

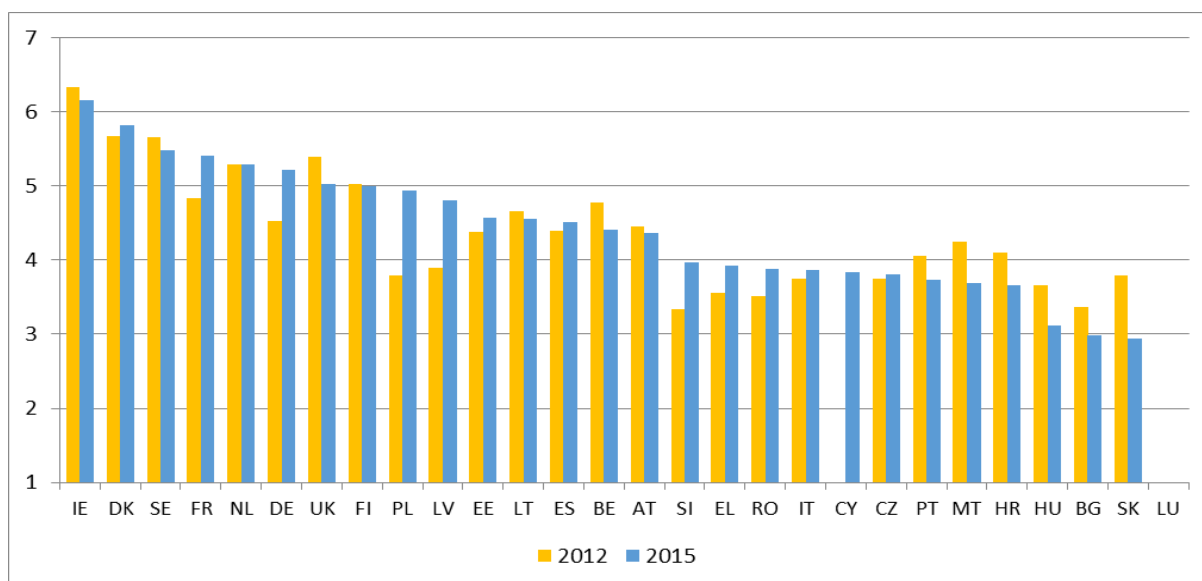
## Index of professionalism in the state administration of Bulgaria for 2018

In August 2018, the European Commission published “A comparative overview of public administration characteristics and performance in the EU 28”. The document has been prepared for project of Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and includes indicator-based assessment of the public administration systems in the EU Member States with regard to capacity, management and performance of public administration in the context of the administrative reforms of the last two decades.

The administrative reform in Bulgaria began 20 years ago with a clearly stated purpose to create a stable, politically independent and professional state administration. It could be assumed that the statements and results set out in the EC document for the first time offer a comparative assessment of the extent to which Bulgaria has managed to achieve the strategic goals set in that reform. Unfortunately, some of these statements and results are disturbing. For example:

- The recruitment of top civil servants is assessed as highly politicized.
- According to the indicator “professionalism of the civil service” for 2015, Bulgaria is second to the last out of 27 EU member states (there is no data for Luxembourg).

### *Professionalism of civil service*



According to the EC publication the data for determining the professionalism index for 2015 was taken from Quality of government institute Gothenburg expert survey - a web survey of 1294 experts from 170 countries. In the publication is explained that the Professionalism index measures to what extent the public administration is professional rather than politicized. Higher values indicate a more professionalized public administration. The value of each country is calculated as a mean of all expert means based on 4 statements:

