoring follows. Finally, the examined literature on the concepts will be used to present a theoretical model and thereafter answer the first sub-question.

2.1 Public Administration and management reform

There are two main areas regarding reform in the public sector: Public Administration Reform (PAR) and Public Management Reform (PMR). Although these concepts are often used interchangeably, there is a difference between them which lies in their primary focus and scope. To establish a comprehensive theoretical basis for the effective use of performance measurement and indicators, exploring both concepts is crucial. PAR and PMR both play vital roles in shaping the theoretical framework and contribute significantly to the topic of this thesis.

2.1.1 Public Administration Reform

Administrative reform is defined as the restructuring or enhancement of public sector organizations through a political and administrative process (Inkina, 2018). The scope of administrative reforms can vary from big national reforms to small regional reforms of the public sector. To implement reform policies, a certain degree of capacity is required. This refers to the concept of capacity building: "Capacity building refers to a broad palette of techniques and methods that help, organizations and communities develop solutions to address the obstacles which prevent them from reaching their development goals" (Junjan, 2020 p.1). In other words, capacity building encompasses a wide range of approaches and practices aimed at assisting individuals, organizations, and communities to overcome barriers that hinder their progress toward achieving their administrative developmental objectives. As the definition suggests, capacity building is conceptualized at different levels. For the scope of this thesis, the focus is on capacity building at the meso-level which refers to the organizational level, but in a European context.

As mentioned in the introduction, candidate countries need to reform their public administration in line with the standards set by the EU. Within the academic literature, this process has been named the Europeanization of public administration (Junjan, 2020). The process of Europeanization, from an administrative perspective, sought to create administrative systems that could operate effectively within the institutional framework of the European Union. It should be noted, however, that the process of developing Europeanized administrations is still dependent on the specific regional and national context of the individual candidate countries. Factors such as the political regime, political-administrative relationships, and path dependencies can have significant impacts on the development of administrative capacity at the regional or national level.

The introduction of this thesis briefly touches upon the EU-developed standards and principles of public administration, which the candidate countries need to comply with. These standard principles help with creating a standard level of public administration for all countries in the EU. In other words, the standards are the benchmarks for the Europeanization of the public administration. In 2014, SIGMA (an initiative commissioned by the EC) created the Principles of Public Administration to aid the EC's strengthened approach towards PAR during the EU Enlargement process. These principles function as criteria for EU enlargement to acknowledge and stress the importance of countries establishing a robust national public administration with the ability to uphold the principles of good public administration, as well as effectively adopting and enforcing the EU acquis (SIGMA, 2017). So, the principles help to build administrative capacity to foster the further Europeanization of the candidate countries. The principles are clustered around six themes of public administration each having their own key requirements and indicators. For the scope of this thesis, as mentioned, the focus is on theme three: Public service and human resource management, which focuses on the functioning of the civil service.

1.	Strategic framework of public administration reform
2.	Policy development and co-ordination
3.	Public service and human resource management
4.	Accountability
5.	Service delivery
6.	Public financial management

Table 1 Themes of Public Administration Reform (SIGMA, 2017)

2.1.2 Public Management Reform

PMR is a component of the broader PAR and focuses mainly on the management and operational aspects of public organizations. In their book Public Management Reform Polit and

Bouckaert (2017) define PMR as 'Deliberate attempts to change the structures, processes, and/or cultures of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better' (p.2). To define the concept better and place it within a general framework, Pollit and Bouckaert (2017) developed a model of PMR (see Table 1) which aims to provide a framework for discussion by illustrating the general factors that have influenced and hindered reform; The model provides the 'why' and 'how' of PMR. Before the model will be further assessed, an important note must be made: The model forms an oversimplification because it does not take international organizations and networks directly into account. Mahon and McBride (2009) state that reform is predominantly driven by international or global organizations. They also refer to the fact that 'families of nations' compete with and borrow from each other to move towards modernity together (Mahon & McBride, 2009). For this thesis, this literature is of relevance because the reform that will be investigated is encouraged by the EU. Although the EU is a main force behind reform in the candidate countries, it are still the national governments who make the key reform decisions and work towards change. Therefore, the model provided by Pollit and Bouckaert (2017) is of relevance to this thesis.

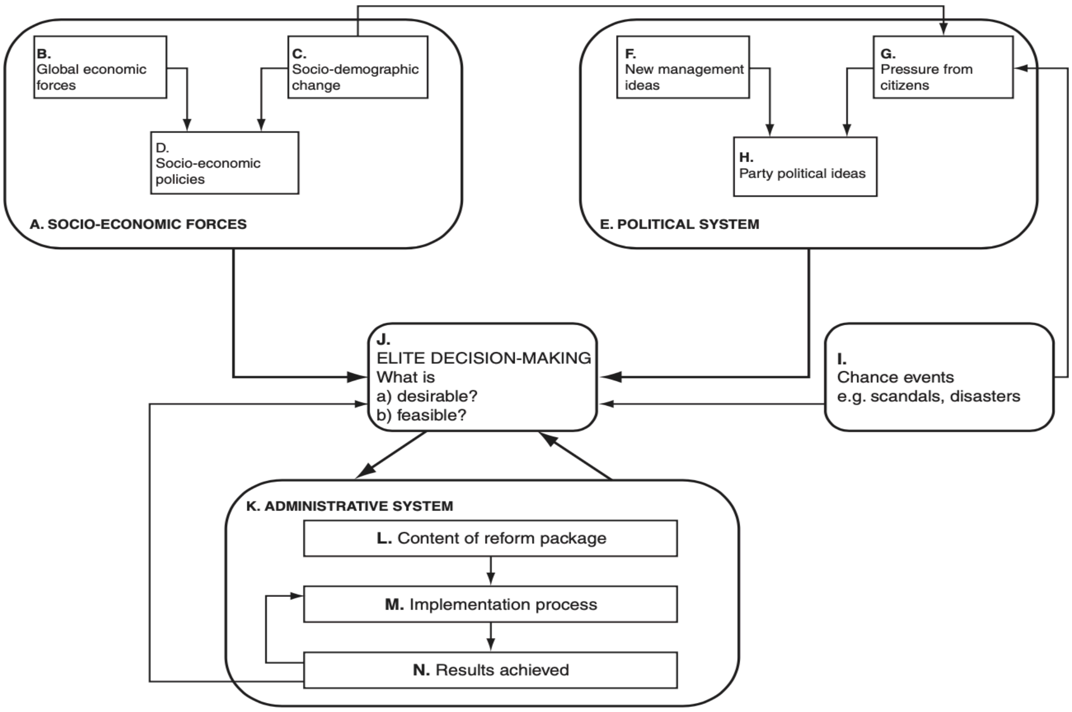


Figure 1. A model of public management reform (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2017)

The model provides five boxes (A, E, I, J, and K). Elite decision-making (J) deliberately forms the center of the model. This box refers to the decisions that are made about the reform; What is desirable and what is feasible? Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) describe that this decision-making process is not always as straightforward. The decision-makers are constantly shaped by and are vulnerable to political and administrative obstacles or other unexpected events, which present further difficulties. Therefore, elite decision-making is surrounded by three large boxes of elements that influence decision-making. These are the socio-economic forces (box A), the political system (box E), and change events (box I). The socio-economic forces refer to general factors that may influence decision-making. These are factors like economic forms of globalization (box B) or shifting in the patterns of the daily life of individuals (box C). These aspects have an indirect impact on decision-making because they shape socio-economic policies (box D).

A second cluster of aspects that influence elite decision-making are those clustered around the political system (box E). Box F refers to new management ideas, which are about all the (sometimes fashionable) ideas about management coming often from the private sector or academia. Box G refers to the pressures from citizens. Those two aspects are picked up by political parties and shape their ideas (box H). But these political parties often also come with their ideas about public management reform. Box I stands for factors that influence elite decision-making outside of the main groupings that are formed by boxes A and E. These are change events are unpredictable events that have an impact on the system. These sudden events may occasionally have a great effect on reform programs.

Finally, there is box K, which refers to the administrative system. This is formed by boxes L, M, and N. Box L stands for the content of the reform packages as decided by the elite decision-making. The content is the outcome of the interaction between what is desirable and what is feasible, as discussed in the section above. Box M stands for the implementation process. This is where the reform package is attempted to be implemented which is often a complex process. Box N are the results of the reform process, which may or may not be the desirable results. Hereby needs to be noted that the results are frequently difficult to measure.

The model of public management reform by Pollit & Bouckaert (2017) is relevant to this thesis because, as already stated, it presents the ‘why’ and ‘how of reform; It shows the process of reform and enables us to understand how reform comes about. The model can help understand why certain reform choices are made. But the model also takes context into account, which is an important aspect of reform. Concrete for PAR in the accession process the model shows the important notion that reform is context-dependent, which is different for each candidate country. There are different factors influencing reform and reform decision-making. In the case of the accession process, the EU is the major factor but certainly not the only one. Furthermore, the model shows the complexity of reform and gives more understanding of why the accession process is often seen as too slow and bureaucratic.

2.1.3 Public service reform

As public service reform is the main focus out of the six key themes of PAR, it needs more elaboration. "A well-designed and effectively managed public service enables the state to reach adequate levels of professionalism and sustainability and quality of public services, in all parts of the administration" (SIGMA, 2017 p.21). A good functioning public service results in the provision of better services to society and better policies in general.

In a very broad sense 'the public service' refers to the staff employed in a government organization (Hughes, 2018). Which are all the personnel who have the status of "civil service members". This approach is very broad as public service then entails every public employee. In the principles for public administration, the EU narrows the scope of public service down to the civil service of national governments. Thereby the EU includes the ministries and administrative bodies that work for the central government, including the prime minister and/or other ministers, the administration of the parliament, and constitutional and other independent agencies that do not respond directly to the central government (SIGMA, 2017). For this thesis, it makes sense to follow this scope of the EU since this is the scope used in the monitoring process that will be investigated. This also ensures that the scope is manageable for the timeframe of the thesis.

The term public service should not be confused with public services. As the definition suggests public service can be used interchangeably with civil service, which is used more commonly in academic literature to refer to the same concept. In contrast to Public Administration Reform, Civil Service Reform concentrates solely on matters related to the creation and administration of civil services across all branches, such as recruitment, training, pay and promotion structures, disciplinary actions, and job security, to enhance the state's administrative capabilities and the quality of its services (Inkina, 2018)

2.2 Performance measurement and monitoring

The previous section of this theoretical framework provides more insight into the different aspects of PAR. Now the focus will be on how to measure reform and what the influence is of the measuring process. Therefore, the main concepts of performance measurement, performance monitoring, and performance indicators will be explored.

2.2.1 Performance measurement

The main concept of performance measurement is straightforwardly defined; De Bruijn (2007) defines it as a process whereby a professional organization establishes its desired performance and indicates how this performance may be measured by defining certain indicators. After completing the tasks, the organization can determine if it has achieved the expected performance and the associated costs. The definition of de Bruijn (2007) is like the definition used by Knill & Tosun (2012) which states that 'performance measurement is about the use of organizational resources relative to a predefined goal, characterized by ongoing monitoring and reporting of policy accomplishments' (p.184). The primary aim of performance measurement is to improve interventions. The definition by van Dooren et al. (2015) is the most straightforward; "performance measurement is the bundle of activities aimed at obtaining information on performance" (p.20). Performance management on the other hand refers to the management approach that includes and uses performance measurement data for decision-making.

In practice performance measurement in the public sector is not as straightforward as the main concept suggests. Due to the unique characteristics of the public sector, it is complicated to define clear goals and performance criteria as they often are diverse or conflicting (Rainey, 2014). Furthermore, public performance is often difficult to measure because performance must take multiple values into account and is achieved in co-production (de Bruijn, 2007). Therefore, it sometimes can take a long time for an intervention to produce its intended effect. This is also where the difference between 'outcome' and 'output' comes into play, which is, according to van Dooren et al. (2015), categories of which performance can be defined. Output refers to the direct effects of interventions of an organization and is measured in numbers and quality of performance (van der Knaap et al., 2020). While outcome on the other hand refers to the final effects.

Output and outcomes are closely linked to concepts of efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency refers to whether the optimal effect is achieved with minimal use of resources (linked to output) (Knill & Tosun, 2012). In contrast, effectiveness measures the extent to which the intended goals of a policy or program are met with the ones achieved (linked to outcomes). In the private sector outputs and efficiency are often sufficient conceptualizations for the measurement of performance but not for the public sector (van Dooren et al., 2015). In the public sector the effects of the outputs on society are of more importance whereby the realization of public values is prominent.

