



Academic associations in the field of administrative sciences in Central and Eastern Europe, or what could be the medium-term objectives of the newly established Central and Eastern European Society for Administrative Sciences?

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Abstract

When we search for the significant players of administrative sciences on both the domestic and international level, we find – amongst others, amongst departments of universities, think-tanks and committees of academies of sciences – also organisations that can be treated as parts of civil society, especially scientific societies, particularly scientific associations. My current paper deals exclusively with the latter ones (with scientific associations) and my main goal is to enlist those functions that can be or even should be provided by our newly created *Central and Eastern European Society for Administrative Sciences*.

To provide the catalogue, the elements of which are based on scientific evidence, my paper covers a) the main roles of contemporary scientific associations; b) the general features of Hungarian civil society; c) the names and main features of the contemporary scientific associations in administrative sciences in Hungary; and d) also the results of an international survey conducted among 142 representatives of administrative sciences of 18 countries in our region, especially of those countries which were formerly socialist states.

And finally, with the help of these facts collected I aim to show, and offer some fairly new possible functions to invent in the interest of our 'beloved' Society.

Keywords

administrative sciences, scientific societies (associations), functions of scientific societies, Central and Eastern European Society for Administrative Sciences.

Introduction

In 2021, the Central and Eastern European Administrative Sciences Association (hereinafter: the Association or ASA) was established; and since I have long been engaged in the study of the current processes of administrative sciences in Hungary, and in particular the science of administrative law, and, independently of the former, I also research the characteristics of Hungarian civil society, the question arose: what are the aims of this new scientific association, and, what is even more interesting: what are the desirable or possible goals, the objectives to be achieved or achievable in the medium term, in the third decade of the 21st century, in the case of a Hungarian Administrative Sciences Association aspiring for an international space?

Such an examination can only be made really lively and useful by the insights that emerge from the data collected, but in which directions can we hope to gain useful knowledge, and which facts can be systematised and generalised?

Clearly, a good starting point for this work might be:

- on the one hand, to identify, assess and offer as a possible model the main characteristics, historical development, current functions and practices of the better-known American administrative sciences societies, and, on the other hand, to present the main characteristics of specifically European international administrative sciences organisations that are typically regional in their activities, with a special reference to the main roles assumed by these entities and the more relevant functions they perform. In this context, an overview of the roles played by civil society-type organisations that are not active in the field of administrative sciences can also play an important role;
- on the other hand, a review of the general situation of Hungarian civil society and, more narrowly, an assessment of the situation of Hungarian scientific associations operating in the form of civil society organisations can be beneficial. The general situation of civil society in Hungary is of interest to us insofar as the general characteristics of NGOs and the characteristics of the wider community, will necessarily apply to some extent to autonomous scientific organisations;
- third, an enumeration of the existing Hungarian Administrative Sciences associations (and foundations) and a record of some common features may be useful; and,
- fourth, surveys of the existence and contemporary characteristics of Administrative Sciences associations in other former socialist countries may also serve as an important point of reference.

Made difficult by the essentially unprecedented nature of the Hungarian literature, this paper, although of a foundational nature, aims to address all four of these approaches in a substantive manner, even if in some respects it does so only to the extent of making the most necessary observations. Thus, in addition to the outline of international contexts and the few generalisations that follow from the situation of civil society in Hungary, the review of existing Hungarian Administrative Sciences societies and the generalisations that can be drawn from them and the data from my survey of representatives of administrative sciences in the former socialist countries will also contribute to the formulation of well-founded recommendations at the end of my work.

1. Scientific associations in Europe and around the world

The uninterrupted development, the possibility of historical and professional development without caesurae, of some “Western” scientific organisations is enviable from the perspective of the

former socialist states. A good example of this continuity in the field of administrative sciences is the American Society for Administrative Sciences (ASPA); its activities, which began in the 1920s, have remained uninterrupted and have been able to play a role in the emergence of Administrative Sciences as a profession in the USA: in addition to its diverse but narrowly focused professional activities (e.g., accreditation activities, promoting the development of independent academic schools, ensuring the separation of professional groups within the organisation), it has also developed awards, scholarships, competitions and ethical standards (Pugh, 1989, 1). The example of the ASPA illustrates the organic development of the relationship with political science, history, economics and other fields, which is at the same time a process of organic detachment. In line with Anglo-Saxon features, a former chair of the organisation, Mary E. Guy (2003, 642–643), has also argued in one of her works that the greatest difficulty within the organisation has long been the coexistence and parallel presence of seemingly distant fields: the study of the more political science-nature government activity, and practical approaches of a legal nature, which are connected to the adjudication and interpretation of specific cases. Although we know what we mean by administrative sciences and what is meant by it in the USA, their centres of gravity are in different places; the important questions that we are asking today are the same ones that were raised there a good seventy years ago, namely to what extent should legal science be highlighted among the sub-specialties of administrative sciences within the framework of the association, and should we accept the expanding concept of the science of administrative law, even if the latter is highlighted? (Rixer, 2020, 55–58) These questions are among those to which the Association’s membership and its leaders will have to provide answers, recurrently and periodically.

