



## Institutional modernisation of public administration as a prerequisite for Ukraine's European integration

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■ **Abstract.** The study analyses the transformation of institutional quality in the context of Ukraine's acquisition of candidate status for accession to the EU. Particular attention was given to the harmonisation of national law with European standards, namely the *acquis communautaire*, especially in the areas of transparency and accountability of public authorities. The article examined mechanisms for modernising the state apparatus aimed at creating flexible institutional structures capable of implementing reforms effectively. It was emphasised that the stability and effectiveness of the institutions are the key factors that determine the successful negotiation process regarding EU membership. The methodological basis of the study was a qualitative approach using the tools of grounded theory, which made it possible to systematise the key factors of institutional modernisation and identify the relationships between them. The article proposed a conceptual model, the Institutional Modernisation Framework, which reflects the interaction between reform drivers, modernisation mechanisms, the institutional capacity of public authorities and the outcomes of transformation in the public administration system. Special attention was paid to Croatia's experience of modernising public administration during the process of accession to the European Union, which helps to identify potential challenges and opportunities for Ukraine. It was demonstrated that effective institutional modernisation requires an integrated approach that includes legal adaptation to EU standards, the development of human capital in the civil service, the digitalisation of governance

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and the strengthening of local self-government. The study concluded that the institutional modernisation of public administration based on the concept of Europeanisation is a key prerequisite for Ukraine's successful integration into the European governance space and for ensuring the sustainable development of the state. Drawing on the combination of the Institutional Modernisation Framework and Gartner's governance maturity model, the article proposes an integrated model of institutional maturity in public administration

■ **Keywords:** human capital; institutional quality; local self-government; Europeanisation; institutional maturity

## ■ Introduction

Ukraine's European integration is one of the key strategic priorities of state policy and determines the direction of the country's institutional, political and socio-economic transformations. After Ukraine obtained candidate status for membership in the European Union in 2022, the issue of the compliance of national institutions with European standards became particularly significant. In this context, the institutional modernisation of the public administration system is regarded as a fundamental prerequisite for the effective implementation of reforms, the harmonisation of legislation and the sustainable development of the state.

A review of the literature on the role of institutions and the effectiveness of public administration in European integration processes shows the complexity and multidimensional nature of the issues under study. J. Wankiewicz (2024) examined the practice of European integration in Central and Eastern European countries and noted that the success of this process depends to a considerable extent on institutional quality, the effectiveness of public administration and the capacity of the state apparatus to implement complex transformational reforms. The author concluded that the ultimate aim of modernisation is to ensure the ability of public administration to fulfil the obligations of membership, including the effective management of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and participation in the European Semester.

In the academic literature, institutions are usually defined as formal and informal rules that structure political, economic and social interaction in society, creating the conditions for the functioning of public administration and the implementation of public policy (Sherbak, 2016). P. Dinesen & K. Sønderskov (2021) emphasised in their research that institutional quality has a direct impact on the effectiveness of governance, the level of public trust in authorities and the state's ability to uphold the rule of law. These findings indicate that institutional capacity is a fundamental factor in the stability and effectiveness of public administration. Research results in the field of human capital management in security and defence, which have been obtained by J. Bashtannyk *et al.* (2025), examined new practices of personnel management and human resource management in the public sector. The authors indicated that the introduction of modern approaches to human capital development, including training, motivation and competence assessment, makes it possible to improve the effectiveness of public institutions performing critically important functions. It follows from the data that without a systematic process of managing human capital, the

prepared structures will not be able to ensure a high level of efficiency in performing national security tasks despite their technical and organisational readiness.

Another point of view is reflected in the research by O. Bashtannyk *et al.* (2024), in which they examine the introduction of digitalisation tools into the sphere of public administration and the effects of national security and economy by using spatial planning tools. According to the authors, digital technologies provide a more effective data analysis, efficient use of resources, and rapid responses to external challenges. This led to the following conclusions: digitalisation of the administrative apparatus contributes not only to accelerating the decision-making process but also to strengthening the strategic potential of public authorities in terms of security and economic development.