1. When recruiting public employees, the skills and the merits of the applicants decide who get the job.

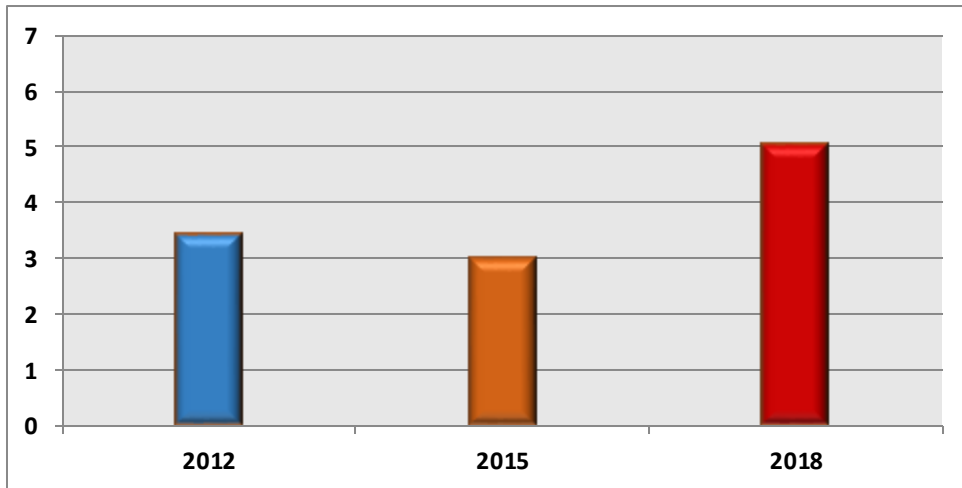
2. When recruiting public employees, the political connections of the applicants decide who get the job;
3. The top political leadership hires and fires public officials;
4. Senior public officials are recruited within the ranks of the public sector.

Given the nature of these statements and the special expertise, which is the most appropriate and necessary for their assessment, it could be assumed that the assessment of professionalism in public administration should be made mainly among employees of human resources units. They are the people who are directly involved in the selection and appointment of employees, as well as in supporting the whole process. They are the people who have the most complete and direct impressions of how, what and why is done for the people in the administration. Of course, the opinion of other specialists could be used to assess the professionalism in the state administration, but it's important that they have the necessary experience to give a competent opinion and assessments.

The index of professionalism, as well as other results from the published document caused strong interest among IPA's team. This is mainly due to the fact that the mission of the Institute is to conduct training for the development of professional skills of employees in the administration and any assessments and comments on the level of professionalism in the state administration of Bulgaria are especially important to IPA (even when we realized that this level of professionalism is due to number of other factors). That's why, provoked by the data on the low index of professionalism in the state administration of Bulgaria for 2015, the IPA team decided to make another assessment of this indicator for 2018 using the same methodology used in the Quality of government institute Gothenburg expert survey.

Since 2003, IPA has held annual meetings of human resources specialists, which are usually attended by about 100 representatives of human resources units in the central and regional administration. It can be said that the participants in these meetings represent over 10% of the administrative structures in Bulgaria - ministries, agencies, regional and municipal administrations, etc. The annual meeting for 2018 was held in September and was attended by over 120 managers and human resources experts. All participants were invited to complete an anonymous questionnaire using the same 7-point rating scale and the above 4 statements used in the Quality of government institute Gothenburg expert survey.

The index of professionalism in the state administration of Bulgaria for 2018 is set based on the assessments of 116 participants in the annual meeting. The obtained index 5.02 is about two units higher than the index for 2015 from the EC report. The chart below shows a comparison of the index for 2012, 2015 and 2018.



The above results were presented and discussed with the participants in the meeting. The discussion raised various issues related to the reliability of different international analyzes and studies, the number and expertise of the people who are involved in such analyzes. Everyone agreed that IPA and the administrations themselves should be more actively involved in conducting different evaluations related to the work of the employees in the administration.

This position fully corresponds with the recommendations of the EC in the report on the results of a study from 2018 „Measuring Public Administration: A Feasibility study for better comparative indicators in the EU”. The document highlights the urgent need for more data and better information on various aspects of administrative activities and recommends more surveys among employees in the administration.

Periodically IPA plans to make an assessment to determine the index of professionalism in the administration. This initiative already has the support of the Directorate “Administrative Modernization” at the Council of Ministers of the Republic Bulgaria, as well as the community of human resources specialists from all levels of the state administration of Bulgaria.

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