

**Public Administration Education in CEE Countries:**

**Institutionalization of a Discipline**

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### Institutionalization of a Discipline

**Abstract:** The array of public affairs programs has been growing in the past 27 years in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Traditionally, public administration programs concentrated primarily on legal and formal institutional aspects of governing, whereas public policy and management programs were entirely absent and remain relatively new. This article discusses the contents of the MPA/MPP programs in five CEE countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia) in order to identify major features in terms of the disciplinary and methodological character of these programs. Our ultimate question is to assess whether these programs reveal a clear, relatively robust public administration “identity,” and whether there is a convergence among programs in the region toward the so-called mainstream programs in the world.

Keywords: public administration education, public management education, public policy education, curricula, Central and Eastern Europe countries

#### 1. The state of public affairs education in Central and Eastern Europe – An overview

There is a relative abundance of literature on university programs in public administration (PA), public policy and/or public management (e.g. Reichard 1998; Allison 2006; Clark & Pal 2011; Clark et al. 2014; Wu et al 2009). Most of the studies concentrate on Anglo-American, English-speaking countries, frequently searching for convergence; i.e., that Masters in public affairs (public administration / policy / management, hereinafter: “MPA”) programs all around the World seem to follow a so-called mainstream MPA pattern, in fact set up mostly by leading US universities.

In most comparative publications about MPA programs, or more generally the study of public administration, the case of post-communist countries is omitted or addressed to a much smaller extent than may be proportionate, taking into account the size of territory (one-third of the world) and population (which is smaller but still relevant).<sup>1</sup> The ATLAS project database fits into this pattern. Out of the 119 programs listed in the database, compiled for a “worldwide” comparison, 58 programs are from the United States and 104 (87%) from Anglo-Saxon Countries. There are four programs from Europe, all of which are English-speaking ones, in a field where speaking the official (not English in these cases) language of the country is a legal requirement of practicing the profession (i.e., being a civil servant). One of these four is from a post-communist country; namely a Russian institution issuing 24 diplomas annually in a country with 683,000 central government employees (OECD 2009). In brief, we feel that in comparative studies the region is highly underrepresented. This special issue may be reasonably considered as a major effort to widen the

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<sup>1</sup> Books that at least address the issue are for instance: Kickert, 2008; Kickert & Stillman, 1999.

focus of the research in the field. We hope to be a part of this process in addressing the issue in five post-communist, Central and East European (CEE) countries.

Countries of this region share some similarities that stem from a shared history, most importantly the communist past with its enforced uniformity, especially regarding constitutional and governmental arrangement that are relevant for our study on one hand, and the research and higher education system on the other. Besides similarities, of course differences are present and those differences have been greatly increasing in the past quarter a century as countries were freed from Soviet rule. Meyer-Sahling (2009) argues that under the surface even the communist regimes were quite different, and especially after 1990 the diversity among these countries increased greatly. Indeed, the difference in terms of political, and more generally, societal arrangements is much larger between the Central-Asian post-Soviet countries and the Central East European ones, than between the latter and the West-European ones. This article addresses a special subset of CEE countries, namely those five that have been accepted as members of the European Union in 2004.

PA education in the region may be classified theoretically through a matrix based on four dimensions: (1) the concept and practice of public administration, and (2) the functioning of research and education, during both (3) the communist regime and (4) the transition period.

	Public Administration and governance	Research and higher education
Communist period (relatively stable)	Communist governance	Soviet academic system
Transition period (major changes)	Adjustment and change	Intensification

Below we provide a short overview of these four issues.

Communist governance system: The system is characterized by an extreme level of centralization. The government, in which the executive was most dominant, and in which the secret police plays a crucial role, is ruled by the Communist Party. All major segments of the society, including the planned economy, centrally controlled media and civil society are under the domination of this governmental system. The civil service is set up accordingly. Political loyalty outweighs professional quality in all human resource decisions (Verheijen & Kotchegura, 1999, pp. 1–4). Although there may have been variations, the totalitarian nature of this regime and its major attributes could be identified in all countries of the Soviet bloc.

Soviet academic system (Burns 1971; Matthews 2011): This was followed by most post-communist countries and had a major impact on PA education, especially in the first period of transition. Most importantly, research was concentrated in the Institutes of National Academies of Sciences. In case of Public Administration, it was the Academies' Institutes for State and Legal Studies that carried out research. Universities were usually responsible solely for teaching and hardly any research activities were carried out within these institutions or even expected from instructors.

In most countries in the system, the social sciences (and political science in particular) were not an officially accepted discipline. Economics was typically discussed in a Marxist theoretical frame, very different from mainstream neo-classical economics. Law and legal science, however, were widely accepted and institutionalized both in terms of research at Academic institutes and education at universities. This may be a key reason why public administration during the Soviet period was almost

purely discussed within legal frames. However, within the frame of a totalitarian regime, law is considered as a generalized order, serving purely the purpose of administrative efficiency. Specifically, there is no need to give individual orders in each individual case, rather the “chief” may command subordinate units to do always X in all Y situations. In cases where the rule might contradict the will of the Party, it would be either changed or simply applied inconsistently across cases.

During the communist regime, scholars had little access to mainstream Western theories, or to participate in international scholarly communication. This could be an additional reason why the dominantly legal approach prevailed, since before the 1940's, before the appearance of the developed welfare state with its service functions, the legal approach was quite general in Europe. In the Dutch civil service, for instance the proportion of lawyers was 56% in 1947, and in Norway was over 70% (Bekke & Meer, 2000). Whereas the emphasis on legal knowledge gradually diminished in Western Europe civil service structures, this happened only to a limited extent the academic and educational institutions of CEE countries.

There was a similar problem of rigidity in regards to the method of teaching and instruction at universities in these regimes. The classical way of instruction, the so called “talk and chalk” method, was highly typical at universities. Interactive training techniques were absent, and methods that require individual problem-solving or team work were practically unknown and not appreciated.

Adjustment and change: Changes of government structure and functioning after 1990 were enormous in the region. The first stage of transition generally aimed at building a democratic political system and the rule of law, with all its difficulties theoretically captured perhaps best by Claus Offe's term of double or triple transition (Offe & Adler, 1991): creating a market economy based on private ownership instead of planned economy; a democratic political system in place of a totalitarian regime, and in several cases, creating a previously non-existing independent state and government apparatus. This has been a major challenge for these countries that typically failed to build stable democratic institutions (Elster Offe, & Preuss, 1998).

Our concern here is about public administration. In that regard the changes have also been enormous. Most of the methods administrators used during the communist regime were now obviously inappropriate. Relying on direct power and enforcement without expressed legal empowerment was not possible. Law greatly limited possible actions of the executive and the administration became significantly less effective carrying out its tasks, or even completely jeopardized in several fields (Gajduschek, 2015, pp. 162–164).

This uncertainty was increased also by the question of which administrative model should be followed. Some argued that first a bureaucratic administrative system needed to be created (Drechsler, 2005; Verheijen & Dimitrova, 1996). Due to the assistance of various international organizations, or in case of IMF, WB and OECD actual pressure and some coercion (Stiglitz, 2002), the NPM model of administration was preferred, even though, the Anglo-Saxon origins of this approach was viewed sceptically in West-European countries (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011) CEE countries without a clear PA identity and an administrative tradition to rely upon, were much more vulnerable to the foreign pressure, which led in some cases to devastating outcomes (Drechsler 2005).