Not all studies touch upon the issue of adaptation of national legislation with the laws of the European Union (*acquis communautaire*) as it relates to Ukraine's integration. As S. Buseti & C. Pacchi (2015) note, the effectiveness of implementing European norms depends to a large extent on the institutional capacity of public authorities and the level of administrative reform. This research perspective also shaped their conclusions, which concerned the need to transform institutional mechanisms and managerial decision-making procedures, as well as to increase the transparency and accountability of public authorities.

A particular role in the modernisation of the public administration system is played by the development of human capital in the civil service, the improvement of strategic planning and the enhancement of the professional competence of civil servants. J. Addink (2019) examined the formation of effective institutions and noted that they emerge not only through regulatory changes but also through the development of administrative culture, the professionalisation of the civil service and the implementation of the principles of good governance. The author concluded that, without the proper development of human capital and administrative practices, even formally effective institutions do not ensure a high level of public administration performance.

Thus, recent studies confirm that the integration capacity of European states, including Ukraine, is determined by the synergistic interaction of high-quality institutions, effective governance and human capital development, which together ensure the ability to implement complex transformational reforms and fulfil international obligations. In addition, an important area of institutional modernisation is the development of local self-government and decentralisation processes, which

help to improve governance effectiveness at the regional and local levels. Strengthening the role of territorial communities in the formulation and implementation of public policy corresponds to the European principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance, which are characteristic features of the modern governance system in the European Union. The institutional modernisation of the public administration system is a key factor in Ukraine's successful integration into the European Union, as it ensures the formation of effective mechanisms for implementing reforms, improving the quality of public administration and strengthening democratic institutions. In this context, the study of the transformation of the institutional structure of public administration is of considerable scholarly and practical significance. Accordingly, this study aimed to identify the specific features of the institutional modernisation of Ukraine's public administration system in the

context of European integration, and to analyse the key areas for improving institutional quality and their role in ensuring an effective negotiation process regarding Ukraine's membership of the European Union.

### Materials and Methods

To achieve the stated aim, the article employs a qualitative research approach that combines analysis of the institutional transformations of Ukraine's public administration system with theoretical inquiry. This approach makes it possible to identify the key patterns of institutional modernisation and to formulate theoretical generalisations based on a systematic analysis of the data. The application of grounded theory in this study made it possible to systematise the key factors of institutional modernisation and identify their interrelationships in the context of Ukraine's European integration (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Open, axial and selective coding in the research process using grounded theory tools

Data fragment/indicator	Open coding	Axial coding	Conceptual category
Harmonisation of national legislation with the <i>acquis communautaire</i>	Legislative adaptation	Legal integration	European integration
Implementation of EU standards in public administration	Implementation of EU norms	Administrative adaptation	European integration
Transparency in the activities of public authorities	Governance transparency	Good governance mechanisms	Institutional quality
Accountability of public authorities to society	Accountability	Democratic control	Institutional quality
Development of e-government	Digitalisation of governance	Innovation in governance	Governance modernisation
Anti-corruption institutions and policies	Anti-corruption mechanisms	Combating corruption	Institutional effectiveness
Civil service reform	Professionalisation of the civil service	Development of personnel capacity	Human capital
Advanced training for civil servants	Professional development	Managerial competences	Human capital
Strategic management	Managerial tools	Governance modernisation	Governance modernisation
Reform of budgetary management	Financial transparency	Effectiveness of public finance	Institutional effectiveness
Decentralisation of power	Transfer of powers	Multi-level governance	Local self-government
Financial autonomy of communities	Budgetary autonomy	Financial decentralisation	Local self-government
Citizen involvement in decision-making	Public participation	Participatory governance	Democratic governance
Partnership between the state and civil society	Interaction between the state and NGOs	Social dialogue	Democratic governance
Development of the institutional capacity of public authorities	Institutional capacity	Administrative effectiveness	Institutional modernisation
Coordination of reforms between public authorities	Inter-institutional coordination	Managerial integration	Institutional modernisation
Use of international governance standards	International practices	Policy transfer	European integration
Increasing public trust in the state	Institutional trust	Social legitimacy	Institutional quality
Monitoring and evaluation of public policy	Policy evaluation	Evidence-based policy	Governance modernisation
Resilience of state institutions under crisis conditions	Institutional resilience	Adaptive governance	Institutional modernisation

**Source:** compiled by the authors

To ensure the scholarly reliability of the research findings, the study applied the principle of source triangulation, which involves the analysis of different types of data. Second, a comparative analysis of the coding results was conducted to identify recurring conceptual

categories, which strengthened the validity of the theoretical conclusions. Third, the findings were correlated with existing theoretical approaches to the study of institutional modernisation and public administration. Thus, the use of grounded theory methodology made it possible to develop

a systematic understanding of the processes of institutional modernisation in Ukraine’s public administration and to identify the key factors influencing the effectiveness of European integration.