Since the academic principle of public administration was established, measuring performance has been a defining characteristic in the field and has played a crucial role in reform initiatives (Pollit & Bouckaert, 2017; van Dooren et al., 2015). It reached its 'golden age' during the New Public Management (NPM) era of the 1990s and 2000s (van Dooren & Hoffmann, 2018). The NPM movement, which has many different definitions and specifications, often emphasizes the use in government of procedures like those purportedly utilized in business and the private sector (Rainey, 2014; Hughes, 2018). The concept originated by Hood (1991) comprised seven main points, of which the 'explicit standards and measures of performance' and 'greater emphasis on output controls' were two. Hereby is defining clear goals and performance targets of importance, which is, as already stated, a difficult task within the public sector. Furthermore, it is important to note that the NPM movement has not been beneficial for either practical application or theoretical understanding as it is a description of developments in a timeframe (Hughes, 2018). There is no consensus on the specific characteristics that define NPM; "NPM was, at most, a convenient label for disparate changes that varied markedly across jurisdictions" (Hughes, 2018 p.91). However, NPM reform has had a significant impact on accountability in the public sector and on how we design performance measurement (Peters & Pierre, 2016).

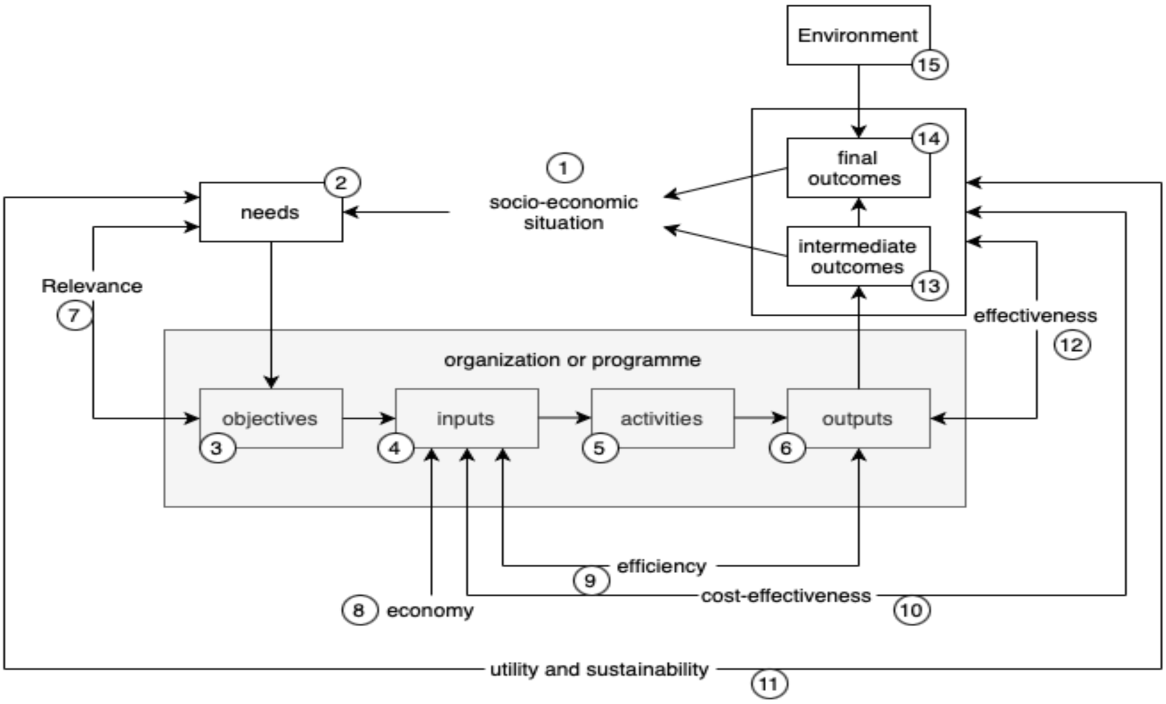


Figure 2. Performance: a conceptual framework (van Dooren et al., 2015)

Figure 2 shows the complexity of performance and enables us to make the distinction between performance management and performance measurement clearer: Performance management encompasses the whole cycle of setting performance expectations, monitoring progress, and taking action to improve performance as necessary. This is labeled by Bouckaert & Halligan (2008 retrieved from van Dooren et al., 2015) as the 'span of performance'. Performance measurement is a component of this cycle of performance management and refers to the process of measuring and monitoring performance. The model offers insight into the whole process and context of performance measurement/management and is therefore useful for this research.

2.2.2 Functions of performance measurement

There are different functions that performance measurement can fulfill, in table 1 those mentioned most frequently are stated according to de Bruijn. These functions become increasingly coercive, whereby the impact of creating transparency will be less impactful as learning and so on (de Bruijn, 2007).

Function	Meaning
Creating transparency	Performance measurement can ensure transparency and thereby act as a form of accountability. Through performance measurement an organization can show the outside world how they perform.
Learning	When organization measure their performance, the next step is to learn from the results of the performance measurement. Because of the transparency that performance measurement provides, organizations can learn what they can improve and what they are doing well.
Appraising	Performance measurement leads to the appraisal of the performance within the organization (this can be done by the management of the organization or by third parties).
Sanctioning	Appraising can be followed by rewarding good performance or punish bad performance (positive/negative sanctioning). These sanctions can take different forms (managerial decision).

Table 2 Functions of performance measurement (de Bruijn, 2007)

Especially the aspect of transparency is relevant for this research, according to de Bruijn (2007) public organizations have the tendency to develop 'red tape' because they have limited external incentives for effectiveness and efficiency. Performance management in this regard can lead to internal transparency because organizations start formulating their targets and goals. Added to that is the fact/proverb according to which 'that what gets measured gets done', which means that when an organization makes its performance visible it will be automatically an incentive to improve performance. Transparency thereby also enhances accountability because citizens can judge organizations based on their performance. For the EU this aspect of transparency is of importance within the monitoring process, as it offers them the opportunity to follow the progress of the candidate countries.

Secondly, performance measurement promotes learning within organizations and between organizations. The measuring of performance provides organizations with the tools for comparing themselves with other organizations that also measure their performance. This can create awareness for problems within organizations and allows organizations to learn from one another. This same principle goes within the organizations whereby the management can compare different units of the organizations based on their performance. Finally, the aspects of appraising and sanctioning, whereby de Bruijn (2007) touches upon the fact that performance measurement can be seen as a form of output steering, which is preferred over input and throughput steering which are according to him disincentives for performance; "Output steering concentrates on products and is thus an incentive to be productive: neither the good intention (input) nor the diligent effort (throughput), but the result is rewarded" (de Bruijn, 2017 p.11). While this aspect is of less importance for the EU, for the candidate countries the learning aspect of the monitoring process can help with improving the next monitoring report.

The aspects appraising and sanctioning, which are functions of performance measurement, also touches upon EU conditionality when referring to the EU accession process, the topic of study. According to Steunenberg & Dimitrova (2007), EU enlargement conditionality refers to the process by which the EU offers a candidate country a feasible opportunity to become a member of the EU in exchange for the implementation of various domestic reforms that are largely determined by the EU. This process ensures the Europeanisation of the candidate countries. This is linked to the appraising and sanctioning functions of performance measurement as defined by de Bruijn (2007) because this refers to the stick-and-carrot approach of conditionality used by the EU. In cases where candidate states' governments fail to make progress with the required reforms, the process of accession may be stopped or slowed down, and the benefits of accession may be withdrawn (Steunenberg & Dimitrova, 2007). On the other hand, once a candidate country shows sufficient reform progress membership of the EU comes closer.

2.2.2 The process of performance measurement

According to van Dooren et al. (2015), performance measurement can be seen as a process that consists of five steps that follow each other. The first step of the process is to (1) prioritize the measurement efforts. Since it is impossible to measure everything, organizations need to make certain choices about what to measure and what not to measure. Prioritizing can be a difficult first step; Figure 1 shows that several factors influence the elite decision-makers about what and how to reform. This makes it also hard to prioritize which measurement efforts are of importance that they need to be further developed.

The second step (2) refers to the selection of performance indicators. The indicators show the ambitions the organization has for their chosen 'targets' of measurement (de Bruijn, 2007). Indicators also serve to ensure that organizations are held accountable for their performance (van Dooren et al., 2015). Furthermore, the development of performance indicators can be viewed as the standard for measuring performance of the public sector. There are multiple criteria established for good performance, these criteria are presented in table 3.

Criteria	Meaning
Sensitive to change	An indicator needs to be able to detect changes over time or across different conditions.
Precisely defined	Indicates the need for an indicator to be clear and unambiguously.
Understandable for users	Refers to the need for an indicator to be clear, with explanations or definitions that are understandable for the intended audience.
Documented	An indicator should have documentation that outlines its goal, measurement methods, data sources, and any other relevant information that helps understand the indicator.
Relevant and actionable	Refers to the need for an indicator to be directly relevant to the specific goals or objectives being measured, and to provide information that can be used to inform decision-making.
Timely	Refers to the need for an indicator to be available in a timely manner, so that it can be used to track progress or make informed decisions.
Feasible	Indicates that an indicator should be useful in practice
Comply with coordinated data process and definitions	Refers to the need for an indicator to be aligned with standards, definitions, and measurement processes, to ensure consistency and comparability across different agencies or organizations.

Table 3 Criteria for performance indicators (de Bruijn, 2007)

According to de Bruijn (2007), the second criterion (precisely defined) is of importance for the legitimacy of the indicators. He argues that, since public organizations are often complex and the fact that public service is a multiple-value activity, indicators are often designed unambiguously, without accepting diversity. Indicators should take the variety of the public sector into account, and therefore this should be considered when selecting performance indicators.

After is decided what and how to measure the performance the next step is the collection of data. This is where the process of monitoring performance comes into play which will be explained in the following section. The last two steps in the process of performance measurement are the analysis of the data that is collected in the previous stage, which is followed by the last step, the reporting. This theoretical process gives more insight into how the monitoring process of candidate countries should generally go.

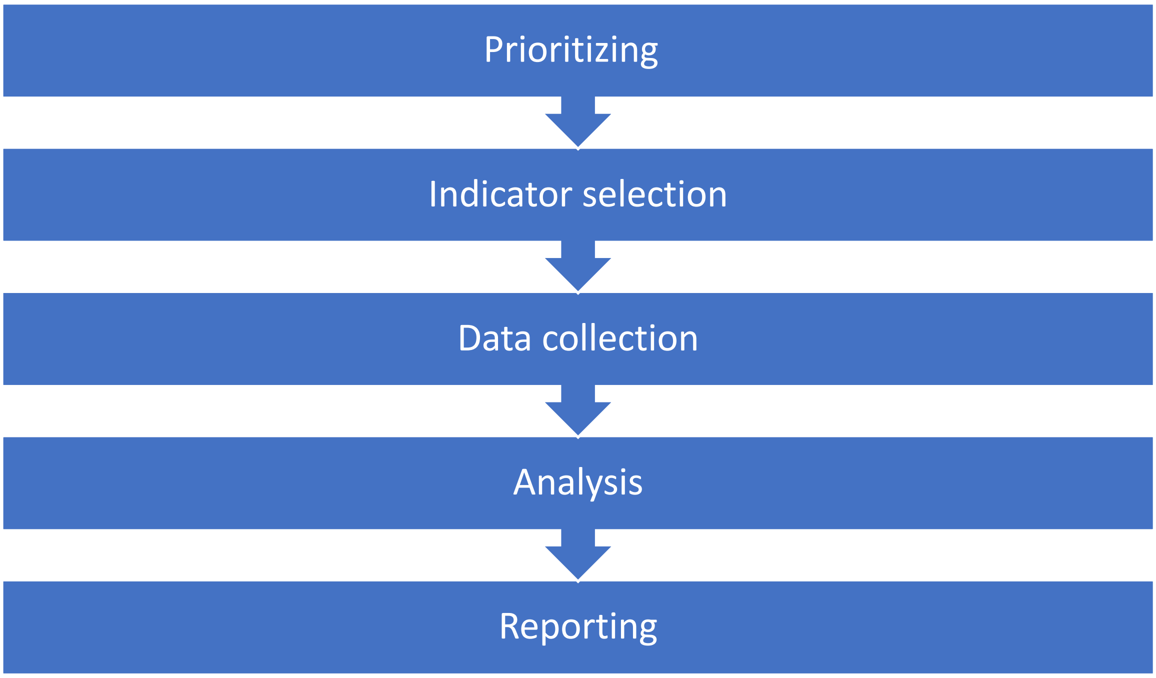


Figure 3. Process of performance measurement (de Bruijn, 2007)

2.2.3 Performance monitoring

Finally, performance monitoring is highlighted. This is because the monitoring of performance plays a crucial role in public management reform (and therefore in this thesis) because it helps clarify the costs, results, and value of reform programs and is therefore seen as a critical element in public sector reform efforts (Wholey, 2007). In today's complex world it is insufficient for managers to operate based on their "gut feel" (Mayne & Zopico-Goñi, 2017). In order to make decisions reliable performance information is necessary. Performance information delivers the means to manage and helps to control (OECD, 1993 retrieved from Mayne & Zopico-Goñi, 2017). Performance monitoring is used in order to collect this performance information. Monitoring refers to tracking and measuring implementation, with the possibility of achieving goals and developments in the context (van der Knaap, 2020). It involves the periodic collection of information about certain policy-relevant aspects, via measurement units but also with the help of indicators. Based on the monitoring of performance, there can be assessed whether there are already results and whether they are in line with the expectations. Furthermore, the side effects of the implementation can be followed. Monitoring then allows for the implementer to, if necessary, adjust the implementation. But merely having good performance information is insufficient for public sector reform (Mayne & Zopico-Goñi, 2017). Monitoring, as described by de Bruijn (2007) is a component of performance management.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In this theoretical chapter, the main concepts are discussed. In order to give an overview of the links between the concepts, a theoretical framework is created. The purpose of the framework is to illustrate how discussed concepts and theories link together and show which part will be assessed in this thesis. In this section, the framework and its relevance will be explained.