Though the international pressure has declined, it is still a question of which Western model should be followed, given that in fact there are varieties of approaches. Several authors emphasize the differences of administrative systems even within Europe. For instance, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) first differentiate between the Anglo-Saxon “public interest” and the European-Continental Rechtsstaat (or legalistic) model. The latter may be divided into Napoleonic and the Weberian models as two major subgroups (p. 62). These differences might be reflected also in MPA education. Indeed, Hajnal (2003) identified three clusters of MPA education, of which one is the Corporate cluster that may be identified as a kind of “mainstream” model. The so-called Public cluster, characterized by the dominance of social sciences, especially political science, was especially characteristic in Europe among those countries that followed the French model. MPA programs were dominated by legal discipline in those countries that followed the German model.

Intensification: The fall of communism has radically changed the institutional arrangement of research and higher education. Soon it became a general expectation that universities carry out research, though in most countries institutes of the Academies have also survived. Due to the Bologna process, most academic programs were established on three levels: BA, MA and Ph.D. (Marčetić et al., 2013). Political barriers preventing international cooperation disappeared, and direct exposure to cutting edge scholarship became available, though language and professional-cultural differences, as well as limited resources still could cause difficulties and prevent most researchers in the region from being effective members of the international academic community.

In terms of demand for PA education, the enormous changes in the structure and functioning of PA generated uncertainty the traditional (both communist and pre-communist) legalistic nature of administration drive the direction for the training. Should the needs of a welfare state with various professional and organizational-management skills, with different, less authoritative, more service oriented attitudes be the goal? Or should NPM be the foundation for training and teaching? Should education purely react on demand or should it attempt proactively influence practice? These questions remain unresolved.

In the CEE countries, MPA programs (or in most countries as a university degree generally) occurred only arose after the fall of communism. Previously, high level generalist positions were typically filled in by persons holding LL.M or sometimes an economics degree. In most countries, the early MPA programs concentrated on legal issues, focusing on public law, primarily administrative and financial law (Staroňová Gajdusček 2013; Hajnal 2003; Koprić 2013; Marčetić et al. 2013).

In 1994, the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPAcee) was formed with significant foreign financial and organizational assistance. Unlike several other similar initiatives, NISPAcee has consolidated its activities and has been able to function after the reduction or elimination of financial assistance (though several organizations still support NISPAcee through donations). NISPAcee has been working actively in the field: it plays an important role in disseminating information on EAPAA accreditation and the related requirements, runs various research and technical assistance projects related to PA education, research addressing major issues in PA from the specific perspective of CEE (among others works that may be used as course manuals, or offering region-specific case-studies, or providing an overview of the state of MPA programs, see Jenei Mike 2008 ), as well as a scholarly journal (NISPAcee Journal of Public

Administration and Policy) and the practically oriented NISPAcee newsletter. Furthermore, annual NISPAcee conferences offer an opportunity for scholars and educators to meet with their colleagues from the region and from the West and share their teaching experience as well as research results. The organization undoubtedly has a relevant, though typically indirect impact, on most MPA programs in the region, especially on those that have an international interest.

Several international assistance projects financed by Western countries have taken place in the region in the field of PA training and education, especially during the first decade of transition. These programs have greatly influenced the content and style of education and training. An overview and assessment regarding PA training assistance programs is provided by Gajduscek & Hajnal (2003). They find that the results of these projects are highly ambiguous; the positive examples are accompanied by a large number of projects without detectable outcomes and in some cases even a negative impact. However, these programs have a significant spill-over effect of generating a need for and disseminating skills in interactive teaching techniques.

This brief review demonstrates the specific context and challenges of MPA education in the post-Soviet space. Not only did these countries have to deal with the “triple transition”, but in the PA field they had to grapple with a choice among multiple models offered by a host of international actors (including governments, international organizations, and their partner professional associations). The legacies of this turbulent backdrop remain alive in all of these countries. As an illustration, we now turn our comparative analysis of MPA programs in our five CEE countries.

## 2. Research questions and hypotheses

Our overall research question is whether MPA programs in the CEE are identical or at least highly similar to those considered as mainstream, US-based university programs? Is there a convergence in that regard?

Some analysts (Fritzen 2008), and (Clark & Pal 2015) suggest that a good deal of international consensus exists on competency standards and the core curricular content for Master’s level public affairs programs. Implicitly, this may refer to those typical academic sources of PA education in the US that may be traced back to Wilson’s classic (Wilson 1887), namely organization theory and management, on one hand, and political science, on the other (Henry 1990; Allison, 2006), with an increasing presence of neoclassical economics and various analytical skills (Cleary 1990; Wu & He 2009). However, the available literature on PA education in CEE typically emphasizes the role of legal approaches, even if that may be gradually declining in most countries in the region. In terms of style, given the traditions in the region, we expect that the education will be more theoretical in focus and less interactive.

Accordingly, we pose two main hypotheses, with several sub-hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1: MPA programs in CEE, or at least a large proportion of them, do not fit to the so-called mainstream model.**

**Sub-Hypothesis 1a:** In terms of content, there are significantly more legal subjects than in a mainstream PA programs, probably at the expense of analytical and methodological subjects.

**Sub-Hypothesis 1b:** In terms of focus and style, we expect more theoretically oriented, rather than practice-oriented, approaches developing skills. In accordance with that focus, we expect more lecturing and less interactive methods, less reliance on individual and group work in dealing with cases, or other instructional techniques that bring education closer to real-life.

**Hypothesis 2:** PA programs in CEE do not express a clear, consistent, and widely accepted PA identity.

PA education may tell a lot about identity of the field as it is perceived by scholars and practitioners. This is a main reason to research this field as emphasized by Clark and Pal and as it found by a systematic analysis of disciplinary orientation by Hajnal (2003). The style and especially the content of pedagogy influences PA practice, whereas the education should reflect the needs of PA practice. Ideally, there is a general match and a mutual fertilization between education and practice. In this regard, our hypothesis is that this is not the case in the CEE region.

**Sub-Hypothesis 2a:** There is a lack of a relatively clear and widely shared PA identity in CEE.

**Sub-Hypothesis 2b:** The curricula and , disciplinary character of the programs are not at all crystallized; rather they depend on accidental factors, external to PA identity.

**Sub-Hypothesis 2c:** In most cases there is a tension between the need of PA practice and PA education, both of which are quite uncertain about the ideal-type of PA. Most typically there is a tension between non-legal character of some of the programs (typically closer to the Anglo-Saxon model) and the governance reality that requires legal expertise for most of the public administration positions.

### 3. Methodology

The article is based on our own research of public administration, public policy and public management programs on the Master's level and equivalents in Central Europe. There are various possible definitions of these programs, such as that of Verheijen-Connaughton (1999: 415): "public administration program is defined as an academic degree program of at least one year, the primary focus of which is governance". Our analysis is mainly based on original data collection from five countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The basic unit of our analysis is the individual program offered. More importantly, our analysis regards a program as one item, irrespective of the language offered (thus English mutation of the same program was counted as one program), form offered (program for external and internal students was counted as one program) or number of students studying there, although there are only less than ten students in some, whereas several hundred in some other programs. The reader has to keep this in mind when, for instance, we review the mean weight of various disciplinary subjects in curricula. That refers to the programs and not to the number of students instructed in various courses. It is also important to emphasize that the programs analysed here are delivered in national languages, as there are only a few solely English language programs in the region, most of them are quite atypical. Furthermore, it is a general expectation of civil servants worldwide to speak and operate in the official national language, which is not English in any of the five countries. Nevertheless, it has to be noted, that because European educational institutions are engaged in

increasing cooperation, many programs are offered also in English. These were not counted as separate programs. Despite these limitations, we will refer to the wider landscape of public administration education, providing a historical overview and reference to existing Bachelor programs and other programs related to governance, whenever this seems necessary for a better understanding of the state of the art in this field.