### ■ Results and Discussion

**Conceptual modelling.** Based on the coding conducted, a conceptual model of the institutional modernisation of public administration was developed. The model explains the relationship between the key factors involved in reforming state institutions during the process of European integration. The Institutional Modernisation Framework consists of four interrelated structural blocks:

1. Institutional drivers of reform. This block reflects the external and internal factors that stimulate the modernisation of public administration. These include European integration and adaptation to EU standards; implementation of the *acquis communautaire*; international recommendations and good governance standards; and the need to improve the effectiveness of public administration.

2. Mechanisms of institutional modernisation. The second block of the model includes the main instruments for transforming the public administration system: administrative reforms; digitalisation of public administration; anti-corruption mechanisms; civil service reform; the development of strategic planning; and the implementation of evidence-based policy.

3. Institutional capacity. The third block of the model reflects the internal characteristics of institutions that determine their effectiveness: professionalisation of the civil service; human capital development; inter-institutional coordination; managerial competences; and organisational adaptability.

4. Outcomes of institutional modernisation. The outcomes of the model include improved institutional quality; stronger democratic governance; increased public trust in the authorities; the effective functioning of local self-government; and Ukraine’s successful integration into the European governance space.

Thus, the model shows that the institutional modernisation of public administration is a multidimensional process involving the interaction of regulatory reforms, organisational transformations and human capital development. The systematic implementation of these components creates the conditions for improving the effectiveness of public administration and ensuring Ukraine’s successful progress towards European integration. Institutional modernisation of public administration is understood as involving the restructuring of public authorities, the reform of human resources and the introduction of digital technologies to improve the efficiency and transparency of service delivery (Guogis *et al.*, 2024). The key areas of activity include digital transformation, such as e-governance and blockchain, SMART bureaucracy and the introduction of neo-Weberian models to balance stability and innovation (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Key aspects of institutional modernisation

Aspect	Content
Digital transformation	Introduction of digital platforms, such as Diia, and blockchain technologies to increase transparency, improve the business climate and reduce corruption
SMART bureaucracy	Transition to analytical, professional and ethical administrative structures that combine regulatory harmonisation with digital openness
Human resource management	Reform of the civil service with an emphasis on career progression, professional development and the alignment of human resources with contemporary European standards
Institutional re-engineering	Strengthening regional and central institutions to improve service delivery and stimulate economic development
Democratic governance	Expanding public participation in decision-making and ensuring the accountability of public institutions

**Source:** developed by the authors based on M. Andrews (2013), H. Ali & S. Bhulyan (2022)

Institutional modernisation of public administration is a continuous process of renewing the system of public authorities, their functions, norms and procedures in order to align them with contemporary requirements, technologies and social needs. The main areas of research in this field include the optimisation of governance structures, debureaucratisation, the introduction of digital technologies, including e-government, improved interaction between public authorities and society, and the legal support of administrative reforms. Theoretical research under conditions of contemporary change is directed towards identifying the optimal relationship between political objectives and the mechanisms for achieving them. This includes analysis of possible ways to achieve coherence between political strategy and administrative tools, such as project-based,

process-based and network-based approaches. At the same time, administrative reforms actively implemented both in developed economies and in developing countries show the ambiguous nature of institutional change. In particular, it has become clear that innovations often encounter resistance because of attempts to preserve the status quo or pursue alternative agendas. This may lead to institutional traps that slow the course of reforms or even call their legitimacy into question in public opinion (Finocchiaro Castro *et al.*, 2025).