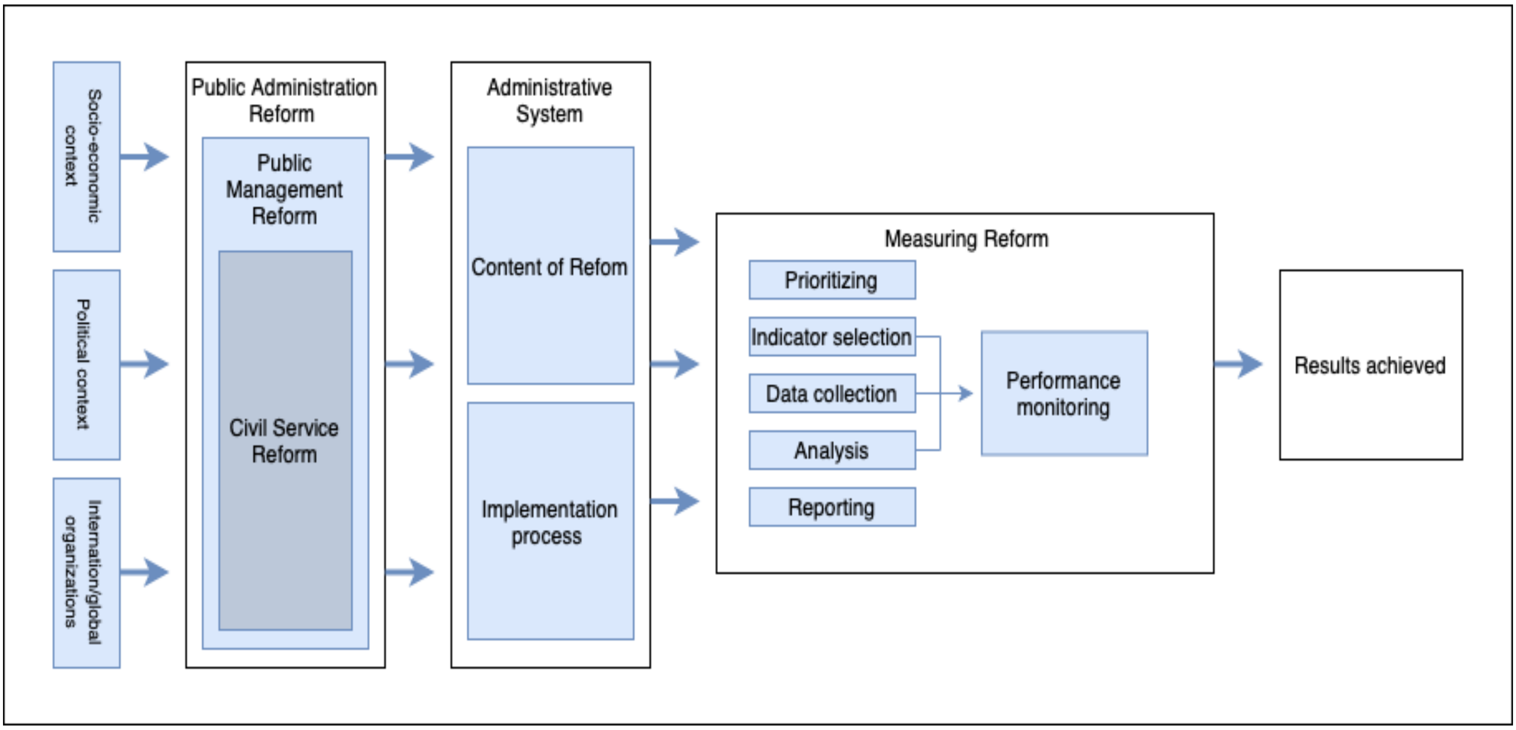


Figure 4. Theoretical framework

The framework begins by identifying the key factors that influence PAR. These factors are retrieved from the literature regarding PAR and the PMR model by Pollit and Bouckaert (2017). These factors include the socio-economic context, the political context, and the international/global organizations (in this context the EU). These factors together significantly shape the extent and content of PAR. The significance of each individual factor depends also on the context. For this research, the influence of the factor international/global organizations is of most importance because PAR in candidate countries is mostly driven by the EU as the EU poses it as a requirement for the accession process.

Next to these factors, which are stated on the left in the framework, is the box representing PAR. The arrows from the factors imply that the factors influence PAR. The box comprises the various components of PAR, of which PMR is one. Another component within PMR is Civil Service Reform. Once the essence of the reform content is determined, the reform of the administrative system (second box) can start. It is worth noting that the administrative system has an ambiguous function. It is the object of reform, while also being the instrument of reform.

This because it is the administrative system that needs reform, but the reform is also driven by this system.

The third box in the framework refers to the measuring of the reform. In other words, measuring the progress of the reform and whether the reform will be achieved. The measurement of the reform starts with identifying which aspects need to be measured (prioritizing) and making concrete how to measure these aspects (indicator selection). If this is clear the monitoring of the performance can start. Monitoring is often an ongoing process, whereby the progress is frequently reported. Through the measurement and monitoring of reform there can be analyzed whether the reform had the intended effects; are the results achieved (box 4).

Overall, this framework offers a visual representation of the process of the monitoring of PAR from the start (influencing/driving factors) to the end (results achieved). It provides a structured overview of all the different components. However, not all will be analyzed in this thesis. This thesis focuses on a specific component namely the measurement of reform. As the aim of this thesis is to analyze whether the monitoring of PAR by the EU in the accession process is effective and has impact, the box 'measuring reform' is of most importance and is the part that is assessed in this thesis. The framework helps to place the measuring of reform into context and creates an overview. By focusing specifically on the box on measurement of reform, it allows for investigating the impact and results of this within the accession process.

2.4 Theoretical expectation

In this chapter, a literature review is conducted regarding performance measurement and the use of performance indicators in the context of Public Administration Reform/Public Management Reform with the aim to answer the following sub-question 'What is the theoretical basis for using performance measurement and performance indicators in public service management?'. This question will now be answered, which will lead to the theoretical expectation for this thesis.

The theoretical basis for performance measurement and performance indicators in public service management is rooted in the principles of PAR/PMR. Performance measurement and monitoring stresses the need for public organizations to focus on results and improving their services to citizens. Performance measurement is an essential tool used to measure the extent to which organizations are meeting their set goals and objectives. It is used for assessing the success of PAR by evaluating the implementation of reforms across the system. This involves systematically collecting and analyzing data to analyze whether the implementation of the reform is successful. Measuring performance in the public sector can be a complex task because of the unique characteristics of the public sector; goals are often difficult to define and vague and performance criteria are often diverse or conflicting.

Performance measuring in the public sector is often used to create more transparency (external and internal). Transparency could enhance effectiveness and efficiency because it creates an incentive to achieve the goals. Furthermore, setting clear performance targets and measuring the progress towards those targets, helps public organizations in addressing accountability to taxpayers and stakeholders. It makes the organization more transparent and open. Besides creating transparency, performance measurement is often also used for learning, appraising, and sanctioning.

Performance indicators make performance measurement more concrete; they demonstrate the organization's ambitions regarding the specific areas of measurement they have selected. Indicators operationalize the criteria used in performance measurement. By selecting appropriate performance indicators, public organizations can track progress towards their goals and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, performance indicators also help in creating more transparency as they provide a basis for clear and accessible information on the performance progress of organizations. For indicators in the public sector, it is important that they should take the variety of the sector into account.

In conclusion, the theoretical basis for performance measurement and performance indicators in the public sector stresses the importance of clear goals and clear indicators, measuring performance against those goals and indicators, and using performance data for decision-making. The explored theory suggests that performance measurement, using indicators, tends to increase transparency and accountability, ultimately incentivizing organizations to prioritize the achievement of measured outcomes. This aligns with the recognized notion that "what gets measured gets done". Therefore, the expectation derived from theory is that there is a positive relationship between measuring performance and the achievement of results and objectives. This theoretical expectation forms the theoretical foundation of this thesis.

Specific for the context of this research, performance measurement is used by the EU in the accession process mostly as an incentive for the candidate countries to reform their administration. Performance monitoring is deployed to create transparency and accountability, and also to boost learning with the aim of Europeanizing the administrations of the candidate countries. Furthermore, the theoretical expectation implies that the indicators used to measure the performance of the public service in candidate countries should have a positive impact on the performance of the public service. In other words, the monitoring process, facilitated by the EU's public service performance indicators, is expected to improve the performance of the public service of the selected candidate member states. Thus, the scores on the performance indicators of public service performance should theoretically improve over the monitoring period.

3. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology of this thesis. In other words, how the analysis will be conducted. To do this, the research design, the operationalization, and the data collection methods that will be used during the research will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the used methods will also be discussed.

3.1 Research design

This thesis is qualitative aiming to explore the relationship between the EU's monitoring of public service performance and the actual public service performance in selected member states. In other words, does the monitoring of public service performance influence the performance of the public service in the selected member states over the period of their accession? To do this, a holistic multiple-case design will be used. A case study is the in-depth analysis of a single instance of some social phenomenon (Babbie, 2020). A holistic multiple-case study design refers to an approach where the cases are viewed as a collective whole, whereby the focus is on understanding the overall phenomenon being studied, rather than the individual cases themselves (Yin 2015). This method involves an analysis of all cases, to identify common themes and patterns of public service performance among the cases. These patterns will be analyzed, which will help answer the research question. The data analysis method used is a document analysis.

Within this case study the focus is on the comparison of the performance of the selected countries across units (i.e., countries) and over time (i.e., from the start of the accession until the present). This is called the before-after comparison which allows for the analysis of change over time, for this research this refers to (the change of) public service performance. This approach is useful when examining the effects of an intervention, in this case EU monitoring, on the outcome of interest, in this case public service performance. This approach will provide a detailed understanding of the relationship between EU monitoring and public service performance.

3.2 Case selection

The cases that will be investigated in this study are the countries of the Western Balkan that are currently in the accession process or potential candidate countries. These are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. The Western-Balkan countries are selected because they can be considered representative cases (typical cases), which helps in exploring causal mechanisms across cases (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). That the selected cases are all in the same region and close to each other does not mean that the countries are similar. On the contrary, these countries all have their own political, economic, and societal contexts but share some common historical context when it comes to EU accession. However, the cases all have common theoretical replications (Yin, 2015). The cases all have similarities or commonalities in terms of theoretical concepts; in this case, they all are reforming their public administration and this process is also closely monitored by the EU for all countries. The different contexts of each country make it, however, inevitably more difficult to speak of generalizations, which is common among case studies (Tsang, 2014). For this thesis, it is therefore more important to speak of common patterns among the diverse cases with their different contexts, which could discount the specific context of the countries (Burawoy, 1988). This is in line with the aim of the thesis which is to detect whether EU monitoring has an impact on public service performance. Therefore, the cases are analyzed to detect differences and similarities among the countries and explore the role of monitoring in the process.