Data are derived from analysis of the formal governmental databases<sup>2</sup> on accredited academic programs<sup>3</sup> in the respective country for the academic year 2014/2015. On the basis of information from the accreditation database, we have created an original database of MPA programs (see Table 1 and Appendix for details).

One of the key peculiarities of the CEE region is that the meaning of public administration as an academic field of study is especially ambiguous and varying (see also Hajnal 2003). This affects the scope of entire study and therefore we have decided to include in our initial search in accreditation documents any field of study that entails any combination of “public”, “policy”, “administration” or “management”. We refer to this umbrella concept, following the general usage in the region, as “public administration” in this article. “Master of Public Administration” or MPA, thus include all types of degrees unless we specifically indicate that the statement refers solely on the Public Administration. Each and every MPA program in our country sample is included in this analysis. At the same time, we excluded programs addressing specific fields of public policy, like public health, education administration, social work, etc. in this initial selection.

More specifically, our data-gathering consisted of:

- a) A study of the web pages of the relevant higher education institution delivering the accredited program, but also institutions delivering MPA programs without formal accreditation,<sup>4</sup> in order to obtain basic information about the curricula structure and contents of the program, as well as on the characteristics of instructors and possibly some other relevant issues. In reviewing their programs, we excluded those which comprised only very few specific courses related to public administration, public management or public policy and courses related to a different field, such as social work, security studies and or general management (grey colour in appendix).
- b) Review of information derived from expert surveys sent to the selected educational institutions. In an effort to expand the database on the nature of education, a survey was sent in June 2015 to the principal representatives of MPA programs in the five countries (thus we sent out 32 surveys and received 26 back<sup>5</sup>). Thus, the expert survey served not only

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<sup>2</sup> Formal accreditation databases can be accessed at: Czech republic - <https://aspvs.isacc.msmt.cz/>, Estonia - [ekka.archimedes.ee](http://www.oktatas.hu/felsooktatas/felsooktatasi_intezmenyek/allamilag_elismert_felsookt_int), Hungary - [http://www.oktatas.hu/felsooktatas/felsooktatasi\\_intezmenyek/allamilag\\_elismert\\_felsookt\\_int](http://www.oktatas.hu/felsooktatas/felsooktatasi_intezmenyek/allamilag_elismert_felsookt_int), Slovakia -

<http://ciselniky.portalvs.sk/classifier/show/extend/4>, Slovenia - <http://www.nakvis.si/en-GB/Content/Details/8>

<sup>3</sup> CEE countries generally use accreditation as a tool to select institutions for public grants/finance. In other words, without governmental accreditation the higher educational institution is not eligible for public funding and/or they are not eligible to issue official master degree certificate. The accreditation body can be completely located with the regulator (Ministry of Education), be semi-independent or outsourced. For more discussion on accreditation bodies see Nemec (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Non accredited universities are typically private universities.

<sup>5</sup> Although, we did not have expert surveys filled by all institutions, we managed to obtain curricula and syllabus information of the remaining 8 programs, as well as information on faculty staff via informative web pages or informal personal contacts.

as a means for information gathering, but also for the validation of the data, since it was the program managers or heads who self-assessed their respective programs in terms of study plans, faculty composition and teaching style.

- c) The authors also relied on their relatively intensive personal network in the field, as major universities and instructors of these universities usually know each other and exchange information via formal (NISPAcee) and informal channels.

On this basis, a detailed set of questions (an institutional datasheet) was created for each MPA program we could identify according to the selection criteria described above. The data sheet contained five sections and altogether about 65 questions, and was devised to answer the following major questions:

- *Institutional structure.* How many Master programs in public policy, public administration and public management are delivered (accredited) in the selected countries and what institutional profile does the institution offering the program have? When, where and how were the programs created? (E.g., new program or one based on a previous one, if so, what type; i.e., law, economics, etc.) What is the profile of the faculty? Were external advisors, foreigners involved?
- *Curriculum design.* What is the subject matter emphasis (i.e., the relative weight of law, economics/finance, political science, social sciences, analytical skill, others)? We measure the proportion of courses within each category. Some of the above mentioned issues are also relevant in this regard. (E.g. foreign advisors involved)
- *Instructors.* What is their professional background, in which discipline have they obtained their PhD.s? Do the instructors have practical experience in PA or any practical experience outside of the academia? Have they studied or worked abroad, and if yes, where? Are there guest lecturers?
- *Style and orientation.* What are the dominant teaching approaches? What types of methods (e.g. case studies, group work, etc.) are applied? What is the role of internship, theses, capstones or other ancillary program characteristics?

## 4. Findings

### State of the Art – Public Administration education and its characteristics

MPA programs are delivered by many study branches (political science, economics, law, sociology) and can be both independent programs taught under Faculties of Social Sciences, Faculties of Economics, Faculties of Law and/or within newly created and more specialized Faculties of Public Administration, Public Policy or Governance, as well as specializations which usually constitute part of general Economics, Social Science, Political Science or Law programs. Most of these programs bear various labels, such as public economics and/or are connected with other subfields such as social policy, economic policy and/or regional development (see Table 1). Recently, new MPA programs, faculties and schools of higher education are being created as private institutions, particularly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (see below), which do not necessarily have the accreditation of the respective Ministry in the country for teaching Master level programs. Nevertheless, they do offer the MPA program under the English label of “MPA - Master of Public Administration”, though they rarely provide instruction in English. In fact, it is mostly the public

institutions that provide their MPA programs also in English since being a part of the European Union increases the mobility of the students (and teachers) within EU countries, thanks to Bologna agreements<sup>6</sup> and various mobility programs, most of all Erasmus, that allows and encourages students to study a semester abroad, with those courses accepted at their 'home' university.

Beside national accreditation by a formal governmental body, in each of the five countries there is at least one institution that has also achieved international accreditation. Normally, the institutions aspire to receive the accreditation of the European Association of the Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA), which issued its first accreditation criteria in September 2006. One of the first institutions to acquire such accreditation was University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica (Slovakia) in 2005, followed by Tallinn University (Estonia) and Ljubljana University Faculty of Administration (Slovenia) in 2008, Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia) in 2009, Corvinus University (Budapest, Hungary) in 2012 and Masaryk University Brno (Czech Republic) in 2014. Besides these, private universities which do not have formal national accreditation have also tried to get accreditation either from partner institution, as is the case of the Higher Financial and Administrative School in the Czech Republic (accreditation from London South Bank University – LSBU - in United Kingdom) and two from the International Association of Distance Learning (IADL). The internationally well-known and accepted<sup>7</sup> Central European University in Budapest has acquired its international accreditation from Middle States Commission on Higher Education, USA. The list of formally accredited programs that are related to the MPA programs are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Program types based on formal accreditation by respective countries (academic year 2014/15)**

Study program (master level only)	Czech republic	Hungary	Slovakia	Estonia	Slovenia
Public administration	1	1	3	2	1
Public administration and safety studies	2	0	1	0	0
Public policy	0	0	1	0	0
Government and administration	0	0	0	1	0
Public policy and administration/public administration and policy	1	0	2	0	0
Public Policy and Management	0	1	0	0	0
Public Policy and Human Resources	1	0	0	0	0
Economics: Economic Policy and administration, Public Economics, Economics of Public Services	5	0	2	0	0
Economics: Public administration and regional development	2	0	2	0	0
Management: Management and economics in public sector	2	0	0	0	1
Sociology: Public and social policy	1	0	0	0	0
Social policy and social work	1	0	0	0	0
Political Sciences: policy analysis and public administration	0	0	0	0	1
European (studies and) public administration	1	0	1	1	0

<sup>6</sup> Agreements within EU focusing on bridging national university education systems and institutions and trying to allow students to migrate during studies.