In a context of institutional uncertainty, where political responsibility and administrative accountability become blurred, the risk of rent-seeking behaviour among senior officials increases. Public office is increasingly used as an instrument for obtaining excessive gains, while corruption acquires the features of a systemic phenomenon. Under

such conditions, the main challenges are the political interests of those who should initiate reforms and the administrative capacity of the apparatus to implement what has been planned. The postponement of strategically important reforms deepens the crisis of public administration. Although such a crisis may potentially serve as an impulse for change, it is unlikely to be overcome without effective political and administrative institutions. These institutions must be integrated into a multi-level system for determining priorities and incentives for the key participants in the governance process, from the highest political leaders and influential business figures to regional and local officials, as well as citizens as recipients of public services.

Taken together, this confirms the topicality and practical relevance of studying political and administrative institutions. Such a study is necessary for formulating the strategic objectives of modernisation and examining the extent to which they are linked to available resources; for identifying the set of institutions, namely the rules, procedures, powers and motivational mechanisms required to achieve the desired outcomes; and for analysing the main actors involved in modernisation. Research in these areas is widely represented in the specialised literature (Addink, 2013; Jinhua, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Moreover, the research focus is gradually shifting from the description of foreign experience as a model to be emulated towards the substantiation of domestic socio-cultural trends and governance models. For instance, in his recent study, A. Rachynskyi (2025) emphasises that the Europeanisation of the Ukrainian bureaucracy is not just the process of importing EU regulatory practices. It requires profound changes in cultural values and administrative thinking, the creation of a new ethics of service, and a reconsideration of the role of the civil servant, who should be not only an executor of procedures but also an active agent of development. At the same time, the author highlights that this process is contradictory, which is manifested in the interaction between technological innovations and institutional inertia, giving rise to the phenomenon of “electronic bureaucracy with an analogue mindset”. In response to these problems, the author offers the concept of SMART Bureaucracy – 2030, which will become the vector of the next transformations. This implies combining legal security with digital analytics, professionalism with trust, and technological efficiency with the humanistic values of public service. Such a model will enable the transformation of bureaucracy from a traditional administrative body into an intelligent system for learning, forecasting and adaptation. A separate focus on the regional dimension of the European integration of Ukraine in the research of L. Lukashuk (2023) is given to the analysis of the regulatory and legal framework for the functioning of public mechanisms, which is relevant to the conditions of regional heterogeneity and the diversity of the country’s cultural and identity space.

**The *acquis communautaire* and national specificities of harmonisation.** Reforming the procedures for developing and implementing public administration

institutions should take into account the political and administrative structure of the system, the level of political competition, the quality of mechanisms that compel officials to comply with administrative rules, and the effectiveness of accountability instruments. With clear and working modernisation institutions, it is possible to actively influence the real behavioural models of civil servants and public organisations’ activities in social practice (Khan et al., 2019). Public administration modernisation means creating an institutional building programme, which implies creating an administrative system with a clearly defined division of powers and responsibility for their performance, a motivational system oriented to the value system of the time, the elements relating to the administrative capacity of the public sector and those relating to the development of policy of public administration reform. Such an institutional-building programme reflects the level of modernisation capacity in public administration, which depends on the administrative capacity of the state and its “ability to formulate and implement policy” (Liu, 2019).

The development of a programme for institutional building and the modernisation of public administration is associated with the use of neo-institutional methodology, which is becoming increasingly widespread in political science and other social sciences. This methodology includes historical neo-institutionalism, sociological neo-institutionalism and rational choice neoinstitutionalism (Kud, 2022). The current theoretical and methodological potential of neoinstitutional analysis makes it possible to formulate conceptual approaches to the study of the modernisation of public administration.

The renewed interest in institutions in political science has been accompanied by an expansion of the research field of institutional theory. “Old” institutionalism focused mainly on the formal institutions of the state, including executive and legislative bodies, courts and laws, and was criticised for paying excessive attention to normative issues, particularly constitutional and legal structures, compared with the actual behaviour of actors in the political process and its consequences. “New” institutionalism treats phenomena covered by broad concepts, such as interest representation and even political consciousness, as institutions in accordance with a broad understanding of the term (Bodnieks, 2020).

The relationship between institutional transformations and political modernisation was once convincingly demonstrated by Samuel Huntington (Bayramova, 2024). In this regard, the political strategy for the modernisation of public administration may be regarded as a form of institutional design, shaped on the basis of political objectives, attentive to the interests of different social groups and implemented through a system of norms. The formation of such a strategy includes not only the theoretical justification of mechanisms of institutional change, namely trajectories of institutional development within the governance system, but also an analysis of the processes that determine the institutional rules for strategic decision-making.