To conclude, the cases are selected because they all represent a particular path to EU accession and have a similar data collection period when it comes to EU monitoring. In addition, these are all data-rich cases because of the intensive monitoring process by the EU, which allows for an in-depth analysis of the cases (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). There are several other countries also in the accession process (Ukraine, Georgia, and Turkey), but these countries do not have sufficient data available due to a too-short monitoring process or an interrupted process. Therefore, these countries will not be considered for this thesis.

3.3 Data collection

The research will rely on pre-existing data instead of gathering new information. Specifically, it will utilize the annual monitoring reports of each case that have been published by SIGMA, which is the program in which the monitoring is conducted on the instructions of the European Commission. The reports are published regularly for each candidate country. The monitoring of the public administration (which public service is part of) starts for every country in 2015 with a baseline report. After that, there are reports published in 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2021. The reports employ consistent measurement methods and have a standardized structure across all cases. The reports assess performance based on predetermined benchmarks and indicators, providing a snapshot of the situation as well as progress made towards the standards of public administration (SIGMA, 2017). Therefore, the reports are well-suited for cross-country comparisons over time.

As this study focuses on public service reform, the focus will be particularly on the Public Service and Human Resource Management section of the monitoring reports. It is important to note that the countries that will be analyzed all started their journeys toward EU accession at different times. Nevertheless, the specific focus on the monitoring of the principles of public administration started in 2015 with the introduction of the baseline reports. Therefore, this is considered the starting point for this research which enables a valid comparison of the cases within the designated timeframe. Analyzing public service performance in the countries before 2015 based on other documents does not fit the limited scope of this thesis. Therefore, other documents will not be included.

Besides the monitoring reports, other documents of SIGMA like the 'Principles of Public Administration' and 'Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration' will also be analyzed. These documents provide a basis for understanding the principles and standards that serve as the basis for the monitoring reports. These documents will give a deeper understanding of the criteria used in the reports as well as the context and background for the principles and indicators used in the monitoring reports. Overall, this will support the interpretation of the data presented in the monitoring reports.

Sub question 2

- Principles of Public Administration for EU candidate countries and potential candidates (2014)
- Principles of Public Administration for EU candidate countries and potential candidates (2017)
- Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration (2019)

Sub question 3

- Monitoring reports Albania: 2015 (baseline), 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021
- Monitoring reports Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2015 (baseline), 2016, 2017 and 2021
- Monitoring reports Kosovo: 2015 (baseline), 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021
- Monitoring reports Montenegro: 2015 (baseline), 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021
- Monitoring Reports Republic of North Macedonia: 2015 (baseline), 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021

3.4 Data analysis

This research will consist of a content analysis of the data mentioned in the previous section, which refers to an analysis that involves analyzing the content as well as the context of the documents (Ritchie et all., 2003). This helps putting the findings in a broader perspective. As means to analyze the content of the monitoring reports the data will be descriptively coded.

This involves assigning a descriptive code to each relevant segment of data in order to organize and simplify it for the purpose of drawing theoretical insights. The coding of the documents will give the opportunity to organize the data in such a way that it is easier to analyze the data. The aim of the coding process is to have a structured overview of the progress of the candidate countries based on the indicators.

Therefore, a deductive approach will be used. The deductive approach refers to starting coding with a set of predefined codes, derived from theory or other relevant themes regarding the topic (Ruona, 2005). For this study, solely relying on deductive coding is sufficient because the data that will be analyzed is already very structured based on the indicators. Therefore, the deductive codes are derived from the indicators used by the EU to assess public service performance (see Appendix I). As the topic of study is public service performance, only the indicators that refer to this are relevant to code. These are all the indicators in the chapter 'Public Service and Human Resources Management'. The codes can be labeled as data-driven codes, as they are created in accordance with the data that will be analyzed (Boyatzis, 1998 retrieved from Ruona, 2005).

Overall, the analysis process is straightforward and consists of four stages (Ruona, 2005). First, the data (all monitoring reports) will be downloaded and systematically grouped in the program ATLAS.TI as this is the program for the coding. After this is done, the second step is to get familiar with the data which means that all relevant sections of the reports will be scanned. This process of familiarization makes it easier to deductively code the data. The third step is the actual coding stage, whereby all relevant data will be marked and structured based on the coding scheme in Appendix I. Finally, all relevant codes for each indicator will be analyzed and an overview of the progress of each candidate country per indicator will be formed. This overview will allow for a systematical mapping of the progress of all candidate countries which forms sub-question 3, and the analysis of the data which forms sub-question 4.

3.5 Operationalization

The research question "To what extent are the monitoring's effects of EU public service performance indicators demonstratable in the public service performance of selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021?" consists of two variables: 'the monitoring of EU public service performance' (independent) and 'Public service performance of selected candidate member states' (dependent). The independent variable will be measured. In the following section, the approach and data collection method for each sub-question will be explained.

1. What is the theoretical basis for using performance measurement and performance indicators in public service management?

Approach: This sub-question will be answered by an extended literature study into the concepts of 'performance measurement', 'performance indicators', and 'performance monitoring'. These concepts will be analyzed in the context of Public Administration Reform/Public Management Reform which will also be defined.

Data collection: Literature will be reviewed regarding the abovementioned concepts and context. Fundamental sources for this literature review are (1) 'Managing performance in the public sector' (De Bruijn, 2007), (2) 'Performance management in the public sector' (van Dooren et all., 2015), and (3) 'Public management reform' (Pollit & Bouckaert, 2017).

2. How does the EU measure and monitor the performance of the public service in candidate countries during the accession process?

Approach: This sub-question will give an overview of the methodology behind the measurement and monitoring of performance and thereby address the variable 'the monitoring of EU public service performance indicators'. Therefore, an overview will be created of the most important indicators that the EU uses to measure public service performance. Furthermore, there will be explained how these performance indicators are defined, collected, and analyzed by the EU. So, there will be elaborated how the indicators are measured and monitored by the EU in order to come to the monitoring reports. This process of measurement and monitoring will be described to answer the sub-question and address the independent variable (EU public service performance).

3. How have the selected candidate member states performed in terms of public service performance from 2015 until 2021?

Approach: For the selected candidate member state their progress in terms of public service performance will be assessed and described by analyzing the monitoring from 2015 until 2021. In order to measure change in performance regarding public service, it is important to have a clear starting point: the baseline reports of each country (2015 reports). These reports establish the baseline values for the indicators within the monitoring framework and offer an assessment of the country's standing in relation to the principles at the start of the monitoring procedure. When all reports are analyzed the overall progress of each country is clear. These results will be compared and analyzed in the fourth sub-question.

4. To what extent does the public service performance in the analyzed candidate member states exhibits similar patterns or differences, and how do these findings align with the theoretical expectation posited in this thesis?

Approach: First the performance of the public service of the candidate countries will be compared in order to find any common patterns or differences between the performance of the selected candidate countries. Subsequently, the identified patterns or differences will be compared to the theoretical expectation stated in Chapter 2. The theoretical framework that discusses the theoretical expectation for using performance measurement and indicators within the accession process will serve as the starting point for this comparison. This approach provides an extended analysis that will identify the public service performance patterns and their alignment with the theoretical expectations.

3.6 Limitations

This section delineates the limitations inherent in this research, recognizing the potential impact on the study's scope and its conclusions. The qualitative multiple-case design used in this study offers rich insights but may limit the generalizability due to the unique contexts of each candidate country (Tsang, 2014). Therefore, it may be hard to draw universally applicable conclusions. The uniqueness of each case must be considered when interpreting the results (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Furthermore, most of this research consists of document analysis and a review of existing literature. Thereby, the validity and reliability depend on the types of data that will be analyzed. Because most of the data that will be analyzed consists of EU documents and academic literature, the reliability of the research will be high. In addition, ensuring reliability will be done by checking the authorship, date of publication, and the credibility of the sources. Finally, for this type of research it is also important to be aware of potential biases in the data collection process. Guarding against biases involves a detailed research plan and cross-checking the research results.

4. Administrative Reform Measurement Methodology

4.1 Requirements, principles, and indicators

In this chapter sub-question 2, how does the EU measures and monitors the performance of the public service in candidate countries during the accession process, will be addressed. This will be done based on an analysis of the documents 'Principles of Public Administration' and 'Methodology for Measuring and Monitoring Public Administration Reform' both established by the SIGMA program, supported by the EC. In the following sections, the content that is relevant for answering the research and sub-question will be discussed and elaborated, which allows for answering sub-question 2.

4.1.1Principles of Public Administration

In order to ensure that candidate countries can align their policies with those of the EU, and are able to actively participate in EU decision-making, and effectively utilize EU funds after becoming members, the EC has developed, with the aid of the SIGMA program, a framework of principles that guides the reform of public administration in the candidate countries (SIGMA, 2017). The principles detail the components of what good public governance entails. These principles are established in the document 'Principles of Public Administration' and form the basis for PAR in the candidate countries. The document outlines six key reform areas for Public Administration Reform (See table 2) which establishes the most important aspects of Public Administration Reform.

1.	Strategic framework of public administration reform
2.	Policy development and co-ordination
3.	Public service and human resource management
4.	Accountability
5.	Service delivery
6.	Public financial management

Table 4 Themes of Public Administration Reform (SIGMA, 2017)

For each reform area, there is one key requirement of which the candidate countries should comply with. To make these requirements more concrete and measurable they are elaborated in several principles, each principle is linked to an indicator with multiple sub-indicators.

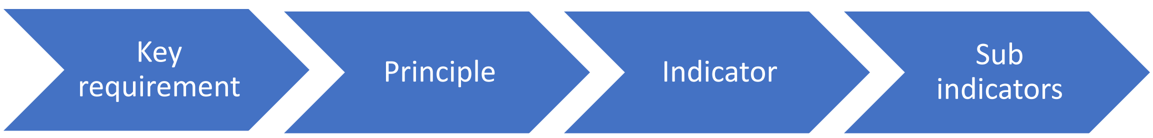


Figure 5. From requirements to indicators

In 1999 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed the ‘European Principles for Public Administration’. They defined standards for national public administrations based on ‘general consensus on key components of good governance’ among democratic states (OECD, 1999). As time has passed, these principles have been progressively clarified and improved via jurisprudence of national courts, and through the decisions of the European Court of Justice. The requirements and principles established by the EU are based on these principles defined by the OECD and thus focus also on general criteria for good governance but specified to countries seeking EU accession (SIGMA, 2017). This means that areas that are also in the acquis (or other EU guidelines and instructions) are specified in accordance with these documents. Requirements and principles outside this scope are based on global standards and regulations, along with best practices adopted by member nations of the EU and the OECD. Overall, the document ‘Principles of Public Administration’ sets a minimum benchmark of good administration, in accordance with EU and global standards of good administration. The document ‘Methodology for Measuring and Monitoring Public Administration Reform’ focuses on the monitoring of these benchmarks by establishing the indicators and corresponding sub-indicators.

4.1.2 Reform area: Public service and human resource management

As this thesis focuses on the reform of the public service in candidate countries, reform area three (Public Service and Human Resource Management) is of the most importance. This area focuses on the clear and distinct group of employees within the administrations of the candidate countries, also called professional public servants or civil servants (SIGMA, 2017). According to the EC, the scope of this group should be clearly defined, and addressed in special legislation, and their management rules should also be explicit, ensuring their independence from politics. The public service should at least cover those employees who exercise state power and protect the public and state’s general interest, which typically includes most employees in ministries and agencies of those ministries. However, the scope of the public services differs in each (candidate) country.

The key requirements and principles, as established in the ‘Principles of Public Administration’, for this categorization are elaborated as part of answering the sub-question. In this document, a divide is made between Public Service and Human Resource Management. For the Public Service the following key requirements and linked principles are formulated (retrieved from SIGMA (2017)):

- **Key requirement (1):** The scope of public service is clearly defined and applied in practice so that the policy and legal frameworks and institutional set-up for professional public service are in place.
- **Principle 1:** The scope of public service is adequate, clearly defined, and applied in practice.
- **Principle 2:** The policy and legal framework for a professional and coherent public service are established and applied in practice; the institutional set-up enables consistent and effective human resource management practices across the public service.

This key requirement and linked principles focus on the policy and legal framework of a country being in place. These frameworks and structures outline the roles and responsibilities of civil servants, the standards and norms that they are expected to follow, and mechanisms for ensuring accountability and transparency. When a country adapts these requirements for the scope of the public, the country should have a public service that is according to European standards.