In the field of evaluating scientific impact and effectiveness, beyond the now classic approaches to evaluation within science (e.g. number of citations), there is a growing emphasis in the international literature on all continents on approaches that emphasise the relationship between science and society, and ultimately promote the importance and measurement of direct impact on society. With some generalisation, this scientific shift seeks to “redress” the previous deficit in the science-society relationship through a meaningful dialogue (Fecher et al., 2021), where the value of individual research is not only confirmed by measures of impact on science, but also by the impact on practice and the wider social context, which also becomes measurable over time (Wolf et al., 2013, 104). This change of perspective also means that the practical forms of interaction, which provide the substantive framework for the presentation, communication and ultimately the practical incorporation of experiences and scientific findings, are becoming more important in the context of the dissemination and exploitation of scientific insights (Fecher et al., 2021, 3). The difference between the impact within scientific circles and the impact on society as a whole and on policy-making is reflected in a previous paper on the success of scientific cooperation established with the EU in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine (EaP countries): while successful cooperation in the scientific field was achieved and the results were visible in the respective scientific fields, the impact on policy-making and society as a whole was not evident in most cases (Toshkov et al., 2019, 3).

An intriguing question is the extent to which individuals working in the legal-administrative field who are substantively engaged with science (i.e. regularly engaged in teaching and producing academic writing for the public), who in principle may form the backbone of the membership of professional associations, are direct participants in public and political, and broadly speaking, legislative and law-making processes; in other words, to what extent they also directly influence the actual, substantive processes of the legal-administrative sphere. An interesting analogy is offered by a survey conducted amongst European political scientists in

2022, which found that, in addition to their academic work, only about a quarter of the representatives of the field were not involved in the direct shaping of political processes as political advisors, experts, etc. (Timmermans et al., 2022, 365). What would be the results of a similar survey to be conducted amongst the representatives of the wider administrative sciences is an intriguing question.

1.1. Functions of scientific societies (associations)

The question of what the functions of a scientific association might be was already raised decades ago. According to the German Schimank (1988, 69), there are at least four functions: firstly, a function of communication within a discipline or sub-discipline; secondly, a professional function, which supports individual career paths and also promotes the collective rights and interests of the representatives of the discipline; thirdly, a transfer function, through which the results of the representatives of science are communicated to the wider public; and a promotional function, through which the scientific community can influence political and scientific policy decisions.

Delicado has studied the specificity of scientific associations in Portugal, a European country similar to Hungary in size and development level (Delicado et al., 2014, 439). He distinguished five functions that they perform: communication within the community, research promotion, dissemination of results, professional advocacy and an advisory role. He concluded that most of these organisations have strengthened over time in their outward activities beyond their membership, and concluded that their internationalisation also spectacularly reflects their practices (ways of operating) in their relations with domestic political and other actors.

There are also examples in the literature of approaches that attempt to generalise by comparing the creation and development of specific European scientific associations: Boncourt (2017, 10) has obtained results that are useful for us by comparing the creation and developmental stages of eight scientific associations at European level, covering five social science fields (although law or management science were not included). He found that the reasons for the emergence of these organisations were often due to tensions between scientific paradigms, and in more than one case to differences between specific scientific institutions, or to geopolitical tensions. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of the organisations studied were not able to achieve fully the objectives they had set out when they were set up, and that their objectives, research topics and research agendas changed significantly along the way. He also points out that there are no such professional organisations covering the whole of Europe, and that their impact is mainly restricted to a limited geographical area. The latter statement is confirmed by the existence and activities of NISPACee in our region of Central and Eastern Europe. Boncourt refers to these aspects (results) as European characteristics (which of course does not exclude the possibility that they may be observed on other continents...). He also noted that most (Western European) scientific NGOs defined the scientific paradigms of their own field in many cases in opposition to or even with reference to (based on) the relevant approaches of American science (Boncourt, 2017, 15). He also recognised the “pattern” that the smaller the country in which the organisation (he uses the term European association) is established, the greater the likelihood that it can count on government financial support in its own country (Boncourt, 2017, 20).

2. Civil society, NGOs and (administrative) sciences in Hungary

It may be stated at the outset that, among the *main* arenas for pursuing administrative sciences, the NGO framework is only one of them, even though it is a field with increasing importance.