<sup>7</sup> CEU was ranked 29th of 2015 QS World university ranking in the „Politics and International Studies“ category, which includes MPAs.

Public administration in agriculture and landscape/regional development	1	0	1	0	0
Public health / Economics of health	2	0	5	n/a	1
<b>TOTAL ACCREDITED PROGRAMS</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
MPA program (not accredited by formal body of the country)	2	0	2	0	0
MPP program (not accredited by formal body of the country)	0	1	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL MPA programs</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL MPA programs analysed (after excluding non-related programs)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Authors' compilation, based on accreditation databases of respective Ministries

Note: All programs referring to „public“, „administration“ and/or „policy“ in accreditation documents. Not all of them are included for further in-depth analysis – excluded ones (or some of them) are marked in grey – see discussion above.

There is a peculiarity linked to the understanding and use of the label “public administration” as a field of study, which in countries with a heritage of continental public law is linked to administrative law (German tradition), rather than the Anglo-Saxon understanding of MPA programs (Bouckaert 2008: 14, Lynn 2008: 251-252). Originally, it was the law faculties of these countries that offered specific MPA (as well as Bachelor) programs, with law faculties staff filling the posts and teaching subjects such as public policy, etc. Naturally, these programs were legalistic in nature and significantly different from the interdisciplinary, increasingly management-oriented programs developed in the Anglo-Saxon world. Many of the programs that bore this label were in fact administrative law or security studies (particularly in the Czech Republic). For example, in Hungary the pre-2010 years witnessed establishment of “public administration” programs at law faculties, largely based on (public) law and related legal courses with a legalistic approach (Hajnal 2015). The proportion of legal subjects in their curricula was about 60-70% (Hajnal 2015). For example, a course on Budgeting might consist of studying the Fiscal Administration Act and related Decrees, while Human Resource Management might focus on civil service laws. A very similar situation also existed in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Thus, the newly emerging MPA programs in economic and social science faculties arose with various other labels than pure “public administration,” as they became a competitive alternative to the Law faculties which traditionally had supplied government administration with generalists. Estonia was an exception from the very beginning, with far less emphasis given on law.

Nevertheless, we can observe an interesting shift in this regard – a decline of “pure” MPA programs on the Master level anchored in law faculties in most countries. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Slovenia developed PA as an academic discipline during the socialist period, mostly at law faculties within the discipline of administrative law (Marčetič et al 2013, Hajnal 2015). Law-anchored PA programs remained only as a specialization within the law faculties, not as independent MPA accredited programs. New “pure” public administration programs were established only towards the end of 2000s within faculties of social sciences, not faculties of law. In the Czech Republic, independent public administration programs within law faculties today can be found only on Bachelor level, with the only exception being the state institution of the Police Academy and the private CEVRO Institute Praha. Since the Police Academy specializes in safety studies and Bachelor programs are not in our focus, they were excluded from the final database of MPA programs. Hungary followed a different

path with the establishment of a state-based National University of Public Service in 2012. The National University of Public Service, as its predecessor, provides legalistic education.

When looking at institutions that offer MPA programs and how these programs were formed, we can observe diversity as well: public institutions, state institutions (functioning as part of the government rather than part of the education system) and private institutions, as shown in Table 2. Here we looked at institutions rather than programs (thus one institution can offer more than one program). In four cases, MPA programs were established by transforming the old programs, already at the beginning of the 1990s, immediately after the fall of communism; however, only in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In all other cases, MPA programs are new, either created at existing faculties, by establishing a new faculty (of social sciences), or by creating an entirely new institution – public, state or private. In all of the cases, where old programs were transformed into new ones, they are located in economic faculties - in the Czech Republic (Praha, Brno, Ostrava) and Slovakia (Banská Bystrica). This can be explained by the fact that even under communism, economic faculties were teaching sub-disciplines related to “Economics of non-producing services” of economy, including public administration, public utilities and human services (schools, hospitals). It was exactly these sub-disciplines that were later transformed into some of the first MPA programs. In these cases, the transformation happened internally without any financial or expert assistance from abroad, with informal peer involvement as in case of Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic and Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. In 30% of the cases, MPA programs were created as new disciplines (with various labels as seen in Table 1) in existing faculties of public universities in all of the countries.

**Table 2: Institutionalization of MPA programs in CEE**

	Private Institution (new)	State Institution (transformation)	Public Institution			Total number of Institutions offering MPA programs
			New faculty (and program)	new program	program transformation	
<b>Czech republic</b>	5	X	1 (offering 2 programs)	4	3	<b>13</b>
<b>Hungary</b>	1	1	X	1	X	<b>3</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	4	X	3 (one offering 2 programs)	2	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	X	X	1	1	X	<b>2</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	X	X	1 (offering 2 programs)	1	X	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>

Source: Authors’ compilation calculated from institutional datasheets (see Methodology)

Note: This table focuses on institutions rather than programs (thus one institution can offer several programs).

In terms of foreign influence in the institutionalization of MPA programs, we looked at the following indicators: foreign financial assistance, foreign expert assistance, network utilization (NISPA/NASPA) and foreign education of the core faculty members. Only five institutions have all four indicators fulfilled (see Table 3): Corvinus University Budapest in Hungary 1992, Charles University in the Czech Republic 1993, and a joint program between Talinn University and Talinn University of Technology in

Estonia in 1994<sup>8</sup> founded as first MPA programs in the region, and Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia in 2005, and Central European University in Hungary in 2006. The first four programs are at public universities, the latter is a private university. The Central European University (CEU) has a completely different status since it is an international rather than national university, only located in Budapest, Hungary, and in our analysis we will treat it separately.<sup>9</sup> All five programs were designed based on experience of foreign universities teaching PA. The most solid courses (core courses) were developed by a large network of scholars from various universities in the US, UK, the Netherlands, Canada in cooperation with local instructors, as part of larger projects to establish a Public Policy program providing a new approach to public affairs and took several years to accomplish. Financial assistance from various donors (e.g., Soros Foundation, Ford Foundation, Matra) was also utilized. Thus, with these programs, we can say that they became model MPA programs with spill over effects for the institutionalization of the next wave of MPA programs.