For the Human Resource Management aspect, the following key requirement with connecting principles is formulated:

- **Key requirement (2):** Professionalism of public service is ensured by good managerial standards and human resource management practices.
- **Principle 1:** The recruitment of public servants is based on merit and equal treatment in all its phases; the criteria for demotion and termination of public servants are explicit.
- **Principle 2:** Direct or indirect political influence on senior managerial positions in the public service is prevented.
- **Principle 3:** The remuneration system of public servants is based on job classification; it is fair and transparent.
- **Principle 4:** The professional development of public servants is ensured; this includes regular training, fair performance appraisal, and mobility and promotion based on objective and transparent criteria and merit.
- **Principle 5:** Measures for promoting integrity, preventing corruption, and ensuring discipline in the public service are in place.

This second key requirement and linked principles focus on the professionalism of the public service through good managerial standards and Human Resource Management practices. This means that civil servants should be managed according to principles of meritocracy, transparency, and accountability and that they should receive adequate training and support to perform their jobs effectively. HRM practices should also promote diversity and inclusivity while also ensuring fair and transparent hiring and promotion processes. Adhering to the requirement and principles ensures that civil servants are managed professionally and according to high standards, and that the public service works effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of citizens.

4.1.3 Methodology for Measuring and Monitoring Public Administration Reform

The second document analyzed is the 'Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration'. This is a comprehensive monitoring framework that assesses the state of a public administration of the principles described in the document 'The Principles of Public Administration' which is discussed in the previous section (SIGMA, 2019). The framework provides a complete set of indicators, focusing on the conditions for a good public administration and how the administration should perform in practice, including the implementation of reforms and subsequent outcomes. The indicators are composed of sub-indicators drawing on different methodologies, combined with a point allocation system. SIGMA collects the evidence necessary for monitoring the performance of, and progress in, countries during the accession process against the defined core areas of public administration. The document is structured according to 48 principles, divided by the 6 key areas of public administration, with indicators for each principle (SIGMA, 2019). Overall, there are 52 indicators, composed of around 340 sub-indicators for these indicators. The Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration enables a wide range of diverse measurement approaches to assess the status of the public administration and track progress in implementing reforms. Overall, the framework aims for active data triangulation by using multiple qualitative and quantitative methods. This refers to a mixed-methods approach which allows for a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Babbie, 2021). Each indicator and sub-indicators have their own measurement method, in order to assess adherence to the (sub)indicators. The most used methods are interviews, desk reviews of legislation, regulations, reports, government data, and multiple surveys.

The measured sub-indicators are all assigned points. For each sub-indicator, there is a maximum number of points to be assigned. In the end the points for each sub-indicator are added up and together determine the overall score for the indicator the sub-indicators belong to. The indicators have a scoring system from zero to five, designed in a way that a country can only score a maximum of two points based on the quality of its legislative and regulatory framework. To score three points, the country needs to demonstrate that it is effectively implementing important processes. Four points are only rewarded when the country consistently achieves relevant outcomes. Five points, which is the maximum, are only given if a country shows exceptional performance and fully complies with the principles and key requirements. Zero points are provided when there is no data available. This scoring system gives the opportunity to clearly assess whether a candidate country has made progress towards the standards for a good administration based on European standards.

4.2 Preliminary conclusion

In this chapter the documents 'Principles of Public Administration' and 'Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration' are analyzed in order to provide an answer to the following sub-question: "How does the EU measure and monitor the performance of the public service in candidate countries during the accession process?". In this section, the findings and answer to the research question will be presented.

The key principles for PAR within the accession process are detailed in the document 'Principles for Public Administration'. Based on previously established principles and general standards of good governance, the EU has defined six key reform areas that are of importance for candidate countries to have a public administration in line with European standards. To make this more concrete for the candidate countries, each key area has one or two key requirements that each candidate country should comply with to make progress towards a Europeanized public administration. These key requirements are elaborated in several connecting principles. These principles make the requirements more concrete and give them more dimensions. The document 'Principles of Public Administration' sets the standards for a European public administration; therefore, it sets a benchmark for a good administration in accordance with EU (and global) standards of good administration.

The 'Methodological Framework for the Principles of Public Administration' provides the framework for the monitoring of the defined requirements and principles. The established key requirements and their equivalent principles are made measurable by connecting indicators and sub-indicators. Each indicator, which is directly linked to a principle, is measured through a composed set of sub-indicators. These sub-indicators are scored based on thorough analysis and together determine how a candidate country performs on a certain indicator. In the end, each indicator has a score from one to five, a score of zero means that there is no data available. One is the worst score, a score of five means that the county is perfectly aligned with the EU when it comes to that specific indicator. This complex but thorough system of measuring and monitoring ensures that a country's progress towards the improvement of its public administration can be assessed very clearly and standardized.

To analyze the countries based on the sub-indicators the EU uses mixed methods to ensure data triangulation. So, there is a mix between qualitative and quantitative data collection and methods. For each sub-indicator, there is a specially designed methodology. Since there are around 340 sub-indicators, the scope of this thesis does not allow for an elaboration of all the sub-indicators. Generally speaking, the main methods used to measure the indicators are interviews, desk reviews of legislation, regulations, reports, government data, surveys etc. For the indicators regarding the reform area 'Public Service and Human Resource Management', which is the most important area for this study, the most used method is an expert review of legislation and relevant documents. But multiple other methods are used as well.

In conclusion, the EU measures and monitors the performance of public service in candidate countries based on a comprehensive monitoring framework. It has established key requirements that each country should comply with. These requirements are concretized in several principles for each requirement. These principles are measured with connecting indicators which all have several sub-indicators to highlight all the relevant aspects of the indicator. This thesis focuses specifically on the reform area 'Public Service and Human Resource Management' which consists of 9 indicators and 77 connecting sub-indicators (See appendix II). Data for these sub-indicators is collected and analyzed in multiple ways. The most common methods are expert reviews and interviews.

The methodology provides a complex framework to measure PAR in the accession process in a standardized way. Given this complete monitoring framework that has been established by the EU, the analysis of the monitoring reports can be conducted effectively, as the reports provide valuable information about the public service performance of the candidate countries.

5. Evolution of the public service performance in selected candidate countries

5.1 Monitoring reports candidate countries

In this chapter, sub-question 3 will be answered. As explained, all the relevant sections of the monitoring reports of the selected candidate countries are analyzed. This section first addresses all progress that the candidate countries have made from 2015 to 2021, retrieved from an analysis of the monitoring reports. This data will provide a comprehensive overview of the overall progress in the public service performance of the candidate countries, which will be discussed in the conclusion.

5.1.1 Montenegro

At the baseline report, Montenegro had a good start regarding the Europeanization of its public service mainly through the implementation of the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees (CSL). The law made for good scores on the indicators on the scope and the policy/legal framework. They also developed a clear PAR strategy and a complementing action plan aimed at enhancing the public service system and developing HRM capacity. Overall, all indicators were already quite established except those on the recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants and the remuneration system. These were behind due to a lack of transparency, fairness, and equality of pay for similar positions.

The 2017 report saw a major decline with deterioration on five indicators; meritocracy and recruitment went from a score of 4 to 2 due to deficiencies that undermined an effective implementation. The indicator measuring the termination of employment and demotion of civil servants also went down due to insufficient data on court decisions and their subsequent implementation outcomes and is now at 2. The indicator on the remuneration system was already low but decreased even more, mainly due to limited data. The professional development and training indicators slightly declined due to the limited allocation of the budget for central training. Finally, while the legal framework regarding integrity was still in place in 2017, there was not a clear policy and action plan, and the amount of corruption has risen causing the indicator to decline.

Montenegro rebounded in **the 2021 report.** The scope is now fully up to EU standards as is the indicator on Termination and demotion (score of 5). Other indicators such as those on the meritocracy and recruitment, recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants, and the remuneration systems also improved: The Remuneration systems have become clearer and the recruitment and dismissal are more efficient and transparent. There was also a decline present among some indicators. The policy and legal framework indicator went from 3 to 2 because the new civil service policy has not been implemented yet and the professional development and training had seen too little progress.

Overall, since 2017 Montenegro has made serious progress towards a civil service according to European standards resulting in two indicators being fully up to standards. However, compared to the baseline report, the progress is less impressive and there is still a lot to do.

5.1.2 Kosovo

The baseline report scores of Kosovo were quite established due to the in 2010 enacted Law on the Civil Service (CSL). Leading to a clear scope and complementing policy/legal framework. The CSL also regulates termination and demotion and merit-based recruitment, which are both quite established. The remuneration system, however, lacked coherence and fairness, varying among authorities. The professional development did not adequately reflect the needs of civil servants and corruption remained a problem although a legal framework was established to promote integrity.

The 2017 report showed no overall progress. Only the remuneration system improved slightly due to classification and competitiveness. The professional development on the other hand deteriorated due to the limited budget allocated for the training of civil servants it also still lacked a strategic approach to fulfill the needs of the civil servants. The other indicators did not make any improvement or decline, they remained stable in 2017.

The 2021 report reflected positive steps in the indicators. There was an improvement on the indicator on recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants, this improvement can be attributed to significant enhancements in the legislative framework governing this area. Furthermore, the indicators on disciplinary procedures and integrity improved due to the effects of enhancing a comprehensive legal framework.

Overall, there is limited progress compared to the baseline report, with most improvements not translating into overall improvements in the indicators. The overall score is therefore unchanged from the baseline report.

5.1.3 North Macedonia

The baseline report showed already average scores on most indicators mainly due to the in 2014 adopted Law ON Administrative Servants (LAS) and the Law on Public Sector Employees (LSPE**).** A PAR strategy was also implemented. This caused for good scores on the indicators on the scope and the policy/legal framework. The new LAS also ensures merit-based recruitment which was not ensured in previous law. It also establishes termination and demotion rules and creates the opportunity to appeal decisions regarding termination of employment. The remuneration system is also better defined. Professional development and training are ensured in a newly established framework. However, offering adequate training is a concern due to capacity problems. Finally, corruption is high in North Macedonia while the general regulation and infrastructure regarding integrity are well established. The same goes for the disciplinary sanctions to compete with corruption.

The 2017 report shows decline compared to the baseline report. All indicators changed (some declined, some improved except the indicator measuring integrity). While the framework for integrity is still in place, corruption remains a problem. The scope improved as well as the meritocracy and recruitment and the remuneration system. They now all have a score of 4, which is almost up to European standards. All other indicators that declined did not receive a score higher than 2.

The 2021 report highlights modest progress on the indicators. The policy and legal framework indicator improved from 2 to 3 due to enhanced public service policy quality and implementation. However, the civil service scope indicator declined, with minimal changes over the years. A slight decrease, attributed to a discriminatory amendment in the Law on Customs Administration, affected this score. The integrity indicator also dropped due to increased bribery experiences, yet the legal framework remains robust. The disciplinary procedures indicator fell to 1, lacking a suspension safeguard. Recruitment and dismissal of senior servants stagnated at 0 due to high instability from dismissals.

Overall, North Macedonia experienced limited progress and an overall decline in indicators from 2015 to 2021.

5.1.4 Albania

The baseline report reveals Albania's relatively strong performance on most indicators, which are rated between 3 and 4. This is mostly attributed to the 2014 enactment of the "On the Civil Servant" law (CSL). The law is largely aligned with European standards and expands the public service scope. The legal/policy framework adheres to European administrative law principles, fostering a professional public service. Merit-based recruitment is ensured, though salary fairness remains a challenge across institutions. Demotion and termination criteria are established, yet EU concerns persist about previous civil service legislation implementation. Professional training for public servants is recognized but lacks specificity in required training hours for civil servants. While anti-corruption measures and disciplinary procedures are in place, high corruption perception persists in Albania.

In the 2017 report, some indicators changed but the overall score remained the same as in the baseline report. The merit-based termination and demotion indicator decreased from 3 to 2 due to fewer dismissals, yet court decisions favoring dismissed civil servants remain scarce. The indicator on integrity also declined and is now at 3. While the legal framework for integrity and corruption prevention is complex, corruption convictions increased by 24% during this assessment period. Positive developments were noted too. The indicator on recruitment of senior civil servants improved from 3 to 4. The in-depth training curriculum for senior positions is finalized, though basic admission procedures are pending. The profession development indicators rose from 3 to 4, attributed to a slight budget increase for training. The other indicators remained unchanged.