Increasing influence of the state requires giving up the dominance of such modernisation logics as rational construction and environmental determinism, and to reveal the process by which the existing institutions mediated political action changes the main features of public administration, and to identify the mechanisms that allow understanding the influence of the existing institutional order on the process of change dynamics and which elements of this mechanism play a leading role. It is equally important to study institutional dynamics, including deliberate institutional building, selfregulating transformations and institutional transplanted, as well as their direction, different trajectories of change and consequences for public administration. The approaches developed within modernisation theory are not always adequate to the realities of economic and political processes and are often fragmentary. These approaches often interpret the linear political and administrative processes of the traditional cause-and-effect relationships without paying attention to their multi-level institutional nature.

This is particularly evident in the study by D. Tkach & T. Kazik (2020), who emphasise that, if the concept of the *acquis* is dynamic and constantly expanding, the adaptation of Ukrainian legislation in all areas required for the country to be considered a candidate for EU membership will take a considerable amount of time. Thus, the legislative process

in Ukraine will not be able to keep pace with the EU *acquis*, which will become a significant obstacle to the country's European integration. Also, the authors emphasised the need to know fully the meaning of all acts of the *acquis* to harmonise Ukrainian legislation. It implies that cooperation with European experts should be close, because in case of misreading, this will negatively affect the implementation of these measures in the process of adaptation.

**A retrospective view of Croatian modernisation.** Institutional modernisation of public administration of Croatia was a crucially important and essential transformational process that mainly had to be implemented due to compliance with the requirements and *acquis communautaire* in the EU accession process in 2005-2011 and membership in 2013. The institutional modernisation of public administration in Croatia was an integral part of the European Union accession process and aimed to bring Croatia's administrative system in line with the *acquis communautaire* for the effective application of EU standards. The main driving force of this process was the influence of the EU conditionality, which emphasised the importance of developing capacities, the rule of law and transition from a centralised, legalistic bureaucracy to a modern, service-oriented administration. The main elements of the institutional environment of the modernisation of public administration of Croatia in the accession process to the EU are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Key aspects and challenges of institutional modernisation in Croatia during the EU accession process

Key aspect	
Europeanisation phase after 2001	After the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in 2001, Croatia entered a phase of intensive reforms, culminating in the 2008 Public Administration Reform Strategy, which focused on modernisation and adaptation to EU standards
Institutional capacity building	A key task was to strengthen administrative capacity for managing EU funds and implementing legislation across the 35 negotiation chapters. This included the creation of independent inspectorates, the strengthening of financial control systems and the enhancement of judicial independence
Establishment of new agencies	Modernisation included the creation of independent environmental agencies, inspectorates and specialised regulatory bodies to meet EU requirements for effective and professional governance
Digitalisation and e-government	Significant investment was made in digital tools and e-government solutions, such as e-Citizens and the state information infrastructure, to improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy in line with EU digital standards
Legislative alignment	The government established a specialised structure for adopting the <i>acquis communautaire</i> , preparing annual national programmes for incorporating EU legislation into the national regulatory framework
Modernisation initiatives	Reforms were aimed at creating a citizen-oriented administration, increasing transparency, advancing digitalisation through e-government and improving the professionalism of civil servants
Regional development framework	The creation of structures for the effective management of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) became a key component of institutional reform
Challenge and outcome	
Slow modernisation	Despite reforms, the process was often characterised as "slow modernisation", marked by structural resistance within the bureaucracy and a high degree of administrative fragmentation. Modernisation efforts included attempts to streamline local and regional self-government, which was considered highly fragmented
Improved effectiveness	After accession, Croatia showed an improvement in government effectiveness, from 0.46 in 2019 to 0.58 in 2022, although it remained below the EU-27 average
Technical support	After accession, Croatia continued to use the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI) to implement more than 138 reform projects, focusing on digitalisation and the efficiency of public expenditure
Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)	Croatia introduced a legal framework for RIA and stakeholder engagement, aligning it with OECD and EU practice in order to improve the quality of public regulation

Source: developed by the authors based on studies by T. Cierco (2009) and P. Wankiewicz (2024)



The main aim of modernisation was to build the capacity of the Croatian public administration in compliance with the obligations arising from membership, such as the effective implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and participation in the European semester (Wankiewicz, 2024). The EU played a fundamental role throughout this evolution. Acting as the main driver of change and reform, and offering models, recommendations and financial assistance for reconstruction, development and transition, the EU helped Croatia succeed in its transition process. A similar situation can be observed in Ukraine, which receives multilateral support, guidance and financial assistance from the EU as part of the accession negotiation process.