**Table 3: Foreign Influence on Creation of MPA Programs**

	Corvinus U., Hungary	Charles U, Czech republic	Talinn U. of Technology, Estonia	Comenius U., Slovakia	Central European University
<b>Institutionalization of the program</b>	1992	1993	1994	2005	2006
<b>Foreign Financial assistance</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes
<b>NISPAcee/NASPA Network utilization</b>	yes	Yes	yes	Yes	yes
<b>Core courses developed with foreign experts</b>	Yes USA, the Netherlands	Yes USA	Yes USA	Yes USA, Canada the Netherlands	Yes USA
<b>Core staff educated abroad (outside of CEE countries)</b>	1 (6)	2 (7)	3 (14)	2 (5)	10 (10)

Source: Authors compilation from expert surveys

The second wave came only in the 2000s, when new institutions (both public and private) and new programs emerged in all five countries. It is this period that new social sciences faculties emerge, either from former Schools of Public Administration (Slovakia, Slovenia), or simply to fill the gap of missing social science faculties, such as Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences (Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia), Faculty of Public Policies (Opava University, the Czech republic), Faculty of Social Sciences (Trnava University, Slovakia). The only exception is the creation of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Talinn University, which was already created in 1993. In Slovakia and Slovenia two new faculties of Public Administration emerged from former Schools of Public Administration that existed already during socialist era and their orientation was predominantly legal. In Slovakia, the School of Public Administration within the law faculty in Šafarik University

<sup>8</sup> The joint curriculum was started because both universities lacked people with PA background, and they simply joined forces. The Faculty of Social Sciences was created only a year before (1993) at Talinn University. By the end of the 1990s they were ready to have separate curricula. See more in Randma-Liv et al (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Central European University was founded after the fall of communism in CEE in 1991 by philanthropist George Soros as a graduate institution of advanced research and teaching on the tradition of best American Universities. With approximately 1,400 students and 370 faculty members from more than 130 countries, CEU is one of the leading international universities in the world, and also the most highly ranked in the region as we indicated earlier. Currently, the MPP program is undergoing reconstruction with the creation of the School of Public Policy as of 2015. See <https://www.ceu.edu/>.

Košice was transformed into a new Faculty of Public Administration (based on social sciences rather than law) in 1998, with the assistance of German partners. In Slovenia, the School officially became the Faculty of Administration at Ljubljana University in 2003 (Marčetič et al 2013). Yet another MPA program was created in 2005 within a different Faculty of Social Sciences at Ljubljana University. Both programs were created internally, without any foreign assistance, and are officially anchored in political science, probably due to the strong tradition of political science in the country as opposed to other CEE countries (see Klingemann, Kulesza and Legutke 2002, Fink-Hafner 2009, Eisfeld and Pal 2010). Many of the newly created social sciences based faculties offer several MPA programs rather than one, for example Tallinn University Estonia, Šafarik University Košice Slovakia, Opava University the Czech republic. Also, the transformed programs at economic faculties offer several types of MPA programs; however, recently EAPAA advised against multiple programs and Masaryk University ceased offering several MPA programs.

There was a boom of private MPA programs towards the end of 2000s and the beginning of 2010s, but only in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Although private higher education institutions exist in Estonia, Hungary, and Slovenia, they do not offer any equivalents of MPA programs. Local private institutions were founded by professionals in law and/or economics (rather than academicians) such as CEVRO Institute Praha, Institute Iuris et Iurisprudentiae, Metropolitan University in the Czech Republic, and the Institute of Law and Professional Education in Slovakia, but also as a branch of a foreign university in the country, such as the Higher Financial and Law School in Prague (branch of LSBU). The quality of private universities is often a focus of debate, and they can differ dramatically among themselves<sup>10</sup>. In addition, even formal accreditation may not guarantee a certain level of quality, because, as Nemeč (2006) warns, in over-politicized societies with high risk of corruption, the state readily fails. In such environment, there is a risk of what he calls “sharks” entering “the university education market”, taking public grants and not delivering the service.

Out of five countries under examination, only one offers an MPA program by a state institution – Hungary. In 2012, by a new Law, the National University of Public Service (NUPS) was established, by integrating the National Military Academy, the National Police Academy and the former Faculty of Public Administration from Corvinus University of Budapest. The new law removed NUPS from the institutional framework of regular higher education institutions and put it directly under the supervisory regime of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, which as Hajnal (2015) notes, does not have to go through the regular process of institutional accreditation performed by the independent higher education accreditation body. At the same time, the law practically abolished the right of any other university to issue the MPA degree, which were previously offered by most universities’ Law Faculties, and so the state institution became a monopoly for the education of civil servants. Hajnal (2015) rightly notes that the idea of merging civilian and military/police education into a single higher education institution with monopoly rights of civil service education was highly unusual from an international perspective. However, it fits the institutional reforms of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán<sup>11</sup> to create a “strong state” with almost unlimited control over various sectors. The other countries not only do not have such an institution

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<sup>10</sup> It must be noted, that perhaps somewhat differently from most Western countries where the most excellent universities are private ones, in the region private universities typically (though there are exceptions) are not very prestigious ones, and some are even considered nothing more than Diploma-printing institutions.

<sup>11</sup> Viktor Orbán came to power in 2010 gaining constitutional majority in the Parliament, after which many changes occurred in all spheres of social life, including the change of Constitution.

for MPA program, but instead, rely on the market of educational institutions in the country to provide for various types of education – general or specialized - for civil servants.

In terms of number of students graduating from MPA programs, we can see three clusters: 0-25 students, 25-60 students and 100+ students.

- If only one department is involved in teaching MPA program, the number of students in the graduating class tends to be up to and around 20 students. The usual faculty complement is around six or seven. This is the case of the most prestigious Universities, such as Charles University, Corvinus University, Talinn University of Technology, Ljubana University, Faculty of Social Sciences, etc.
- If several departments, or a whole faculty, is involved in program(s) or several tracks within the program, the number of graduating students is about 30-50. These are mostly economic faculty based programs (transformed programs), but also newly established faculties of public administration or social sciences, but also private institutions which are larger and have also larger core faculty staff between 15-20.
- Finally, there are large programs of more than 100 graduates, where the entire higher educational institution is involved in the program. This is notably the state institution (and program) in Hungary (NUPS), and private higher education institutions in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. To this category also belong former Schools of public administration (created under communist regime) which were re-created as new faculties (Šafarik University Košice and Ljubana University- Faculty of Administration). The core faculty is around 20+, utilizing a lot of external staff and branches in the region.

However, the number of graduates in public institutions will likely soon decrease dramatically due to demographics of the 1990s, when the birth rate of CEE countries plummeted. This appears dramatically in Slovenia, where in the last two years there were no graduates in its one MPA program. This is a long-term trend in the region that will probably influence the composition and number of MPA programs offered.

### **Curricula Analysis**

Core course requirements differ from program to program. Viewed in terms of numbers, one program is at the lower margin requiring only three core courses (Ljubana University, Faculty of Social Sciences). At the upper margin there are five programs requiring more than 20 core courses (three are private institutions in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, one is state institution in Hungary and one public institution in the Czech Republic). The mean number of core courses required by respondent programs is approximately 15 in all four countries, while only 6 in Slovenia.

For the analysis of curricula, we list the curricula compulsory subjects according to eight main study fields: law, political science (political institutions and processes), sociology, economy/finance, management/business, methodology, analysis (analytical and practical skills development), specific policy field and other (Table 4 and 5).

