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Editorial

Social and economic changes that took place in recent years have significantly impacted the functioning of the public sector in Poland and in the world. Institutions and organisations counted among this sector have faced new and often entirely unknown challenges. These changes are also marked by the so far unusual dynamics. The main challenge is to meet higher and higher social expectations while having to ensure sustainable development at the same time. Greater and greater limitations of resources – caused by the baby bust, economic crises, the pandemic, or the war in Ukraine – result in the necessity to increase the effectiveness of the functioning of this sector. Another challenge that public organisations are facing is the dynamic development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Gil-Garcia et al., 2018). Technical solutions absorbed by business, enabling the automatisisation and virtualisation of processes, also result in the necessity to transform solutions in the public sphere (Waheduzzaman, 2019). In the face of the presented challenges, the notion of public governance is gaining a new meaning. Under the current conditions, this process should aim not only at ensuring the efficient functioning of the state and its institutions, but also at actively supporting the processes of social and economic changes (Bozeman, 2019).

In this special issue of *Public Governance*, five scientific articles have been published, presenting research results within selected contemporary problems of public management. These articles were prepared and presented within the 14th International Scientific Conference of the College of Management and Quality Sciences, titled “Knowledge – Economy – Society”, which took place on 26–27 October, 2022. These works have been chosen out of elaborations submitted to the conference. The problem area of these articles refers both to the functioning of public organisations and to the perspective of the state’s public policies. The problem area concerns Poland as well as other countries of Europe.

The first article, written by Agnieszka Skoczylas-Tworek, is devoted to the problem of frauds and embezzlements in organisations, as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness of mechanisms counteracting such phenomena. Frauds and abuses are currently one of the biggest threat to the effective functioning of organisations. The conducted analysis revealed that among anti-fraud controls, the tool of whistleblowing shows the biggest effectiveness, while among the culprits of abuses, employees of organisations constitute the biggest proportion. The research also demonstrated companies’ progress in implementing mechanisms countering the abuses, when compered to previous years. This, however, is still not enough to effectively limit the pace of the increase of frauds and abuses. Technological development provides the culprits with much greater possibilities, which means that mechanisms countering frauds will turn out to be insufficient in the long run. It is, therefore, necessary to better adjust the mechanisms of controlling the counteracting of embezzlements to the organisational structure as well as its level of cultural and ethical maturity. This should

be accompanied by legal initiatives at the national and international levels, such as sanctioning the duty of reporting in this scope. Organisations should put much greater emphasis not only on implementing anti-fraud controls, but also on monitoring their effectiveness. Also indispensable is legal support aiming at creating airtight systems of fighting against embezzlements.

The problem area of the effectiveness of the functioning of public organisations concerns also the second article, written by Janusz Nesterak and Damian Majkowski. This elaboration is devoted to the structuring management of the post-merger integration (PMI) phase in the buy-and-build (B&B) model. This issue is presented based on the example of the private network of integrated healthcare entities. In the article, literature review is offered, supplemented with the practical description of the structure of managing the PMI in the B&B model on the German market. The structuring of managing the PMI phase in the B&B model is unique and requires an individualised approach. The general assumptions of the integration process are formulated and steered based on the mechanism of the loopback from information relayed by linear directors responsible for a given PMI. The observations coming from the practical case study show that the structure of the integration phase in the healthcare sector might be composed of three general stages: (I) the analysis of the market context; (II) formulating a strategy, including business planning and working out long-term financial prognoses; (III) working out guidelines for an analysis of the entity undergoing a takeover and integration. Moreover, an appropriate management of the PMI phase should take place within strictly defined timeframes not longer than 120 days so that the degradation of the value resulting from acquisition can be avoided.

The third article in this collection, written by Sylwia Krzyżek-Liburska, is devoted to the problem area of the international cooperation of Polish universities within framework programmes [Pol. *Programy Ramowe*, PR] of the European Union. The EU's framework programmes constitute the biggest instruments of financing scientific research and technological advancement in the European Union. They are addressed to research institutions as well as small and medium-sized enterprises. Framework programmes are managed directly by the European Commission through the agency of a selected implementing agency. The programmes do not have national or regional allocations, which means that the applicants compete at the level of the whole Union (*Programy Ramowe*, 2022). Currently, the 9th framework programme Horizon Europe, with the budget of over 95 billion EUR, is the biggest and the most ambitious one (*Polityka w zakresie innowacji*, 2022). Participation in research projects within framework programmes offers the opportunity to realise big international research undertakings which significantly influence the increase in the quality of research activity of the entities taking part in the project. Despite these benefits, participation of Polish universities in the H2020 budget is merely 0,83% (*Programy Ramowe*, 2022). This article makes an attempt at identifying the main reasons behind the low level of the participation of Polish universities in the European Commission's research programmes as well as at recommending the activities which can contribute to the improvement of this situation.

Two subsequent articles concern problems of public management in other countries of Europe. The article written by Javier Jorge-Vázquez, Sergio Luis Nández Alonso, Konrad Kolegowicz, and Jarosław Kaczmarek is devoted to the problem area of technological entrepreneurship and rural development in Spain. Intensive flows of migrants from rural to urban areas within the last century resulted in the emergence of a strong imbalance which caused the concentration of the population in big cities, whereas rural areas are experiencing the advancing process of depopulation and obsolescence. In the European Union, Spain is one of the countries which experience the biggest economic imbalance resulting from demographic challenges. Aware of the enormous scale of this

challenge, national, regional, and local authorities have implemented in the recent years a wide range of policies and programmes of activities aiming at the promotion of the development of rural areas through promoting entrepreneurship as a driving force of economic activities in these territories. Within these strategies, what stands out is the promotion of creating rural start-ups within the Programmes of the Development of Rural Areas of the Structural Funds. One of the Spanish regions which are the most experienced by the outcomes of the ageing and depopulation is the Castilla y León region (CyL). In this context, the purpose of this article is to characterise the phenomena of the depopulation of the rural environment from the perspective of the opportunities provided by rural entrepreneurship based on technology as the force aiding the fixation of population and the economic dynamisation of the territories most experienced by economic and social imbalance resulting from depopulation.

The last of the articles, written by Yuliya Idak, concerns the vision of rebuilding the cities of Ukraine. The author performed an analysis of the European experiences with regard to the contemporary architectural and urban-planning practice in cities of Austria, Germany, and Poland. A considerable part of research begins with selecting attributive categories and generalising different ways of organising the residential environment, which belong to the field of modern European urban planning. This made it possible to distinguish between five basic models, whereby each of them is directed by theories, rules, concepts, and categories which are significant to the essence of a given model, but what connects them all is the paradigm of sustainable development. The *formal* model focuses on the harmonisation of the urban environment; the *classic* one puts emphasis on the consistency with the sector standards; the *social and economic* one concentrates on ensuring that the citizens have various and sufficient chances; the *ecological* one focuses on preserving and recreating the natural environment; and the *conceptual* one is about creating ideas based on innovations. The author conducted a discussion on the possibility of using the identified models when reconstructing cities of Ukraine after the war has ended.

The articles presented in this special issue depict the diversity of problems connected with the functioning of the public sector. The authors are hoping that they will constitute inspiration for further discussions as well as academic and research explorations.

Reference List

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