In fact, after 2003, the Croatian government was able to strengthen state institutions and ensure internal security more effectively than the previous centre-left government. However, it still fell short of expectations in its capacity to carry out macroeconomic reforms in areas such as the judiciary and to combat corruption, which remained deeply entrenched. These were, in essence, the two most difficult problems for Croatia's long-term democratisation, inherited from the processes of transition and state-building during wartime. They are also relevant to contemporary Ukraine.

The problematisation of the concept of Europeanisation in Croatia also deserves attention (Maldini & Pauković, 2017). As a concept, Europeanisation involves meeting membership criteria, including compliance with democratic standards such as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and economic performance. It also implies "the development of networks of interaction between domestic and supranational actors that can start and initiate a data-informed decision-making process" and "the gradual and differentiated diffusion of values, general norms and specific decisions, from European institutions and actors, into domestic politics, that is into the existing domestic institutions and into the political and public processes" (Morlino, 2002). Thus, with an emphasis on promoting stability through democratisation, institution-building and civic participation, Europeanisation is understood here as a process of constructing, disseminating and institutionalising formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, "ways of doing things", and shared beliefs and norms that are first defined and consolidated in EU decision-making and then incorporated into the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policy (Clemens, 2017).

The latter does not correspond to regionalisation since it involves socialisation and internalisation of the EU-conceived political and economic policy and security measures, and involves legal, institutional and structural adaptation. This process of deepening integration is embedded in the EU's accession criteria, as well as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that serves as a tool for harmonising practices conducive to cooperation between the EU, the candidate countries and the region, extending from the Mediterranean and through the Middle East to the Caucasus.

K. Sigrist (2008), an adviser to Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, highlighted two key points. Firstly, the reform process in Central and Eastern European states was sectoral and sequential and did not follow a systemic approach. Such a system would probably create institutional difficulties in the future and could potentially change the democratic status of these countries. On the other hand, L. Radu (2015) underlined that cultural aspects and historical inheritance could also be reasons for different results in reforms. Thus, Ukraine is not unique in the challenges it faces in the process of EU integration and the corresponding institutional modernisation of public administration. However, Europeanisation, as the concept described above, remains the only viable way to achieve success on the path towards EU membership.

**Europeanisation: Opportunities and a pathway for Ukraine.** As mentioned above, the Europeanisation of public administration is one of the key tools for institutional transformation of the countries striving to integrate into the European political and legal area. In the academic literature, Europeanisation is understood as a process through which national political and administrative institutions are transformed under the influence of the norms, principles and governance practices of the European Union. This process involves the gradual diffusion of European rules, standards and governance models within a state's domestic political and administrative system.

For Ukraine, Europeanisation of public administration was not just a political decision, and it is a vital condition for the sustainable development, democratic stability and effective functioning of state institutions. It covers extensive transformations from legislative approximation to the *acquis communautaire* to changes in administrative culture, the practice of decision making and the mechanisms of state-society interaction. One of the important factors for the successful Europeanisation is strengthening the state's institutional capacity. It is related to the development of professional career public service, the development of strategic planning capacity, the introduction of new digital technologies to the public sector governance, and the establishment of efficient mechanisms of interinstitutional coordination. In this context, an important area of reform is the digital transformation of public administration, which involves the development of e-government, open data and digital platforms for the provision of administrative services.

Moreover, Europeanisation is not just a mechanical adaptation of European institutional models. The experience of Central and Eastern European countries proves that the success of reforms is largely determined by the potential of national institutions to adapt European standards to their socio-political context. In this context, it is important to combine European principles of governance with national traditions of public administration and administrative culture.