In the 2021 report, Albania's civil service showed some improvements. First of all, the meritocracy and recruitment indicator is now at 5, meaning that it is up to European standards. This is due to the utilization of more comprehensive recruitment files and adherence to the regulatory framework which have ensured the proper implementation of actual procedures. Secondly, the termination and demotion indicator again improved after declining in 2017 from 3 to 2 due to a revised interpretation of employment termination criteria. Finally, the indicator on integrity improved from 3 to 4, which is caused by improvement in areas like the perceived level of bribery, the implementation of public sector integrity policy, and the availability of information on corruption investigations. Besides the improvement, there was also deterioration the recruitment and dismissal went from 4 to 3. The lower indicator value is due to several factors: many senior vacancies, limited court decision adherence, and stricter role stability. The remuneration indicator dropped to 2 due to unclear salary criteria and lack of transparency, reducing civil service competitiveness against the private sector.

Overall, the civil service of Albania is quite established but has not much improved since the baseline report.

5.1.5 Bosnia and Herzegovina

For Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to note that the civil service can be complex because the country is divided into three different regions with each region having its own institutions. Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), the República Srpska (RS), and the Brcko District (DB). These institutions all have their own civil service law (CSL) causing fragmentation in the overall system.

The baseline report shows average scores on the indicators, but no indicator makes it above a score of 3. While the scope appears adequate, the inclusion of political roles could compromise neutrality. Despite collaborative efforts among the three regions, a unified HRM framework remains unadopted. Each region's CSL emphasizes merit-based recruitment, favoring internal competition and transfers over external options. Termination rules are established, with appeal rights for civil servants. However, legislative gaps exist, notably in termination and demotion processes due to excessive managerial discretion. Political influence affects senior civil servants' appointments without preventative measures. The remuneration system lacks coherence and fairness; however, transparency is improved via new legislation but needs more fairness. The professional development of civil servants is legislated but constrained by limited resources and budget. Disciplinary measures are in line with European standards. Despite anti-corruption efforts, the perception of high corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still high.

The 2017 monitoring report shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a decline in most indicators. The scope remains fragmented despite unproductive efforts for improvement, reflected in a score of 1. The policy and legal framework indicator also dropped to 1, with no updates to the PAR strategic framework since 2015. Merit-based recruitment suffered, dropping from 3 to 1, due to formal application procedures and weak selection committees. The recruitment of senior civil servants improved slightly to 2, despite lingering political influence. The remuneration has also declined as it lacks coherence (score 1) so did the professional development indicators as the budget is still too low (score 2). High corruption perception persists due to ineffective measures, with inconsistent integrity legislation.

In the 2021 report, Bosnia and Herzegovina recovered on almost all indicators, except the indicator on integrity which is now at 0. The legislation regarding integrity was assessed as incomplete and the perception of corruption has worsened. The public sector scope managed to bounce back from 1 to 3 due to effective amendments after the 2017 report. The policy/legal framework also advanced with a new PAR strategy, raising the indicator to 3. The meritocracy indicator rose from 1 to 3, though practical implementation lags. The termination and demotion indicator now is at European standards as merit is prioritized (score 5). The recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants are now sound earning a score of 3. The remuneration system slightly improved yet lacks transparency and fairness (score 2). Finally, professional development and training were centralized, but there are still limited resources.

Overall, the public service did not improve in absolute terms. It declined significantly from 2015 to 2017 but recovered to the baseline heights from 2017 to 2021.

5.1.6 Serbia

In the baseline report, Serbia had already a quite established civil service as most indicators had a score of 3 or 4. The scope of the civil service, which is based on the Law on Civil Service (CSL), is limited and narrow because some employees are not granted civil service status. There is also much political influence in the recruitment of senior civil servants. The legal/policy framework is adequate but lacks professionalism in some areas. Furthermore, there is legislation established that ensures merit-based recruitment, yet patronage persists in practice. The remuneration system is transparent and fair. Training and professional development are well-established, but limited budget allocation hinders accessibility. Anti-corruption measures are in place, alongside effective disciplinary procedures to punish corruption.

The 2017 report showed only a decline as six indicators deteriorated. Efforts were made to reduce the fragmentation through legislative changes, yet the implementation lacks behind. The policy and legal framework's adequacy remains unchanged, but implementation challenges lowered the indicator from 4 to 2. The indicator on meritocracy and recruitment dropped from 3 to 2. Though legislation supports merit-based processes, bureaucracy hampers effective selection, especially for senior civil servants. The indicator on the remuneration system dropped from 4 to 1 due to the awaiting implementation of the new Salary System Law. The integrity framework's adequacy persists, while implementation gaps lowered the indicator to 3.

Compared to the 2017 report, **the 2021 report** showed improvement in certain indicators, yet progress remains limited compared to the baseline report. The scope indicator increased from 2 to 4 due to amendments to the CSL. The policy and legal framework improved due to a new Action plan for the PAR strategy, which consists of clear measures to assist the implementation of the PAR strategy. The CSL also saw some amendments which improved the recruitment of civil servants, which should make it more competitive. The remuneration system also improved to 4, attributed to available salary competitiveness data. The indicator on disciplinary procedures rose from 3 to 4 as clearer legislative sanctions where introduced.

5.2 Indicator progress

Montenegro indicator progress

Year	Scope public sector	Policy/legal framework	Meritocracy and recruitment	Termination and demotion	Recruitment and dismissal	Remuneration system	Professional development and training	Disciplinary procedures	Integrity of civil servants
2015	3	3	4	3	2	2	4	3	3
2016	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	4	2
2019	-	-	--	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021	5	2	3	5	3	2	2	4	2

Overall	+2	-1	-1	+2	+1	=	-2	+1	-1

Table 4 Montenegro indicator progress

Overall score:

2015	27	60%
2017	23	51%
2021	28	62%

Kosovo indicator progress

Year	Scope public sector	Policy/legal framework	Meritocracy and recruitment	Termination and demotion	Recruitment and dismissal	Remuneration system	Professional development and training	Disciplinary procedures	Integrity of civil servants
2015	4	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	3
2016	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021	4	3	2	3	3	1	3	4	4

Overall	=	=	-1	=	+1	-1	-1	+1	+1

Table 5 Kosovo indicator progress

Overall score:

2015	27	60%
2017	27	60%
2021	27	60%

North Macedonia indicator progress

Year	Scope public sector	Policy/legal framework	Meritocracy and recruitment	Termination and demotion	Recruitment and dismissal	Remuneration system	Professional development and training	Disciplinary procedures	Integrity of civil servants
2015	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3
2016	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017	4	2	4	2	1	4	2	2	3
2019	-	-	4	3	0	-	-	2	4
2021	3	3	4	3	0	4	2	1	3
Overall	=	=	+1	=	-2	+1	-2	-2	=

Table 6 North Macedonia indicator progress

Overall score:

2015	27	60%
2017	24	53%
2021	23	51%

Albania indicator progress

Year	Scope public sector	Policy/legal framework	Meritocracy and recruitment	Termination and demotion	Recruitment and dismissal	Remuneration system	Professional development and training	Disciplinary procedures	Integrity of civil servants
2015	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	3
2016	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4
2017	4	3	4	2	4	3	4	4	3
2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021	4	3	5	3	3	2	4	4	4
Overall	=	=	+1	=	=	-2	+1	=	+1

Table 7 Albania indicator progress

Overall score:

2015	31	69%
2017	31	69%
2021	32	71%

Bosnia and Herzegovina indicator progress

Year	Scope public sector	Policy/legal framework	Meritocracy and recruitment	Termination and demotion	Recruitment and dismissal	Remuneration system	Professional development and training	Disciplinary procedures	Integrity of civil servants
2015	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
2016	1	2	3	3	1	-	-	-	-
2017	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	1
2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021	3	2	3	5	3	2	3	2	0

Overall	+1	=	=	+2	+1	-1	=	-1	-3

Table 8 Bosnia and Herzegovina indicator progress

Overall score:

2015	29	64%
2017	20	44%
2021	29	64%

Serbia indicator progress

Year	Scope public sector	Policy/legal framework	Meritocracy and recruitment	Termination and demotion	Recruitment and dismissal	Remuneration system	Professional development and training	Disciplinary procedures	Integrity of civil servants
2015	3	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	4
2016	3	4	3	3	2	-	-	-	-
2017	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3
2019	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	-	-
2021	4	3	3	2	3	4	3	4	3

Overall	+1	-1	=	-1	+1	=	=	+1	-1

Table 9 Serbia indicator progress

Overall score:

2015	29	64%
2017	20	44%
2021	29	64%

5.3 Preliminary conclusion

The analysis of public service performance in the selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021 provides valuable insights into the progress and challenges faced by each country during their accession process. This conclusion aims to address sub-question 3: "How have the selected candidate member states performed in terms of public service performance from 2015 until 2021?'. Therefore, the progress of each country will be discussed briefly after which the sub-question is concluded.

1. **Montenegro:** From 2015 to 2021, Montenegro's public service performance exhibited limited overall progress. The country started the accession process with a relatively well-established public service but faced challenges in areas such as the recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants and the remuneration system. The 2017 report showed a significant decline in overall performance, but Montenegro made a recovery in the latest monitoring report. Notably, the scope of the public sector and the termination and demotion systems of civil servants now meet European standards. However, further improvements are needed in indicators related to the policy/legal framework, remuneration system, professional development and training, and integrity of civil servants. Continued efforts and targeted reforms will be crucial to enhance Montenegro's public service performance and align it more closely with EU standards.
2. **Kosovo:** From 2015 to 2021, Kosovo's public service performance demonstrated limited overall progress. Throughout the accession process, the country maintained the same overall score, but individual indicators showed varying changes, with some indicating improvement while others declined. Positive advancements were observed in three indicators: recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants, disciplinary procedures, and integrity of civil servants. However, Kosovo faced challenges in three other indicators: Meritocracy and recruitment, remuneration system, and professional development and training. To address these challenges and foster further alignment with European standards, targeted efforts and reforms are necessary.
3. **North Macedonia:** From 2015 to 2021, North Macedonia's public service performance demonstrated an overall decline. Despite starting with an average established public service in the baseline report, the subsequent reports in 2017 and 2021 saw a continuous decrease in performance. The 2017 reports showed a significant decline, particularly in the indicators related to the policy/legal framework, termination and demotion, recruitment and dismissal, professional development and training, and disciplinary procedures. While the decline

continued in the 2021 report, it was less intense. Overall, North Macedonia's score dropped from 27 in 2015 to 23 in 2021. The indicators on recruitment and dismissal and disciplinary procedures were particularly concerning, showing severe shortcomings in the country's public service. Targeted efforts and reforms are imperative to address these challenges and reverse the declining trend.

4. **Albania:** From 2015 to 2021, Albania's public service performance showed limited overall progress. However, Albania is the best-performing country of all the candidate countries. The country already established this position at the start of the monitoring process by having the highest overall score (31) and most indicators rated at 3 or 4. The country made some improvements in the recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants, and the integrity of the civil service. However, challenges remained in areas such as the remuneration system and professional development and training. While Albania's public service was considered above average compared to other assessed countries, there is still room for improvement to meet European standards. Continued efforts over the accession process, however, only resulted in an overall increase of one (to 32). With meritocracy and recruitment being the only indicator that is fully up to European standards. So, targeted reforms, and addressing specific challenges in key areas will also be essential to further advance Albania's public service performance and align it more closely with European standards.

5.. **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** From 2015 to 2021, Bosnia and Herzegovina's public service performance experienced mixed progress, with some improvements and persistent challenges. The country faced complexity due to its divided regions, each with its own civil service law, leading to fragmentation in the overall system. The 2017 report highlighted significant declines in multiple indicators, reflecting a challenging period for the public service. However, in the latest monitoring report in 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina showed some positive developments. Notably, improvements were observed in indicators related to the scope of the public service, termination and demotion, and recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants. The policy and legal framework also saw progress with the establishment of a strategic framework for public service reform. Despite these advancements, challenges remain in indicators related to meritocracy, remuneration system, professional development and training, and integrity of civil servants. Addressing these challenges through targeted efforts and reforms will be crucial to further enhance Bosnia and Herzegovina's public service and align it with European standards.

6. **Serbia:** From 2015 to 2022, Serbia's public service performance exhibited mixed progress, with some areas showing improvement while others faced challenges. At the start of the process, Serbia had a relatively established civil service with above-average scores in most

indicators. However, the report in 2017 and the interim report of 2019 highlighted significant declines on various indicators, particularly those on the scope of the civil service, recruitment and dismissal of civil servants, and the remuneration systems. In the latest monitoring report in 2021, some indicators showed improvements, such as the scope of the civil service, the remuneration system, and disciplinary procedures. However, there were still challenges in areas like meritocracy and recruitment, termination and demotion, and integrity. More targeted reforms are essential to address these challenges and enhance Serbia's public service performance, to align it more closely with European standards.