#### **Table 4: Core Courses Analyses (country specific, mean number)**

	<b>LAW</b>	<b>Political science</b>	<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Economy /Finance</b>	<b>Mngmt/business</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Analyses</b>	<b>Policy fields</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Czech republic</b>	21%	15%	1%	21%	10%	6%	6%	6%	13%
<b>Slovakia</b>	24%	21%	3%	19%	18%	6%	6%	4%	18%
<b>Estonia</b>	5%	25%	3%	7%	11%	13%	16%	6%	11%
<b>Hungary</b>	26%	20%	0%	13%	16%	4%	7%	0%	15%
<b>Slovenia</b>	11%	50%	0%	6%	0%	22%	0%	0%	11%

Source: Authors' compilation calculated from institutional datasheets (see Methodology)

The legal character of MPA programs is far less noticeable on a country basis (Table 4) than it used to be, though still characteristic for Hungary (Hajnal 2015). Estonia from the early years of transition broke away entirely from the legal character of its curricula. However, from an institutional perspective (Table 5), and considering the way that programs were created (Table 6), the character of MPA programs varies significantly. Private higher education institutions with MPA programs still have a highly legalistic approach, with 40% of core courses being law. Similarly, MPAs which used to be Schools of Public Administration also have high content of legal subjects, be it now public or state Universities. The State University NUPS in Hungary also has legal courses for more than 43% of its curricula. Thus, the content of NUPS program underwent minimal change and still can be considered fundamentally legal in character. In Slovakia, this is Šafarik University, faculty of Public Administration with 37% of core courses based on law (28% for "European PA" program), and in Slovenia, Ljubana University, Faculty of Administration, with 22%. This is a surprising finding, considering that the overall legal character of MPA programs is declining.

It is interesting to note that a relatively large number of MPA programs is based mainly on economics and management (around 30%), except for Slovenia where the number constitutes still only 6% of all curricula (see Table 4). This observation was already made by Verheijen and Connaughton (2003) in relation to the Czech Republic and Slovakia, however, in the course of time the shift towards more economic and management courses has taken place. One possible explanation can be that public universities are much more involved in academic research, and tend to apply what at the time were cutting edge economic and management skills due to the NPM movement and/or actively participated in the mainstream scholarly communication that required a facility with the Anglo-Saxon professional – policy and management based – 'language'.

Nevertheless, deeper analysis of curricula confirms the observation of Nemeč et al (2011) who, reviewing the curricula of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, that none of these fulfil the characteristics of public management programs, but rather are of mixed nature that they do not

cover the minimum list of all of the following subjects: public financial management, e-governance (or similar), human resource management and strategic management in the public sector (Nemec et al (2011: 125). Instead, these MPA programs focus on economic theory, and typical courses are microeconomics, macroeconomics, economics of various subfields, accounting and public finance. If human resource management and strategic management can be found, they are usually among the electives, and are relatively rare.

Yet another surprising finding is the low amount of analytical core courses – the overall mean being 7%. Estonia is the only exception with a focus on analytical core courses that constitute 16%. However, if we look at public institutions which were created with external assistance (regardless whether by transformation, new program or new faculty), the overall mean in analytical core courses is also relatively high - 12% (Table 6). Also, these programs which were created with external assistance put more emphasis on methodological courses (14,1%), particularly in contrast to state and private institutions. This finding suggests that external influence took into consideration Denhardt’s (1999) prediction that in the future, MPA programs need to focus and acquire new set of skills and abilities. Technical competence in analysis and evaluation is absolutely essential in civil service work and in other public administration work – unless the application of the law is the main focus.

**Table 5: Core Courses (Institution Type specific)**

		LAW	Political science	Sociology	Economy /Finance	Management/ Business	Methodology	Analyses	Policy fields	Other
<b>PRIVATE</b>		39.7%	17.3%	1.1%	8.1%	14.0%	3.0%	6.0%	3.7%	6.4%
<b>STATE</b>		42.9%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	23.8%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	14.3%
<b>PUBLIC</b>	<b>new faculty</b>	12.9%	25.3%	3.2%	11.4%	9.7%	8.0%	5.7%	4.0%	19.8%
	<b>new program</b>	6.2%	20.4%	1.6%	23.9%	10.7%	9.9%	8.2%	6.5%	12.3%
	<b>transformation</b>	8.4%	10.2%	0.0%	34.0%	12.0%	9.5%	3.1%	2.3%	19.0%

Source: Author’s compilation calculated from institutional datasheets (see Methodology)

From the above discussion, it is clear that institutional setting and the method of creation of MPA programs matter in the core curricula design far more than country context. With each type of institutional base we can observe disciplinary biases. Private institutions and state institution (NUPS Hungary) are biased toward legal character of curricula, newly established faculties are biased towards political science, since they are almost exclusively social science faculties. Transformed programs are biased toward economic and management character, since all transformed programs took place on economic faculties (Table 5).

When the MPA programs are studied from the viewpoint of interdisciplinarity, i.e., balancing different contributing disciplines, we can conclude that the MPAs that were created with external assistance at public universities tend to have adopted far more interdisciplinary and balanced curricula than any other (Table 6). This counts also for the interdisciplinary based private CEU in Hungary.

**Table 6: Core Courses (Way of Creation Specific)**

Way of Creation	LAW	Political science	Sociology	Economy /Finance	Management/ Business	Methodology	Analyses	Policy fields	Other
public - external assistance	6.0%	18.2%	2.6%	17.3%	10.0%	14.1%	12.0%	4.4%	15.0%
former schools of PA (new institution - state/public)	26%	24%	1%	12%	9%	4%	3%	1%	20%
entirely new institution (private)	39.7%	17.3%	1.1%	8.1%	14.0%	3.0%	6.0%	3.7%	6.4%
all other public	7%	25%	1%	23%	12%	7%	5%	5%	14%

Source: Author's compilation calculated from institutional datasheets (see Methodology)

Verheijen and Bernadette (2003) find that MPA programs in CEE countries are largely missing core courses on the European dimension and comparative administrative courses. They urge better internationalization and Europeanization of curricula (Ágh, 2013). After more than ten years we can observe that particularly public, but also private higher education institutions, provide comparative courses with EU content or have a “multilevel governance” element included. We can also observe a rise in cooperation, manifested by offering dual degrees that formally came into existence after 2010. Interestingly, those who offer dual degrees have their partner institutions also in the CEE region, and thus broader internationalization is relatively limited. For instance, Corvinus University Budapest, Hungary and Babes-Bolyai University from Romania, have an almost two decade long history of cooperation that led a few years ago to the establishment of a dual degree program. Similarly, Šafárik University Košice, Slovakia and Slezská University Opava, the Czech Republic, created a joint degree program in “Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe” as of 2015. Another joint degree program is between University of Pardubice, the Czech Republic and Siauliai University, Lithuania and between Ljubljana University, Faculty of Administration and Belgrade University, Serbia.

### **Style of the education and its practical focus**

Practical approach to administrative education is frequently attributed to Anglo-American space (Bouckaert 2008). However, the balance between theory and practice is central to public administration education also in continental-European administrative education (Koprič 2013). Learning can take place in various environments, and many of the skills and knowledge that students need can be acquired outside of the school setting. Denhardt (2001) argues that the classroom is better suited for developing cognitive knowledge, nevertheless, an MPA student should also master interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. For these skills, on-the-job training or administrative experience is better suited. Training of practical skills, with internship as a desirable form, is becoming an inevitable component of public administration education (Accreditation Criteria, 2011).

In our study, we have found out that from 34 studied programs, only eight include internships in their study plans (five offer credits for taking an internship), out of which two are private institutions

(CEVRO Institute Prague and Central European University Budapest) and one is state institution (NUPS Budapest). Thus, only five public universities require their students to take an internship for developing skills and knowledge outside of the classroom (Masaryk University Brno Czech republic, Technical University Ostrava Czech republic, Technical University Košice Slovakia, Šafarik University Košice Slovakia and Talinn University of Technology in Estonia).