Another important aspect of Europeanisation is the strengthening of the role of civil society in the formulation and implementation of public policy. Citizen participation

in managerial decisionmaking helps to increase the transparency of public administration, strengthen trust in state institutions and develop democratic governance practices. Hence, Europeanisation of Ukraine’s public administration system can be considered as a holistic process of institutional change, which involves legal, organisational and cultural change. The implementation of this process creates the conditions for improving the effectiveness of public administration, strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring Ukraine’s successful progress towards European integration.

To facilitate and continuously monitor institutional modernisation, it is advisable, it would be advisable to combine the Institutional Modernisation Framework with Gartner’s governance maturity model. Gartner maturity models are structured methodologies for assessing the development of processes, technologies or data that help organisations move from reactive action to optimised management. However, the concept of the maturity model can also be applied to institutional transformations in public administration.

The main levels of maturity, according to Gartner, as applied to data and process management, are as follows:

1. Level 1: Awareness: Processes are chaotic and depend on individual parameters or factors. Problems are recognised, but there is no systematic approach.

2. Level 2: Reactive: Basic practices begin to be introduced, while actions are taken in response to crises or incidents.

3. Level 3: Proactive: Structured management emerges, procedures are documented, and risk prevention becomes established.

4. Level 4: Managed: Management is integrated into processes, and quality and effectiveness metrics are in place.

5. Level 5: Optimised: Data are used as a strategic asset, while processes are automated and continuously improved to ensure maximum value (Król & Zdonek, 2020).

Application of the Institutional Modernisation Framework and the Gartner maturity model allows consideration of the institutional modernisation of public administration not only as a conceptual model, but also as a staged process of institutional development. This is important for European integration research because this model identifies the stage of transformation of the public administration system and the steps to achieve European standards. Thus, the integrated model could be proposed, where the drivers of the reform and modernisation mechanisms, as well as institutional capacity, are considered in the light of institutional maturity. The maturity model makes it possible to assess the level of development of the public administration system and determine the logic of gradual institutional transformation. The adapted model includes five main levels of institutional maturity (Table 4).

**Table 4. Integrated model of institutional maturity in public administration**

Maturity level	Institutional characteristics	Main modernisation mechanisms	Role in European integration
1. Initial stage	Institutions function in a fragmented manner, administrative procedures are not standardised, and coordination between public authorities is weak	Initial administrative reforms, creation of a regulatory framework, and development of strategic documents	Formation of the basic prerequisites for adaptation to European standards
2. Developing stage	Standardised administrative procedures emerge, and institutional mechanisms of control and accountability are established	Civil service reform, development of anti-corruption infrastructure, and introduction of elements of e-government	Beginning of the harmonisation of national legislation with the <i>acquis communautaire</i>
3. Standardised stage	Stable governance structures are formed, and coordination between state institutions becomes more effective	Institutional strengthening, development of digital services, and strategic planning	Active implementation of European norms and governance standards
4. Managed stage	Institutions demonstrate a high level of managerial effectiveness, and digital governance tools are actively used	Full-scale digitalisation, integration of management processes, and development of network-based forms of governance	Deepening integration into the European administrative space
5. Optimised stage	Institutional structures are flexible, while public administration shows a high level of adaptability and innovation	Use of innovative management practices, data-driven governance, and strategic forecasting	Full integration into the European governance space

**Source:** developed by the authors

Combining the Institutional Modernisation Framework and the Gartner model to assess institutional maturity enabled the formation of an integrated analytical model that considers modernisation of public administration as a process of institutional development in stages. Within this logic, each stage of modernisation is associated with an increase in institutional quality and with the state’s capacity

to implement European governance standards. For Ukraine, the transition from the formalisation of institutional reforms to their stabilisation and systemic integration is particularly relevant. This requires not only the harmonisation of legislation, but also the formation of an effective administrative culture, the development of a professional civil service and the introduction of modern digital gov-



ernance tools. The integrated model makes it possible to view institutional modernisation as a multi-level process in which institutional change, administrative reforms and the development of managerial competences form the basis for Ukraine's successful European integration.

### ■ Conclusions

The article examined the process of institutional modernisation in Ukraine's public administration system in the context of European integration. The analysis showed that institutional quality plays a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of public administration and in implementing reforms aimed at bringing Ukraine closer to European Union standards. The use of grounded theory methodology made it possible to identify the main factors of institutional modernisation, among which particular importance is attached to the harmonisation of legislation with the *acquis communautaire*, the development of human capital in the civil service system, the introduction of digital governance technologies, the strengthening of anti-corruption mechanisms and the development of local selfgovernment.