To conclude, the analysis of public service performance in the selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021 reveals different levels of progress and challenges towards a Europeanized public service. While countries made efforts to align with the European standards, there is still much work to be done to achieve any significant improvements. Some countries showed limited overall progress or experienced deterioration, while other countries showed mixed progress with improvements in some areas.

As the aim of the accession process is to bring the candidate member states' public service up to European standards, the analysis suggests that the progress has not been sufficient to meet this aim. Despite this, it is essential to acknowledge that the candidate countries did make efforts to enhance their public service system and become more Europeanized. Leading to some indicators showing improvements and even some indicators being fully up to European standards. However, as said, there was also much deterioration. To address the challenges and accelerate progress, the candidate member states will require more targeted and strategic efforts in specific areas.

In the light of answering the sub-question, the analysis shows mixed results per country but a general overall pattern of limited progress towards Europeanization of the public service. Significant work lies ahead for the candidate member states to bring their public service closer to European standards.

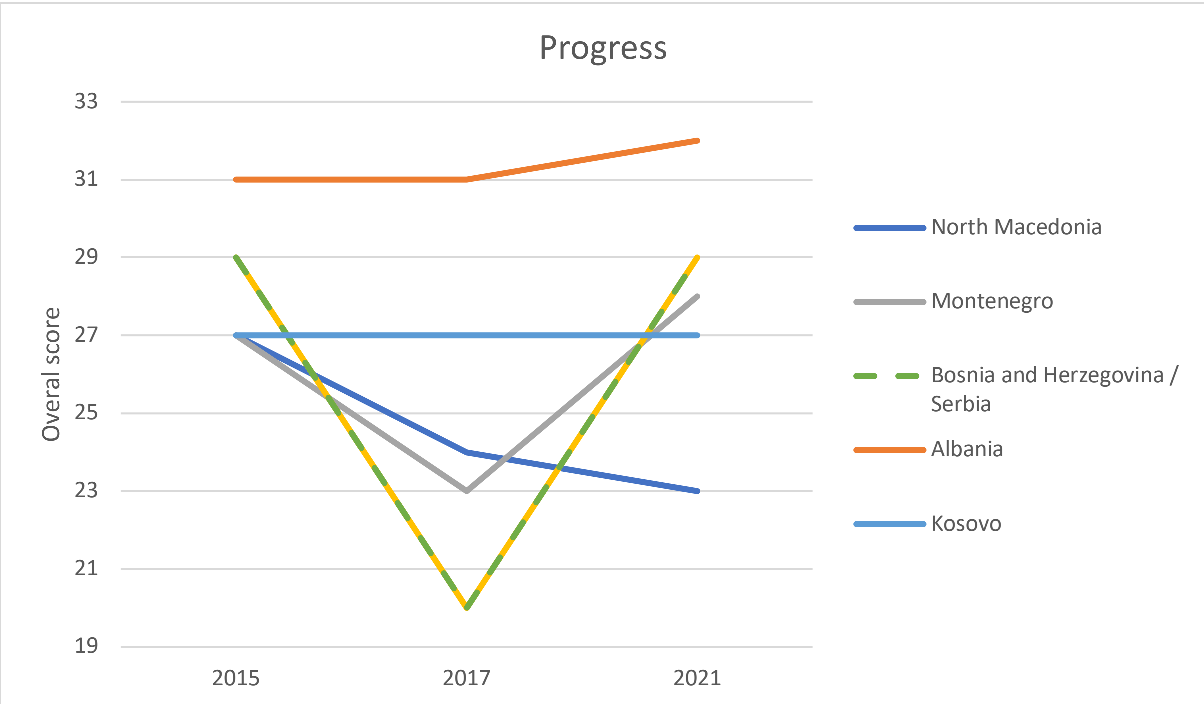
6. Analysis of public service performance

6.1 Examination of performance

In this chapter, the aim is to explore the extent to which the public service performance in the analyzed candidate members states exhibits similar patterns or differences. Therefore, the findings presented in sub-question 3 will be analyzed, which allows for a systematic comparison to identify any consistent trends or differences. Subsequently, there will be examined how the empirical findings of sub-question 3 align with the theoretical expectations posited in the theoretical framework (sub-question 1). Therefore, this chapter serves as a critical link between the theoretical propositions and the observed empirical data, offering insights into the overall public service performance and the relationship to the theoretical framework.

6.1.1 Patterns/differences

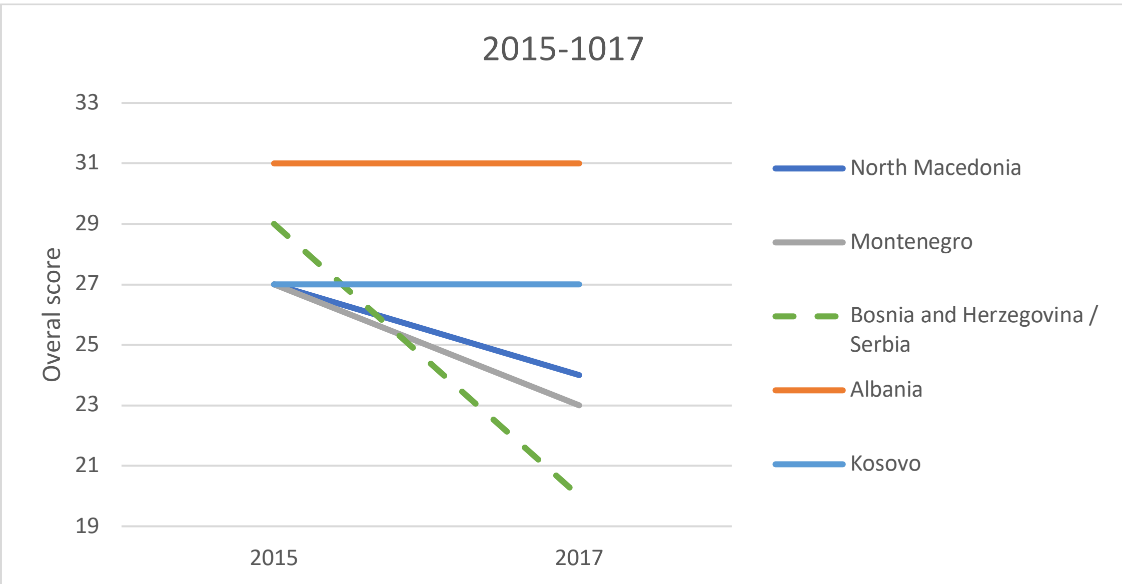
When examining the advancement of each candidate member state individually, as done in Chapter 5, a multifaceted landscape of diverse scores across sub-indicators and reports becomes evident. Nevertheless, a more comprehensive perspective emerges when analyzing the overarching scores and comparing them with one another. This gives the potential to identify shared trends or differences. The graphical representation presented in Graph 1 shows the collective progression of all six candidate countries, offering a holistic view that enables to look for patterns/trends in their trajectories.



Graph 1: progress 2015 - 2021

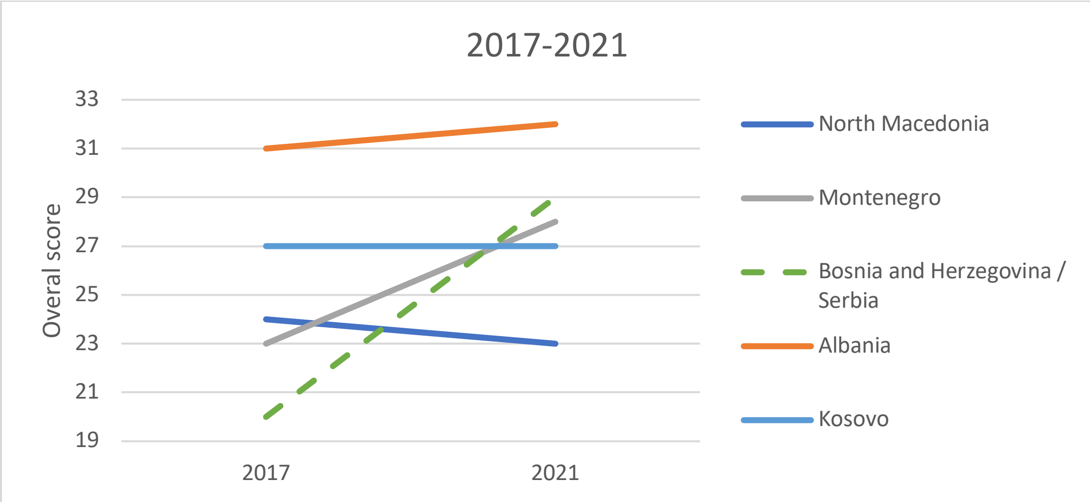
So, when interpreting graph 1 we see that one candidate country showed a positive change in the period from 2015 to 2021: Albania, which was already the best performing candidate country in terms of public service performance, received a limited improvement of 1 point. The other countries did not demonstrate a positive improvement. Some worsened and some stayed the same.

When looking for a common pattern, the first thing that stands out is that in the period from 2015 to 2017 none of the countries made a positive improvement, some countries worsened, and others remained the same. So, the first period is marked by a negative trend (see graph 2): Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro all make a (significant) drop in the overall score. Albania and Kosovo fail to make overall improvements and their score remains the same.



Graph 2: Progress 2015-2017

When looking further into the next period (2017-2021), almost all countries seem to recover, and a positive pattern emerges. This is made visible in graph 3. While Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia all show improvements, Kosovo again scores the same and does not break the positive trend. North Macedonia, however, does make a drop in the period from 2017 to 2021. However, the negative trend of North Macedonia from 2015 to 2017 has weakened, which can also be considered as positive. So, overall the period from 2017 to 2021 can be considered as positive.



Graph 3: progress 2017-2021

In conclusion, when comparing the results of the performance of the candidate countries from 2015 to 2021, one common pattern emerges: First there is a clear negative trend from 2015 to 2017 which is followed up by a clear positive trend from 2017 to 2021. Kosovo is an interesting case as it seems not influenced by these tendencies. Despite this clear pattern, it should also be noted that the overall performance of the candidate countries is limited; because of the negative pattern in the first period and the positive pattern in the second, almost all countries are back at their baseline value. Some made a small improvement of 1 point and one a small deterioration of 1 point. So, while a clear pattern is visible of a negative trend followed by a positive trend, the overall improvement of performance on the indicators is still limited.

6.2 Preliminary conclusion

The sub-question central in this chapter – To what extent does the public service performance in the analyzed candidate member states exhibit similar patterns or differences, and how do these findings align with the theoretical expectation stated in the theoretical framework – aims to explore the extent to which public service performance in the selected candidate member states shows similar or different patterns, and how this aligns with the theoretical expectation stated in chapter two.

A clear negative pattern is followed by a clear positive pattern, except for Kosovo which does not seem affected by this pattern. Overall, however, the progress of the candidate countries during the period from 2015 to 2021 was limited. Only Albania and Montenegro made an overall improvement in their scores. For all countries goes that they improve on some indicators, but also deteriorate on others. Therefore, the overall progress is limited because the improvements and deterioration are balanced.

Considering the theoretical expectation posited in the theoretical chapter, the findings from the analysis provide valuable insights into the relationship between performance measurement and the actual performance of the public service within the EU accession process. The theoretical expectation emphasizes the importance of performance measurement to progress towards goals, in this case, the Europeanization of the public service of candidate countries. It suggests that performance measurement and monitoring enhance transparency, and accountability and thereby incentivizes organizations to prioritize the achievement of measured outcomes. This refers to the notion that "what gets measured gets done", implying a positive relationship between measuring performance and the achievement of results and objectives.
Applying this theoretical expectation to the context of this research, it refers to the EU's performance measurement as an incentive for candidate countries to reform their administration to European standards. The monitoring/measurement process aims to create transparency and accountability and ensure Europeanization of the administrations of the candidate countries. Therefore, theoretically, the use of indicators to measure the performance of the public service in candidate countries should have a positive impact on the actual performance of the public service.
However, when looking at the empirical results of this thesis, it is challenging to confirm or deny the theoretical expectation because of the pattern of a negative trend followed by a positive trend. On the one hand, it denies this expectation because of a clear negative pattern, but almost all countries recovered from this negative pattern and showed positive improvements in the period 2017 to 2021. Looking at the overall progress from 2015 to 2021 there can be stated that the progress is limited because only two countries made a (small) positive improvement. Overall, it is hard to confirm the theoretical foundation because only limited improvements were shown. However, the positive trend from 2017 to 2021 shows that it is possible.