Thus, in addition to the Administrative (Law) Sciences Departments of higher education institutions, usually with no legal personality, and the public law and administrative law sciences research workshops set up alongside them; the think-tanks that also exist in Hungary; the committees, subcommittees and other entities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; and the academic workshops of certain journals not affiliated to the aforementioned organisations, the role of “classical” civil society associations is also becoming more appreciated.

The umbrella term “civil society organisation”, introduced by Act CLXXV of 2011 on the Freedom of Association, Non-profit Status and the Operation and Support of Civil Organisations, covers two essential forms: associations and foundations. Based on the literature in this field, the characteristics of a civil/non-profit organisation, going somewhat beyond legal regulation, are the existence of an organisation that is ideologically independent of government through self-government, the prohibition of distributing profits among its members, and the emphasis on volunteering and self-directed activity (Kaprinay, 2015, 100). In the context of the conceptual definition of civil society, we have to note that it is important to delineate it from the “similar” activities and organisational forms of state and economic actors, especially in Hungary, where the so-called parastate-pseudo civil society solutions traditionally predominate (Sárközy, 2004, 5), and the latter statement is especially true for the wider educational-research, if you like, scientific sphere; to mention only the latest developments, in the recent year(s), for example, public interest trusts with public functions, managing assets provided free of charge by the state, have appeared in the Hungarian higher education sector.

Looking back over the past three decades or so, the civic characteristics of the Western model have not been strengthened to the extent hoped for after the regime change, and the mobilisation techniques imported from the West have not been directly applicable (at least not with the same effectiveness or consequences) (Gagyí & Ivancheva, 2017, 282). Many authors continue to refer to civil societies in Hungary, and in post-socialist states in general, as “weak” (Wallace et al., 2012, 3). Weakness is of course to be understood in relation to the ideal situation (constellation) of a limited/self-constraining state, and, compared to the latter, a strong civil society, in the context of the practices of the “advanced West”, developed in the previous century (Ost, 1993, 453). One of the essential roles of civil society is to confront the will of the state with the values, aspirations and practices it represents through the publicity and articulation of its interests – and this can be an essential task for a professional or academic society of a civil nature, which focuses on administrative phenomena. As a phenomenon, civic engagement has a close logical and practical link with the “governance” *modus operandi* of the state that has become predominantly established in OECD countries and has come to the forefront in recent decades, where public affairs are dealt with by networks (networks of strategic partners), composed of public institutions, private entrepreneurs and NGOs. While the principle is universally accepted, the internal proportions of each factor may differ significantly due to national specificities (Jenei & Kuti, 2011, 16). Differences arise, among other things, from “the institutional capacities and mechanisms that operate in a given state to achieve national consensus, and the extent to which mechanisms of social corporatism that can strengthen and complement representative democracy are in place” (Jenei & Kuti, 2011, 16). There is no reason to assume that, in the case of explicitly academically-oriented institutes of civic education, professional associations, foundations, the centuries-old patterns of social development and the general characteristics of civil society do not or only to a limited extent prevail, so that these contexts should also be reflected when the aims, operational framework and possibilities of a given organisation become a subject of discussion.

2.1. Traditional public policy characteristics determining all NGOs in Hungary

In the modernisation of the Hungarian state – by the standards of Western reform trends – the imbalances between the state and the market have persisted for centuries (Jenei, 2010, 94); and the Hungarian model of public policy-making is still dominated by a top-down approach, where institutional mechanisms for the involvement of advocacy-integrative organisations often function only formally (Jenei, 2010, 95). Traditionally, paternalism, intolerance and the transformation of personal relationships into political ones have been characteristic features of Hungarian political culture (Kulcsár, 1987, 336), not least the existence of corruption, which is more prevalent than the regional average (Ernst & Young, 2010). Among the classic phenomena of governance failure are the theoretical difficulties in setting public policy objectives and the uncertainties over their measurability, including the systematic lack of ex ante and ex post impact assessments, and the influence exerted by powerful interest groups (Hajnal, 2008, 33). The traditional characteristics of civil society in Hungary are that it is fragile and reactive, because it is undercapitalised and typically lacks links towards some form of unity with state actors (Kövér, 2015). This is complemented, as we shall see, by the interruptions of scientific associations, the need to start again constantly and the lack of models, inherited from socialism and that still persist today.

2.2. Latest developments and their effect on NGOs in our area

Recent developments show, in a peculiar way, both the signs of a centralising state switching to crisis mode, which in some approaches is turning populist and necessarily growing, and the signs of a dynamic and continuous transformation, even expansion, of civil society. The latter changes are partly driven by the new contents (e.g. sharing economy) and new arenas (e.g. digital communities) of citizenship in its broadest sense (Rixer, 2019, 56), and partly by the nature of crises, where migration, war, epidemics and other pressures bring with them a range of civic activities that the state alone, with its existing resources, would not be able to conduct. It is also true for the region in general, but in the case of Hungary in particular, that it can be argued that the internal relations of the civil sphere and the relations between civil society and the state are highly politicised, and that there is also an inevitable identity dispute and intensive search for identity in this relationship (Rixer, 2017).