We also looked for an advanced practitioner degree – an executive program -- specifically designed for senior civil servants and requiring a Master degree at entry point. This should be a completely new degree that would equip students with knowledge, skills and values needed for practice. Surprisingly, no public universities and two private institutions offer such executive programs under the MPA label. A possible explanation for this situation may be that in CEE, higher education is generally free by law, and teaching in the executive program might not be financially attractive for a public university. In fact, Talinn University of Technology abolished its executive program in 2013 after ten years of operation. It was abolished because of the change in the financing of Estonian higher education, when all of higher education became free and it was not possible for the Faculty to earn additional income through offering an executive program. Thus, public universities are not motivated to design such a program, which would mean an extra burden but not necessarily extra money. However, it has to be noted here that many bachelor PA programs are designed particularly for specialist practitioners, such as custom officers, accountants, etc. This was, however, not the focus of this article.

Another important source of practical focus is the professional and educational background of their faculty. When looking at PhDs (or Masters) of the faculty we observe similar strong institutional biases as noted with MPA programs, with respect to private institutions and former Schools of public administration (now either state institution in Hungary or two new faculties in Slovakia and Slovenia). Private institutions have the most lawyers among their ranks, with some institutions having 80% to 100% staff members graduated from law. In terms of practical experience, many of these also did or still do practice law, such as lawyer at a ministry/municipality, but frequently outside the executive branch, such as judge or attorney. The state institution NUPS Budapest Hungary has half of its staff of legal background. MPA programs which used to be Schools of Public Administration (Ljubljana University, Faculty of Administration in Slovenia and Šafarik University, Faculty of Public Administration, Slovakia) both still have 30% of their faculty with a legal background. These, however, are academicians with no practical experience (except for one politician in NUPS and ad hoc consulting experience at NUPS and in Slovenia and Slovakia). Other institutions either do not have legal professions among their core faculty, or have one or two persons, often as non-core staff.

In terms of the interdisciplinarity of the backgrounds of the core faculty, there are big differences among the institutions. Public universities created as new programs (or transformation of programs) are much more diverse in core faculty, though still biased depending on the anchoring of the MPA program: economic faculties tend to have more economists, and social science faculties tend to have more political scientists and/or public administration graduates. The biggest diversification of core faculty is noticeable with MPA programs created with external assistance, which is an interesting observation, since they have usually the smallest number of core staff of six or seven people. Among these (and nowhere else), we can also find graduates of prestigious western universities, such as London School of Economics, New York University, Leuven, University of St. Andrew's, etc. Also, it is

only here that foreign lecturers are regularly invited as guest lecturers – normally academicians from prestigious western universities. However, guest lecturers from CEE countries are far more common in all types of higher education, and here we can also see the different background of such lecturers, coming not only from academia but also from civil service, NGO sector and consulting.

## 5. Conclusions

This article started with two major questions and related hypotheses.

### **Hypothesis 1:** MPA programs in CEE, or at least a large proportion of them, do not fit to the so-called mainstream model.

In brief, it seems that MPA programs in the region may not fit well to the mainstream model and this fact may somewhat question the idea of global convergence towards a general PA educational model.

**Sub-Hypothesis 1a:** In terms of content, there are significantly more legal subjects than in a mainstream PA programs, probably at the expense of analytical and methodological subjects.

The proportion of legal subjects in Slovenia is about one-tenth, in the Czech Republic about one-fifth, and in Hungary, and Slovakia about one-fourth of all core courses, whereas Estonia seems to be a clear exception. In a representative mainstream program there is typically none or one legal core course. Furthermore, legal subjects dominate exactly at those universities that have the highest number of students, like the State University in Hungary, or the private universities in the Czech and Slovak Republics. The composition of the faculty is even more characteristic. We found that 70%-100% of instructors of private university are lawyers, frequently practicing their legal profession at the same time. Programs at public universities that were originally Schools of PA are also run with several (30%-50%) instructors with legal education.

The proportion of political science courses is generally quite high, presumably as the formal institutional aspects of public administration (organizational arrangements, what type of PA organizations exist in the given country, accountability lines, etc.) were coded into this category. Management subjects, on the other hand, are relatively low (typically between 10-15%), and especially are those subjects that assist policy understanding and analysis like methodology and analytical skills. One may argue that some of these issues were coded as “economy/finance”. However, the high proportion of economics subject is seemingly due to the fact that several MPA programs were established on the basis of economics faculties and they rely to a great extent on pre-existing courses. Furthermore, in accordance with Nemeč et al. (2011), we also confirm that even the alleged similarity to mainstream MPA programs is misleading, as the quasi-management and economics subjects are highly theoretical and have not much to do with PA practice. Finally, the degree titles are revealing. More than half of the degrees (27 out of 46) enumerated in Table 1 contain the “administration” designation that may be somewhat unfashionable to the mainstream, “management”, focus.

**Sub-Hypothesis 1b.** In terms of focus and style, we expect more theoretically oriented, rather than practice-oriented, approaches developing skills. In accordance with that focus, we expect more lecturing and less interactive methods, less reliance on individual and group work in dealing with cases, or other instructional techniques that bring education closer to real-life.

The aim and style of the programs are also closer to the classical legal training in civil law tradition. They seem to be more theory-driven, focusing on knowledge transfer, rather than a practice-oriented focus on skills development. This can be seen from the low proportion of methodology and analytical courses. Furthermore, only eight (22%) out of the 34 study programs required an internship as a prerequisite for obtaining diplomas. Methods typically used for practice-oriented education, such as well elaborated case studies, are relatively rare. The work experience of instructors differs greatly among programs. Several high prestige universities employ instructors holding degrees from leading Western universities, but hardly anyone with an extensive administrative work experience. People moving between university and leading positions in the executive, which is quite typical in the US, can hardly be found in the region.

**Hypothesis 2: PA programs in CEE do not express a clear, consistent, and widely accepted PA identity.**

**Sub-Hypothesis 2a:** There is a lack of a relatively clear and widely shared PA identity in CEE

We found large differences between countries (Table 4). This could be explained by the fact that countries follow different PA ideals and/or ideal-types. However, we found even larger differences when we compared institutions by type (Table 5) and programs by way of creation (Table 6). Even those who neglect globalization or, in our case, Europeanization, must accept that within one country one PA system exists. For this reason, we may reasonably expect that the deviation between programs in one country is smaller than between countries. However, this is not the case.

**Sub-Hypothesis 2b:** The curricula and disciplinary character of the programs are not at all crystallized; rather they depend on accidental factors.

Seemingly, the curricula depend on factors external to the PA system, most importantly: (a) the formation of the program (i.e., was it formed from an existing program, and if so, that naturally determines the orientation) or a new one (in which case the orientation of the Faculty is decisive); (b) if it is a private, public or state institution; and (c) if foreign advisors were involved in curriculum design.

For instance, if the program was initiated within an economics faculty, economic subjects, if in a social sciences faculty political science, etc., became crucial. Similarly, private universities staffed typically with lawyers who served as instructors while being a legal professional elsewhere, also focused almost solely on law. Thus the curricula have been driven by university supply (faculty members) rather than demand. It is true, however, that the demand has been vaguely articulated. We have also discussed the impact of foreign assistance projects in the field. We found that these programs fit best to the international (that is US) standard.