The proposed conceptual model, the Institutional Modernisation Framework, demonstrates the relationship between reform drivers, modernisation mechanisms, the institutional capacity of public authorities and the outcomes of transformation in the public administration system. The model shows that effective modernisation of public administration is possible only through the systematic implementation of administrative reforms, the development of managerial competences and the strengthening of democratic institutions. The analysis of Croatia's experience of institutional reform shows that adaptation to European Union standards is a long and complex process; however, it contributes to improving the effectiveness of public administration, strengthening the rule of law and developing democratic institutions. For Ukraine, this experience is an important reference point in implementing the reforms required for further progress towards European integration. Thus, the institutional modernisation of public administration is a strategic prerequisite for Ukraine's successful integration into the European Union. The study proposes the Institutional Modernisation Framework as a conceptual model that reflects the relationship between reform drivers, mechanisms of institutional modernisation, institutional capacity and the

outcomes of transformation in the public administration system. Combining this model with the approach to assessing institutional maturity developed by Gartner made it possible to construct an integrated analytical model that treats the modernisation of public administration as a staged process of institutional development. According to the integrated model, institutional modernisation of public administration passes through successive stages from the formalisation of institutional reforms of public administration to the creation of an innovative governance system able to respond adequately to socio-economic challenges. This approach makes it possible not only to conceptualise the process of public administration reform but also to assess the level of institutional maturity of public institutions.

The study also indicates that it is relevant for Ukraine to transition from institutional formalisation to institutional stabilisation and systemic integration of public administration processes. It includes enhancing strategic coordination of public authorities, raising the level of professional civil service, digital governance development, and mechanisms of interaction between the state, business and civil society. Hence, institutional modernisation of the public administration system should be considered as a complex long-term process, which involves legal, organisational and management changes. Implementing such a process will allow for achieving the goal of public administration modernisation to improve its effectiveness, strengthen democratic processes, consolidate Ukrainian society, and integrate Ukraine into the European administrative area. Further research should focus on the empirical measurement of the institutional maturity of Ukraine's public administration system, the analysis of the effectiveness of administrative reforms in the context of Europeanisation, and comparative studies of the experience of other candidate countries seeking accession to the European Union.

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## Інституційна модернізація публічного управління як передумова європейської інтеграції України

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■ **Анотація.** У дослідженні аналізується трансформація якості інституцій у контексті набуття Україною статусу кандидата на вступ до ЄС. Основна увага приділяється гармонізації національного права з європейськими стандартами (*acquis communautaire*), зокрема у сферах прозорості та підзвітності влади. Розглядаються механізми модернізації державного апарату, спрямовані на створення гнучких інституційних структур, здатних ефективно впроваджувати реформи. Автор обґрунтовує, що саме стабільність та ефективність інституцій є визначальним фактором для успішного переговорного процесу про членство в ЄС. Методологічною основою дослідження є якісний підхід із використанням інструментарію обґрунтованої теорії, що дозволив систематизувати ключові фактори інституційної модернізації та визначити їх взаємозв'язки. У статті запропоновано концептуальну модель Institutional Modernization Framework, яка відображає взаємодію драйверів реформ, механізмів модернізації, інституційної спроможності державних органів та результатів трансформації системи публічного управління. Особливу увагу приділено аналізу досвіду Хорватії щодо модернізації публічного управління у процесі вступу до Європейського Союзу, що дозволяє визначити потенційні виклики та можливості для України. Доведено, що ефективна інституційна модернізація потребує комплексного підходу, який включає правову адаптацію до стандартів ЄС, розвиток людського капіталу у сфері державної служби, цифровізацію управління та посилення ролі місцевого самоврядування. Зроблено висновок, що інституційна модернізація публічного управління на основі концепції Європеїзації є ключовою передумовою успішної інтеграції України до європейського управлінського простору та забезпечення сталого розвитку держави. На основі поєднання Institutional Modernization Framework із моделлю зрілості управління Gartner запропоновано інтегровану модель інституційної зрілості публічного управління.

■ **Ключові слова:** людський капітал; якість інституцій; місцеве самоврядування; європеїзація; інституційна зрілість