3. The Hungarian situation

For a long time, in the literature, there was a lack of studies including a substantive evaluation that specifically addressed the current Hungarian administrative sciences and their characteristics, and it follows that there was also a lack of surveys on the civilian-type of voluntary professional organisations operating in the field, which also formulated scientific objectives. This is why the April 2013 decision of the Subcommittee on Administrative Sciences of the Legal Sciences Committee of Department IX of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS), which called for the launch of a study to assess the state of Hungarian administrative sciences at that time, primarily by reviewing the literature on public administration and mapping the schools and scientific workshops that were active and also engaged in public administration research, was forward-looking and a response to the actual needs of the administrative sciences sector. This study has not yet been completed, at least not in the above-mentioned framework, but the issue has grown in importance and the first academic attempts to address it have been made (Rixer, 2020).

In this review of professional-civil organisations, which (also) aims at the scientific study of Hungarian public administration, we do not attempt to provide a complete catalogue of the entities that have previously operated in the field; the immediate aim of this chapter is to identify the main organisations that have existed in the recent past and are currently active and to draw general conclusions about them. It should be noted at the outset that, although it did not operate as a non-governmental organisation (not as a scientific association) during its existence between 1931 and 1944, the Magyary type Hungarian Institute of Public Administration still serves as an example for those who set up a workshop, professional association, educational institution or anything similar for the scientific conduct of public administration in Hungary: Zoltán Magyary's international embeddedness and wide-ranging knowledge, his substantial impact on the institutions of public administration and research related to them in Hungary, his influence on thinking about the state and public law, and his ability to motivate his colleagues and his wider environment, together make him an unavoidable example to this day (Lőrincz, 2010).

The beginnings of the “cultivation of public administration and administrative law in the framework of academic associations” in Hungarian-language science date back to the early 20th century: the Hungarian Lawyers' Association's Committee for Public Law and Public Administration, or the Transylvanian Museum Association's Law, Economics and Social Sciences Section, organised a series of very serious professional events and publications on contemporary problems of public administration.

Since the second half of the 1940s, the social life in the area under review has also largely died out, since “[the] socialist political socio-economic system did not really allow civil society to organise itself. In the decades of socialism, politics tended to prevent real, grassroots social self-organisation and to replace it with quasi-social organisations, rather than supporting it” (Sipos, 2008, 538). Among the highly controlled organisations of this period, which also promised to strengthen the scientific aspect, the Lawyers' Association should be highlighted, which at one time had an independent Committee for Public Administration. However, the term “scientific association” was also in use at this time, and in addition to the task of promoting dialogue within the profession in the narrow sense, the possibility and need to pass on information to other interested parties and external actors – as part of the scientific nature of the profession – also emerged (Györe, 1978).

Towards the end of the 1980s, signs of a sharpening began to emerge, and it was then that the pre-war public scientific scene was partly destroyed, some of the institutional knowledge and civic skills accumulated earlier were lost, and the personal continuities had largely disappeared – so that the organisation of scientific associations began relatively slowly and with considerable state support and even state participation. Despite the obvious strengthening of the legal transition, it was not driven by organised civil society, and the weakness of the civil sphere was not only in political, social, religious and other areas, but also in other, more or less autonomous areas, such as the characteristics, integrity, scientific self-image and degree of “dependence on power” of scientific communities. A good example of the above, i.e. of the close relationship of newly established NGOs with state actors, is the Foundation for the Development of Democratic Local Administrations, established in 1990 by the Ministry of the Interior, which also undertook to carry out and support scientific research and to disseminate the results to a professional audience, or the Hungarian Faculty of Public Administration, which was established in the form of an association at the same time.

Among the associations that still exist today, we should also mention the *Magyary Zoltán e-Administrative Sciences Association*, founded in 2005, the credo of which “(...) is the interdisciplinarity of e-government, therefore it tries to promote the electronization of public admin-

istration by involving experts from many disciplines” (Juhász, 2006, 21). It should be stressed that the association’s credo states that its aim is to “create synergy that transcends changes of government, ideological fault-lines and party political battles on an issue that determines the future of the country” (Juhász, 2006, 27). The take-off of e-government can be seen in the name and objectives of other associations in the field: also in 2005, the *Mobile Public Administration Information Association* (Belényesi, 2011, 56) was established at the *First International Conference on M-Government*, organised by the Department of Organisation of Public Administration and Urban Studies (KSZUT) of the Faculty of Administrative Sciences at Corvinus University of Budapest (BCE KIK). The profile of this scientific association is integrating the technological potential of mobile devices, namely mobile phones, into the workflow of public administration and public services, thus promoting step by step the development of a client-friendly public administration that is always open to all. For many years, the main product of the association was the operation of an English-language Internet portal (www.mgsg.org) that monitored and published international news on mobile communications services.