In conclusion, while the theoretical expectation posited in the theoretical chapter proposed a positive relationship between performance measurement based on performance indicators and the improvement of public service performance, the empirical findings do not confirm this expectation yet. It is a bit challenging to go beyond this speculation as the monitoring is still in progress and the period of 2015 to 2021 may prove to be too short. Therefore, it would be interesting for further research to continue following the progress over the span of the accession process. Furthermore, future research could also delve further into how the sub-indicators reflect the pattern discovered in the empirical data as they perhaps give hints of the local dynamics that influenced this result.

7. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis aimed to analyze the effectiveness and impact of the EU's monitoring of PAR during its accession process. Specifically, the focus of this study was on the monitoring of public service performance in selected candidate member states (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia). Therefore, this thesis explored the relationship between the monitoring of public service performance by the EU and the actual public service performance in the selected candidate member states. With the aim to answer the main research question: "To what extent are the monitoring's effects of EU public service performance indicators demonstratable in the public service performance of selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021?".

Throughout this investigation, four key sub-questions were answered to help answer the research question. The first sub-question formed the theoretical foundation for this research. The second sub-question explored the methods employed by the EU in the monitoring process of public service performance, providing essential insights into the context of the monitoring mechanisms. The third sub-question evaluated the actual performance of the candidate member states in terms of public service performance from 2015 to 2021, forming the empirical data to underpin the subsequent analysis. Finally, the fourth sub-question formed the analysis of the theoretical data and how these findings aligned with the theoretical foundation.

The first sub-question, after an extended literature review, presents a theoretical expectation that poses a positive relationship between the monitoring of performance and the achievements of results, under the notion 'what gets measured gets done'. This expectation implies that performance measurement based on well-established goals and indicators enhances transparency and accountability and thereby incentivizes public organizations to prioritize work towards the achievement of the desired outcomes. In the context of this research, this theory poses that by measuring the public service performance of the candidate countries, makes that their public service will improve. Thereby the effects of monitoring by the EU should be demonstratable in the public service performance of the candidate member states.

The findings of the empirical analysis of the performance of the candidate made it hard to confirm this theoretical expectation. The candidate countries revealed a diverse levels of progress and challenges, where some countries demonstrated overall progress, while others exhibited mixed progress with small improvements in specific areas. However, a deeper examination and comparison of the performance of the public service revealed a common pattern among the performance of the candidate member states. From the start of the monitoring process until 2017 a clear negative trend was shown, with some countries deteriorating and some remaining with the same score but no country managed to improve. The period from 2017 to 2021 on the other hand showed a clear positive trend, with some countries showing improvements and others remaining the same. Only North Macedonia showed again a negative performance, however, the negative trend that started at the baseline report was weakened, which also can be considered as positive. Only Kosovo does not seem to be influenced by the common pattern as the country does not make any overall changes and remains at the same level throughout the process.

Interpreting these patterns makes it hard to confirm the theoretical expectations. While the positive trend is clearly visible in the second part of the monitoring process, overall, most countries fail to improve. Most scores were the same at the start of the process as they were at the end of the process.

In conclusion, addressing the main research question, it is hard to point out clear monitoring effects of EU public service performance indicators on the public service performance of selected candidate member states from 2015 to 2021. As most scores did not improve overall, it tends to be hard to see clear effects of the monitoring by the EU. However, the positive trend that started in 2017 shows us that it is possible. Further research is needed to be clearer about the impact of the public service monitoring by the EU on the actual performance of the public service in candidate countries. This will be elaborated in the discussion of this thesis.

Discussion

It is also important to acknowledge the possible limitations of this study and identify avenues for future research to address these limitations and to expand on the findings from this study. Therefore, the limitations and avenues for future research will now be discussed:

This thesis focuses on the reform in the public service of candidate countries. However, this is not the only area of PAR. As laid out in 4.1.1. there are five other areas of PAR that are being monitored. Public service is one of the most important areas, as this encompasses the civil service which eventually must reform the public service. However, this does not mean that the other areas are not relevant to study. While these other areas are not considered in this thesis, they could potentially also offer a lot of data about the demonstration of monitoring effects in the accession process.

Furthermore, this thesis focuses on a specific timeframe, from 2015 to 2021. It is important to recognize that this timeframe limits the scope of the analysis. The accession process is currently still taking place, so it would be interesting to see how the discovered pattern evolves over the years. However, the results from this thesis do already offer some interesting insights, which can help improving the accession process for the candidate countries.

Finally, the context of each candidate country should be considered when interpreting the results. As explained, each country has its own unique path characterized by historical, cultural, and institutional factors. These factors may influence the outcomes of PAR efforts as explained in the theoretical framework. It remains challenging to rule these contextual factors out and is also not possible. However, despite these factors, a clear common pattern did emerge from the empirical findings.

Now that the limitations of this thesis are discussed, this thesis is finalized by stating some interesting avenues for future research. First of all, it would be interesting to analyze the other five PAR areas, with the same methodology as used for this study. This would offer a complete picture of the influence of monitoring on PAR. Furthermore, another opportunity for future research is to consider a longer time span. Therefore, first new monitoring reports should be released. Overall, this thesis offers valuable insights for on the influence of monitoring on the performance of the public service in candidate countries and offers multiple avenues for future research.

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Appendix I – Codebook

Indicator	**Codes**	Meaning
Adequacy of scope of public service’	**Scope public sector**	Overall change in indicator ‘Adequacy of scope of public service’
Adequacy of the policy, legal framework, and institutional set-up for professional HRM in public service	**Policy/legal framework**	Overall change in indicator ‘Adequacy of the policy, legal framework and institutional set-up for professional HRM in public service’
Meritocracy and effectiveness of recruitment of civil servants	**Meritocracy and recruitment**	Overall change in indicator ‘Meritocracy and effectiveness of recruitment of civil servants’
Merit-based termination of employment and demotion of civil servants	**Termination and demotion**	Overall change in indicator ‘Merit-based termination of employment and demotion of civil servants’
Merit-based recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants	**Recruitment and dismissal**	Overall change in indicator ‘Merit-based recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants’
Fairness and competitiveness of the remuneration system for civil servants	**remuneration system**	Overall change of indicator ‘Fairness and competitiveness of the remuneration system for civil servants'
Professional development and training for civil servants	**Professional development**	Overall change of indicator ‘Professional development and training for civil servants’
Quality of disciplinary procedures for civil servants	**Disciplinary procedures**	Overall change of indicator ‘Quality of disciplinary procedures for civil servants’
Integrity of public servants	**Integrity**	Overall change of indicator ‘Integrity of public servants’

Appendix II – Public service indicators and sub-indicators

Indicator: Adequacy of the scope of public service

nr	sub-indicator	max points	weight
1	Clarity in the legislative framework of the scope of the civil service.	2	15%
2	Adequacy of the horizontal scope of the public service.	6	46%
3	Comprehensiveness of the material scope of civil service legislation.	2	15%
4	Exclusion of politically appointed positions from the scope of the civil service.	2	15%
5	Clarity of the lower division line of the civil service.	1	9%

Table 10 Indicator: adequacy of the scope of public service

Indicator: Adequacy of the policy, legal framework and institutional set-up for professional human resource management in public service

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	Establishment of political responsibility for the civil service.	2	7%
2	Quality of public service policy documents.	4	15%
3	Implementation and monitoring of public service policy.	4	15%
4	Right balance between primary and secondary legislation.	2	7%
5	Existence of a central, capable co-ordination body.	4	15%
6	Professionalism of HRM units in civil service bodies.	2	7%
7	Existence of a functional HR database with data on the civil service	4	15%
8	Availability and use of data on the civil service	5	19%

Table 11 Indicators: adequacy of the policy, legal framework and institutional set-up for professional human resource management in public service

Indicator: Meritocracy and effectiveness of recruitment of civil servants

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	Adequacy of the legislative framework for merit-based recruitment for civil service positions.	18	36%
2	Application in practice of recruitment procedures for civil service positions.	18	36%
3	Time required to hire a civil servant	2	4%
4	Average number of eligible candidates per vacancy	4	8%
5	Effectiveness of recruitment for civil service positions	4	8%
6	Retention rate of newly hired civil servants	4	8%

Table 12 Indicator: meritocracy and effectiveness of recruitment of civil servants

Indicator: Merit-based termination of employment and demotion of civil servants

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	Objectivity of criteria for termination of employment in civil service legislation	6	34%
2	Objectivity of criteria for demotion of civil servants in the legislative framework	2	11%
3	Right to appeal dismissal and demotion decisions to courts	2	11%
4	Dismissal decisions confirmed by the courts (%)	4	22%
5	Implementation of courts decisions favorable to dismissed civil servants (%)	4	22%

Table 13 Indicator: merit-based termination of employment and demotion of civil servants

Indicator: Merit-based recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants

nr	sub-indicator	max points	weight
1	Appropriateness of the scope for the senior civil service in legislation	3	5%
2	Adequacy of the legislative framework for merit-based recruitment for senior civil service positions	15	26%
3	Objective of criteria for the termination of employment of senior civil servants in the legislative framework	4	7%
4	Legislative protection of the rights of senior civil servants during demotion	2	4%
5	Application in practice of recruitment procedures for the senior civil service	9	16%
6	Ratio of eligible candidates per senior-level vacancy	4	7%
7	Effectiveness of recruitment for senior civil service positions (%)	4	7%
8	Women in senior civil service positions (%)	4	7%
9	Stability in senior civil service position (%)	4	7%
10	Dismissal decisions confirmed by the courts (%)	4	7%
11	Implementation of final court decisions favorable to dismissed senior civil servants (%)	4	7%

Table 14 Indicator: Merit-based recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants

Indicator: Fairness and competitiveness of the renumeration system for civil servants

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	Legal obligation to base salaries on job classifications	2	10%

2	Comprehensiveness, clarity and transparency in legal definitions of salary, criteria and procedures for allocation	2	10%
3	Availability of salary information	3	15%%
4	Fairness in the allocation of base salaries in the job classification system	4	20%
5	Base salary compression ratio	2	10%
6	Managerial discretion in the allocation of bonuses	2	10%
7	Motivational character of bonuses (%)	2	10%
8	Competitiveness of civil service salaries (%)	3	15%

Table 15 Indicator: Fairness and competitiveness of the renumeration system for civil servants

Indicator: Professional development and training for civil servants

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	Recognition of training as a right and a duty of civil servants	2	4.7%
2	Co-ordination of the civil service training policy	3	7%
3	Development, implementation and monitoring of training plans	3	7%
4	Evaluation of training courses	2	4.7%
5	Professionalism of performance assessments	4	10%
6	Linkage between performance appraisals and measures designed to enhance professional achievement	4	10%
7	Clarity of criteria for and encouragement of mobility	2	4.7%
8	Adequacy of legislative framework for merit-based vertical promotion	2	4.7%
9	Absence of political interference in vertical promotions	2	4.7%
10	Right of civil servants to appeal against performance appraisal decisions	2	4.7%
11	Right of civil servants to appeal mobility decisions	2	4.7%
12	Training expenditures in proportion to the annual salary budget (%)	4	10%
13	Participation of civil servants in training (%)	5	12%
14	Perceived level of meritocracy in the public sector (%)	5	12%

Table 16 Indicator: Professional development and training for civil servants

Indicator: Quality of disciplinary procedures for civil servants

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	The adequacy of civil service legislation to uphold basic principles related to disciplinary procedures	4	22%

2	Compliance between disciplinary procedures and essential procedural principles	6	34%
3	Time limits for the administration to initiate disciplinary action and/or punish misbehavior	2	11%
4	Legislative safeguards for suspension of civil servants from duty	2	11%
5	Disciplinary decisions confirmed by the courts (%)	4	22%

Table 17 Indicator: Quality of disciplinary procedures for civil servants

Indicator: Integrity of public servants

nr	sub indicator	max points	weight
1	Completeness of the legal framework for public sector integrity	5	20%
2	Existence of a comprehensive public sector integrity policy and action plan	4	17%
3	Implementation of public sector integrity policy	3	12%
4	Use of investigations in practice	4	17%
5	Perceived level of bribery in the public sector by businesses (%)	4	17%
6	Bribery in the public sector experienced by the population (%)	4	217%

Table 18 Indicator: integrity of public servants

*Input for tables retrieved from: SIGMA. (2019).