The same diversity could be found in aim and style of education and the provider. In Hungary, a state-run, monopolized institute, exempted from educational standards, provides PA education, though before 2012, most major public universities offered MPA programs. On the other hand, in the Czech and Slovak Republics, several private universities provide such programs, some of them without official accreditation.

There is also large difference between the numbers of students enrolled. NUPS in Hungary and private universities enroll a relatively large number of students. Similarly, if a whole faculty is involved in the program that usually means a larger enrollment, whereas if only one department is involved, the number of students rarely exceeds twenty.

**Sub-Hypothesis 2c:** In most cases, there is a tension between the need of PA practice and of PA education, both of which are quite uncertain about the best model of public administration in the region. Typically, there is a tension between non-legal character of some of the PA programs (typically closer to the Anglo-Saxon model) and the governance reality that requires legal expertise for most of the public administration positions

We assumed that there is a tension between the need of PA practice (demand) and PA education (supply), at least in some of the cases. Most typically there is a tension between the non-legal character of some of the programs (typically those closer to the Anglo-Saxon model) and the governance reality requiring legal expertise to a great extent. In Hungary, about 80% of the content of the generally obligatory civil service exam is legal in character. This may be less relevant for the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Estonia, where the civil service is limited to the top administrative employees serving on policy-making level and there are no civil service exams. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that lawyers (and increasingly economists) are preferred over MPA degrees in most managerial positions in public administration, whereas lay-administrators typically carry out routine work off applying laws.

If one accepts the theory that private institutions are more responsive to “market demand” and we refer to the private universities’ supply of legal courses, we may conclude that it is rather the legalistic than the mainstream approach that fits better to the needs of the government in the region. If we presume that the government knows best what the government needs, and we look at NUPS, then we may arrive at the same conclusion. Meanwhile, the much more research-intensive, higher-prestige public universities find it more important to take part in international academic communication. Instructors are also researchers in these universities, whose career is based primarily on international reputation: delivering conference presentations, publishing in leading international journals. For that they need to understand and speak the ‘language’ of these fora (which is not the legalistic approach). Probably it is this need of some instructors, and not the need of public administration, that may be in the background of the development of several mainstream-type MPA programs.

### **On the main question**

The ultimate question of all of the articles in this issue is about convergence. Are MPA programs around the world converging? At first glance, the answer, based on our findings, may be straightforward: No, not the ones in the CEE region. PA programs in the CEE region are markedly different from the mainstream in respect of the curricula and subjects taught, and style and aim of the education. It is not only that these programs are not similar to the mainstream, they are not similar to one another, not even within a single country. However, rejecting the notion of convergence relies on our snapshot data, data that have been possible to collect in a sample of five

countries. Nevertheless, the word “convergence” refers to a process. In this regard, our answer is more nuanced.

Though law is still crucial in most countries (except Estonia), it would be also fair to state that the proportion of legal subjects has decreased since the collapse of communism. There is a tendency of shifting from traditional legalistic to a more managerial and/or policy approach, as it shown by our study, similarly to findings by Pollitt-Bouckaert (2011) and Hajnal (2015; except Hungary). We sense, though cannot quantitatively prove, a tendency of convergence generally towards the mainstream PA program model, both in terms of content and style, with an increased interest in practice orientation and related instructional methods. Somewhat strangely, if there is a kind of gradual convergence within the CEE countries analyzed in this article, it is driven by the tendency towards this Anglo-Saxon ideal. Whether that is good news or whether that prevents the development of specific PA identity of the region, is another issue.

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**Appendix: List of Higher Educational Institutions with MPA programs**

<b>MASTER LEVEL MPA PROGRAMS</b>				
<b>study program</b>	<b>study field</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>faculty</b>	<b>type of institution</b>
<b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>				
public administration	safety mngt	Police Academy		state institution
public administration	safety studies	CEVRO Institute		private institution
public administration	public administration	CEVRO Institute	School of Political Studies	private institution
public administration and regional development		Czech Agricultural University in Prague	Faculty of Economics	public institution
International territorial studies	European studies and public administration	Metropolitan University Prague		private institution
European studies and public administration		College of International and Public Relations		private institution
Sociology	public and social policy	Charles University Prague	Faculty of Social Studies	public institution
Social policy and social work	mngt of organizations of social services	University of Ostrava	Faculty of Social Studies	public institution
Public Policy and Administration		Slezská Univerzita v Opavě	Faculty of Public Policies	public institution
Public Policy and Human Resources		Masaryk University Brno	Faculty of Social Studies	public institution
Economic policy and administration	public administration	Mendelova University Brno	Faculty of Economics	public institution
Economic policy and administration	public administration	University of Economics	Faculty of Economics	public institution
Economic policy and administration	public economics and administration	Technical University Ostrava	Faculty of Economics	public institution
Economic policy and administration	public economics and administration	Masaryk University Brno	Faculty of Economics and Administration	public institution
Economic policy and administration	regional dvlpt and administration	Masaryk University Brno	Faculty of Economics and Administration	public institution
Economic policy and administration	Economics of public sector	University of Pardubice	Faculty of Economics and Administration	public institution
Economics and Management	management and economics in public management and economics in public	Moravská VŠ Olomouc		private institution
Economics and Management	management and economics in public management and economics in public	Technical University Liberec	Faculty of Economics	public institution
MPA (not accredited)		University of Finance and Administration		private institution
MPA (not accredited)		Institute Iuris et Iurisprudentiae		private institution
<b>ESTONIA</b>				
public administration		Talinn University of Technology	Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance	public institution
public administration		Talinn University	Faculty of Social Sciences	public institution
Governance and administration		Talinn University	Faculty of Social Sciences	public institution
European studies program	Democracy and Governance	University of Tartu	European College	public institution
<b>HUNGARY</b>				
Public Administration		National University of Public Services	Faculty of Public Administration	state institution
Public Policy and Management		Budapest Corvinus University	Faculty of Economics	public institution
Public Policy		Central European University	School of Public Policy	private institution
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>				
public policy		Comenius University Bratislava	Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences	public institution
public policy and public administration		Danubius University		private institution
public policy and public administration in Central Europe		Šafárik University Košice	Faculty of Public Administration	public institution
public administratin		Šafárik University Košice	Faculty of Public Administration	public institution
public administratin		University of st. Cyril and Method Trnava	Faculty of Social Sciences	public institution
public administratin		School of Economics and Management in Public Administration		private institution
public administration and safety studies		Police Academy		state institution
European public administration		Šafárik University Košice	Faculty of Public Administration	public institution
public administration and regional development		University of Economics Bratislava	Faculty of Economics	public institution
public administration and regional development		Technical University Košice	Faculty of Economics	public institution
Public administration in agriculture and landscape		Agricultural University Nitra	Department of public administration	public institution
economics of public services	public economics and services	University of Matej Bel Banská Bystrica	Faculty of Economics	public institution
economics of public services	economics and territorial governance	University of Matej Bel Banská Bystrica	Faculty of Economics	public institution
MPA (not accredited)		LIGS University		private institution
MPA (not accredited)		Institute of Law and professional education		private institution
<b>SLOVENIA</b>				
Political sciences	policy analysis and public administration	Ljubljana University	Faculty for Social Sciences	public institution
Public administration		Ljubljana University	Faculty of Administration	public institution
public management		University of Primorska	Faculty of Management	public institution

Note: Grey colour indicates excluded programs from the in-depth analyses on the basis of filtering education programs which comprise only few specific courses related to public administration/management/policy and their core courses related to a different field of study (social work, general management, security studies, etc.).