The *E-Government Foundation for the Modernisation of Public Administration*, which was also established at the BCE as a research backbone of the KSZUT, aims to study and implement the rapidly developing achievements of information technology in local and central administration, and to educate on the emerging methods (Belényesi, 2011, 56). *E-Government Studies*, a series of textbooks published by the Foundation, had a total of 36 volumes between 2003 and 2009.

Following the mention of the predecessors, the *Hungarian Lawyers’ Association* (MJE), which still operates today, should also be mentioned among the organisations presented. In the narrower field covered by this paper, the *MJE’s Public Law Section* and its *Scientific Committee* are to be mentioned. As the MJE’s founding document states, “The purpose of the Association, as defined in its Statutes, is to promote the general social interests of the legal profession, to develop Hungarian legal life, to cultivate jurisprudence and to promote professional and academic cooperation between lawyers working in different fields of legal life”.

The *Association of Administrative Judges* and its *Scientific Council*, established in 2008, are still active in the field of Administrative Sciences. It should be noted that the advocacy role, as one of the essential roles of the Association, was raised at the time of its foundation and in subsequent debates (Ságiné, 2008).

As we are moving forward in time after the regime change, the process of “civilising” the field of administrative sciences is accelerating: the *Hungarian Faculty of Public Administration* has meanwhile ceased to exist after an agony of about two decades, also with litigation, and the gap left in its wake was partly filled by the short-lived *Hungarian Association of Public Administration*, which operated between 2009 and 2012, and then by the *Hungarian Public Administration Society*. The latter, formally, still has county branches even today (2022). It is important that these organisations defined themselves primarily as professional advocacy groups, and, as part of this and in connection with this, they expressed and supported scientific endeavours.

The *Association for the Science of Administrative Sciences* was established in 2015 (in its external communication: Közigazgatástudományi Egyesület) “to create better communication and cooperation between people working in public administration, organised on a voluntary and democratic basis. As a result, they can provide each other with professional assistance in certain specific cases” (*sic!*) (www.civilek.hu, 2022). The association sees itself, as its founding document states, as an advocacy organisation and its early activity was mainly the organisation of communities. It should be noted that both the *Hungarian Association for Administrative Sciences* and the *Association for the Administrative Sciences* have been operating with low intensity, with no substantial activity in the 2020s.

Another key player in the field is the *Administrative Procedural Law Association* (KEJE), founded in 2018, which aims to research administrative law, more precisely administrative procedural law, and to support and develop the relevant law enforcement, providing professional forums for its members and interested parties. In 2021, the KEJE also announced and organised a National Administrative Procedural Law Case Solving Competition.

The above-mentioned associations constitute the *first large group* of scientific associations (foundations) active in the field of administrative sciences in Hungary and listed in the court register in 2022: this group includes those entities with a founding document or mission statement that explicitly states their intention to conduct scientific research into administrative sciences, administrative law or public law as a main objective or at least one of its essential objectives.

However, in addition to the above-mentioned organisations, it is essential to include, in the list of Hungarian administrative sciences research actors, those entities for which scientific work, scientific organisation, etc. is not the core element of their activities. This second group includes all those entities which, for various reasons and to varying degrees, have the intention of processing administrative phenomena in a scientific manner, but this is by no means their main profile. There is a link, but a more distant one, between the objectives of the organisation and the scientific pursuit of administrative sciences. These organisations consciously and regularly involve representatives of science and outstanding figures in administrative sciences in their work by organising conferences, other professional events, international exchanges and publications, while their core activities are not of a scientific nature. The *National Association of Notaries* or the *National Association of Local Governments* (TÖOSZ) are certainly examples of such organisations. These are professional advocacy organisations, organised in the form of associations, which operate in close symbiosis with public administration, and which also carry out scientific activities (even as a subsidiary function). The “inverse” of this category of organisations are scientific associations, the main profile of which is scientific, but their portfolio does not include public administration as a subject of study as an exclusive or primary activity. In Hungary, this could be the case, for example, of the *Political Science Association*, which previously had a public policy section.

In the field under review, the *Magyary Zoltán People’s High School Society*, founded on 1 June 1995, can be considered as a specific note of colour. The Society was founded with the aim of preserving and cultivating the intellectual legacy of Zoltán Magyary and, as part of this, to relaunch the people’s high school training that existed in the area between 1940 and 1944. For many years, most of the participants in the courses have been representatives of the municipalities of Tata and the surrounding area, members of NGOs, volunteers and interested citizens. Emphasis was placed on the aim of providing practical knowledge with a theoretical basis and a systematic form, often in the form of lectures by eminent representatives of the social sciences in Hungary. In any case, *scientific dissemination as such has a special place* among the possible orientations of scientific associations and other grass-roots organisations, in our case in the field of administrative sciences, in that it also provides information and knowledge on public administration and the organisation of the state in an exciting and interesting form, while at the same time presenting the results of contemporary science. The strengthening of the field is demonstrated by the emergence of new phenomena, not analysed in detail here, such as the expanding concept of *community science* (Gaálné, 2020). It is to be highlighted that the Society, within the framework of the public cultural agreement concluded with the City of Tata in 2016, is carrying out an increasingly diverse range of public cultural tasks, with the mission of actively participating in the cultural and community life of the region, including the presentation and dissemination of public, legal and historical knowledge.

In addition to the entities with a scientific profile, this “second” group also includes scientific associations dealing with certain other sub-disciplines of administrative sciences and border studies, in particular through scientific societies for regional studies, sociology, psychology and management sciences.

The above list of elements and the tasks assigned to each of them form the broader institutional and professional context against which the reasons for and the circumstances of the creation of the *ASA*, which became operational in 2021, and the objectives and roles of the organisation can be understood. The mission statement of the founding fathers of the *ASA* reads as follows: “Our primary objective (...) is to create a forum for administrative sciences, administrative law scholars, academics and leading practitioners from the ‘Visegrad countries’ in flourishing and meaningful cooperation. (...) This international cooperation has been joined, as it has developed and strengthened, by a growing number of research networks, such as the Information and Organization Centre for Research on the Public Finances and Tax Law in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which is affiliated to the Bialystok Law Faculty. (...) An important goal of the association is to ensure the high professional standing of the international journal of administrative sciences, which was completely reorganised with (and because of) the foundation of the *ASA*, titled: *Institutiones Administrationis – Journal of Administrative Sciences*” (www.kte.sze.hu, 2022). It has also been set out which sub-disciplines of administrative sciences the *ASA* wishes to focus on: “The aim of the Association is to promote and disseminate knowledge of the administrative sciences in Central and Eastern Europe, with particular emphasis on the public law, regulatory, governance, administrative, administrative law and public finance aspects of the functioning and organisation of public administration, and to promote cooperation between professionals in these fields” (www.adjukossze.hu, 2022).

On the basis of the facts set out in this chapter, the correlations of Hungarian administrative sciences studies that I have explored in my previous research and discussions with Hungarian researchers in the field, the following summary observations can be made about the existing (or former) scientific associations in the field:

- 1.) Almost without exception, these associations are founded by one or two “powerful people”.
- 2.) There is a lack of awareness of the need to train the next generation of leaders, and a lack of conscious succession planning. Newer generations tend to pursue their own scientific goals by setting up new professional organisations. In Hungary, on average, a new scientific association or foundation is created every 3 years in the scientific field under review.
- 3.) Around 70% of the organisations reviewed were established alongside university departments.
- 4.) The predominance of legal themes, including procedural law, is a characteristic feature; in the post-2000 period; procedural law and digitalisation are the two dominant keywords. We find that, for most organisations, the actual presence of these areas is over-represented, even compared to the roles assumed in the founding documents.
- 5.) The organisations under review are directly or indirectly funded by public (budget) resources, with a minimal presence of private donors or substantial financial contributions from members.
- 6.) There is an inner circle of NGOs “adjacent” also to administrative sciences research, the members of which consider this research as their main or one of their main objectives. The main entities belonging to this group are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Main administrative sciences research NGOs in Hungary as registered in 2022. (Own editing)

Name of civil organisation	English name	Date of establishment
Demokratikus Helyi Közigazgatás Fejlesztéséért Alapítvány	The Foundation for Democratic Local Public Administration	1990
E-Government Alapítvány	E-government Foundation	2002
Magyary Zoltán E-közigazgatástudományi Egyesület	Magyary ssociation of e-Administration Science	2005
Mobil-közigazgatási Információs Egyesület	Association for Information on M-Government	2005
Közigazgatási Bírák Egyesületének Tudományos Tanácsa	Association of Hungarian Administrative Judges, Scientific Council	2008
Magyar Közigazgatási Társaság	Hungarian Society for Public Administration	2011
Közigazgatás Tudományi Egyesület	Association for Administrative Sciences	2015
Közigazgatási Eljárásjogi Egyesület	Administrative Procedural Law Association	2018
Közép és Kelet-Európai Közigazgatástudományi Egyesület	Central and Eastern European Society for Administrative Sciences	2021
Magyar Jogász Egylet Közjogi Szakosztálya	Hungarian Lawyers Association, Section for Public Law	(1879, if predecessors are taken into account)

One of the aims of this paper is to formulate sound proposals for the ASA regarding its *further* roles in science and the tasks it can/should take on. In order to identify the possible and desirable functions of the ASA in the following chapters, firstly, in an earlier chapter, we reviewed the situation and typical contemporary functions of scientific associations at European level and in general; secondly, we formulated some characteristics of the Hungarian administrative sciences associations today, and thirdly, now focusing on administrative sciences, in the following chapter we will discuss the Central and Eastern European region (in a simplified manner, the former socialist countries in a situation comparable to that of Hungary); we will summarise the results of a survey of representatives of administrative sciences. These will enable me to formulate and record a sound position on the possible or desirable role of the ASA at the end of this paper.

4. Administrative sciences NGOs in the former socialist countries

In the *Introduction*, I pointed out that a good starting point for examining the possible aims of ASA could be to look at what is happening in other former socialist countries in the same field: do NGOs exist in the field of the discipline under review and, if so, what are their tasks? To answer this question, I sent out a series of questions in English to 142 researchers in 18 countries. I contacted practitioners in administrative sciences in the former socialist countries, ensuring a representation of sub-disciplines other than law. For the former socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, I did not distinguish whether and to what extent their perception of socialism at the time differed from that of the Soviet Union (the successor states of Yugoslavia and Albania were therefore included).

In the end, excluding Hungary, 41 substantive responses were received from 11 countries (these are Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) to the following questions:

- 1.) Are there any scientific societies in your country running within administrative sciences?
- 2.) If so, then are there any subdisciplines of administrative sciences that are overrepresented within the scientific priorities of those associations?
- 3.) To what extent are they independent of the state (financially, etc.)?
- 4.) What are the main functions fulfilled by them (towards their members and/or towards the wider public)?

Due to the uncertainty of the facts and data revealed (for example, it is difficult to verify whether the organisations cited by the respondents as examples existed or were actually operating at the time of the publication of the paper), I have presented mostly aggregated data; that is, I have not listed the organisations, their names and characteristics of individual countries. This type of presentation is also perfectly suited to drawing generalised conclusions, in order to capture, in a factual way, the main common features and the trends of change affecting a larger number of actors. Without going into all the details, what has emerged from the responses?

- 1.) Including Hungary, 6 out of 12 countries have been able to identify at least one genuine NGO (typically an association or foundation). Where there is no scientific entity organised as a classical NGO, there is a local academy of science or a committee organised by the ministry of education or science to carry out a similar science-organising role, bringing together the scientific community. It is noticeable that the further east we go, the fewer NGOs there are. Several respondents also gave unsolicited explanations, embedded in their answers, as to why they think there are no or few administrative sciences associations in their country: According to Wojciech Federczyk, a Polish researcher, scientific societies before '89 could only exist under state organisation, and the gap left by this monopoly has not been entirely filled by administrative sciences in the region to date.¹
- 2.) Researchers from all 12 countries (!) mentioned meetings of administrative sciences

¹ “Due to the policy pursued before 1989, scientific societies other than public ones could not develop their activities. At that time, scientific activity was “monopolised” by the state. As can be seen, this is a gap that has not been filled to date.” Wojciech Federczyk, 2022. 03 10. e-mail.

departments (typically: administrative law departments), the importance of their formal or informal contacts: there is a tendency to organise contacts and cooperation between administrative sciences departments (mostly in the form of meetings, joint research and joint textbooks). In fact, half of the respondents (!) also reported that these collaborations had started, but over time they stalled or became rare or irregular, and in two cases (Lithuania, Bulgaria) they even ceased altogether in recent years. It is interesting to note that this process has followed a similar pattern in Hungary: there was a boom in the 2000s in organised meetings of administrative law departments, but after 2010 these died out, at least initiatives to involve all departments. It is also worth mentioning here that most of the academic associations that have been set up in the region are institutionally linked to a particular administrative law department.

- 3.) Almost without exception, academic associations and civil society organisations are growing in the region as a whole from jurisprudence; the predominant approach and choice of subject matter is legal, even if the growing importance and prevalence of political science approaches is also noticeable.
- 4.) A characteristic feature – also due to the average size of the countries of the Central and Eastern European region – is the low number of people professionally involved in administrative law or administrative sciences in the broadest sense in a country.
- 5.) All civil society organisations organise conferences for their members and for the wider professional public, either in person or online; in general, the organisation of events and conferences is the typical form of activity. Joint projects are particularly rare, mentioned by only two respondents (and they referred to previous collaborations). It is worth mentioning that about 2/3 of all the NGOs mentioned publish one or more journals; this proportion reaches 4/5 (!) when we include newsletters and various electronic *working papers*.
- 6.) It is interesting to note that the history of the development of local administrative sciences studies has been covered in monographic work(s) in most places, *but that there is a general lack of works on the current state of the discipline*. In this respect, researchers in the region prefer to focus on the past rather than the present.
- 7.) There are also professional NGOs set up by members of staff in public administration, although their scientific activities are not of primary importance: in these cases, they tend to have a complementary profile, serving advocacy or other professional purposes. About one third of all the organisations surveyed fall into this category.
- 8.) There are also non-generalist professional/scientific NGOs dealing with only one essential element or aspect of Administrative Sciences, either related to a “specialised” field of Administrative Sciences (e.g. environment, consumer protection, especially in the case of the Czechs and Poles) or focusing their research on a cross-cutting, “functional” issue (e.g. the context of digitalisation).
- 9.) Among the tasks carried out or to be carried out by professional associations, the need for cooperation with the media and the need for a specific presence in social media, and more generally the importance of social contacts and the desire to communicate scientific results to a wider social public were also mentioned by several actors.
- 10.) The majority of respondents mentioned NISPACee (The Network of Institutes and Schools of Administrative Sciences in Central and Eastern Europe), an international administrative sciences organisation registered in Slovakia, as a model and/or a key non-profit actor in the region.

5. Conclusions and suggestions

This paper has reviewed the academic associations in the wider region in the field of administrative sciences and their various aspects of operation, with a view to drawing sound conclusions and making recommendations that could be of use to the ASA.

One of the fundamental characteristics of the sciences is the high degree of parallelism: researchers in the field, while sometimes exploring similar or identical topics, often explore different subject areas, sometimes overlapping and sometimes very divergent ideas. This diversity is certainly a necessary element for successful scientific research, but the persistent fragmentation of scientific communities, with a small number of researchers, and the fact that they are only able to engage in meaningful scientific discourse on a very narrow range of topics, also poses a real danger of isolation, both internal (towards their own members) and external (towards the frontiers, towards representatives of other disciplines, towards the wider international community and towards non-professional audiences). The creation of the ASA is a single, but decisive step towards avoiding this internal and external isolation. If we look for the underlying reasons for the creation of this entity, which also aspires to a regional role, then – among other factors – the emergence of international visibility as an independent aspect in various performance expectations and evaluations, and the requirement of multi-, inter- and even transdisciplinarity, which has become inescapable, are also pushing researchers in Hungary towards these forms of cooperation. The exciting question is, of course, whether and how ASA as a new arena will change the current logics, existing networks and “points of preference” of scientific collaboration (Evans et al., 2011, 381). We will be able to answer this question in a few years’ time. What is already relevant and worthy of consideration is the question of some of the new functions that could be proposed for ASA in the medium term.

The additional roles and tasks I propose for consideration are as follows:

- 1.) To take on the task of modernising science, in so far as the value of individual research is nowadays not only confirmed by the metrics of its direct impact on the discipline, either at individual or at community level, but also by the impact on practice and the wider social environment, which will also become measurable over time. Taking on a function that goes beyond the organisation of internal relations and the internal flow of information would be in line with contemporary trends in scientific development, and could be seen as a new and modern conception of the role. This function is obviously inseparable from the increased use of social media.
- 2.) As regards future directions, the question of whether further sub-disciplines of Administrative Sciences outside Administrative Sciences law will be involved is a kind of watershed, since the answer to this question also answers whether the ASA will define itself as a comprehensive platform of administrative law that consciously builds links between the sub-disciplines. The development of these links and a policy of conscious opening up seems to be justified to some extent.
- 3.) Although we know that the culture of debate is less developed in Hungary than further west, and that Hungarian administrative sciences cannot escape its effects, it is justified to organise events where the organisers consciously strive to ensure that *all relevant views on the issue are represented, and that there is an opportunity for reflection*. By practicing “active neutrality”, it is essential to avoid the phenomenon that has become

rampant in Hungarian social science, whereby “national and illiberal” approaches are heard at one event, while “globalist and liberal” approaches are heard at another – on the same topic – avoiding any kind of meaningful, professional dialogue.

- 4.) In the light of the Hungarian history, one of the most important tasks could be to ensure that the organisation remains viable after the founders’ departure or death, i.e. to develop and implement a *meaningful organisational development and youth development plan*, so that the next generation can take over the “baton” of the ASA in a few years or decades, without having to think about founding a new association.
- 5.) The accelerating decline in the number of Hungarian speakers, the rise of English language and the greater internationalisation of administrative sciences studies, as outlined above, are all factors that make *the protection and conscious development of the Hungarian legal and administrative language* an independent task. This can take many forms, from terminological debates to proposals for the renewal of the terminology.

All of the above proposals are valid positions with regard to possible future goals, but they also have in common that they cannot be achieved without conscious efforts, decisions by associations and persistent work: without commitment they will remain mere pipe dreams.

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