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**The modernisation of Public Administrations
in the European Union and in the Russian
Federation: University International Relations
Offices Case**

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This paper compares the modernisation level of the Universities' International Relations Offices (IROs) situated in the Russian Federation and the European Union. The analysis is based on Max Weber's definition of modernity and involves a questionnaire survey for the civil servants working in Russian and European IROs, as well as their users. The author's research stay in St. Petersburg was supported by the CGES as an award for winning the Annual Russian-European Research Paper Competition held at the CGES of St. Petersburg University in November of 2018.

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Introduction

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “*public sector modernisation is no longer an option, but a necessity*” (OECD, 2018). The definition of a modern public administration considered in this paper is the one given by Max Weber (Weber, 1921). This study will focus on the public administration level of modernisation in the European Union (EU) and in the Russian Federation. A particular focus is on the Universities’ International Relations Offices. Indeed, international relations is the area where public administration improvements are expressed the most. It can be explained by the fact that states cannot avoid developing, or at least maintaining them, as they enable peaceful relations through dialogue and international economic cooperation. International relations materialise themselves in multilateral and bilateral relations and Universities are a means for the state to build such relations with other countries. Indeed, such partnerships reinforce interuniversity cooperation, but also states’ cooperation because they promote the international appeal of a given country, thus its research and social and economic development (Tremblay, 2003). Therefore, Universities’ International Relations Offices (IROs) can be expected to improve, as part of a larger public administration field being modernised.

The interest in assessing the public sector’s level of modernisation resides in the fact that a good public administration is the key to an efficient government¹. Moreover, the public has a growing will to be directly involved in the decision-making. A means to attain this goal is to enhance the citizens’ contributions and the amount of information they have access to. In this regard, opinion survey is one of the best tools to reach this goal (OCDE, 1998). However, no comparative analysis has been done in this field between the European Union and the Russian Federation, which underlines the relevance of doing one. It appears that Universities are a relevant public administration body to study in that respect, as “within the EU, the proportion of financial resources devoted to education is one of the key choices made by national governments”. For instance, in 2015 the EU countries spent, on average, 5% of their public expenditure on education² as a share of GDP (Eurostat, 2018). Among these, higher education, on average, represented 26% of the expenditure on education in the EU (Eurostat, 2018). In comparison, the Russian Federation spent 0,7% of its GDP in 2015 on tertiary education (OECD, Public spending on education, 2019)³. Such a difference

¹ “Although the difficulties of civil service reform have led to some calls for abandoning this area, the evidence indicates that improved civil service is essential for major improvements in other areas” (The World Bank, 2008).

² Excluding early childhood educational development.

³ “Public spending on education includes direct expenditure on educational institutions as well as educational-related public subsidies given to households and administered by educational institutions.” (OECD, Public spending on education, 2019). Also, “International cooperation is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science. Student mobility is also an issue of special importance, given that both national and international mobility is still weak, mostly due to financial reasons and to lack of foreign language competence of students and teachers. The

emerges another interest to compare these two areas. This interest remains even if the Russian Federation and the EU institutions do not have the same institutional and university autonomy. Indeed, the European and Russian national contexts, diversity of legal frameworks, systems and policies induce differences in the way transnational mobility is addressed. For instance, the degrees of institutions' autonomy vary in these countries, which is reflected in their levels of university autonomy, despite the fact that they are guided by the same principles in terms of educational cooperation and have partnership and cooperation agreements. For instance, the EU and the Russian Federation signed the "EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement"⁴. In a general manner, institutional autonomy is related to both decentralisation and privatisation. Indeed, according to the Russian constitutional law, "*autonomy*" is the "*right of a geographical area to exercise State power on its own account within the constitutionally prescribed limits*" (Kartashkin & Abashidze, 2004). Therefore, it is the ability to enact its own policies and programmes, as well as to spend its money at its convenience⁵. However, it appears that "*institutional autonomy in Russia, while clearly much greater now than under the former Soviet Union or even the early days of the Russian Federation, remains uneven*" (Chapman & Austin, 2002). As for the EU's institutional autonomy, it can be approached by analysing one of its largest and most representative institutions: the European Commission. Indeed, it has as many members as there are the EU countries. Furthermore, it is the biggest institution of the EU as 80% of its staff is concentrated within it (Toute l'Europe, 2019). Its independence is guaranteed by a charter "*which prohibits any other authority from interfering with [their] audit work or asking [them] to modify the content of [their] audit reports. If [their] auditors believe that their objectivity is compromised "in fact or in appearance", they must report it without exception*" (European Commission, 2019)⁶. Moreover, "*as applied to public institutions of higher education, autonomy suggests institutional self-governance, or freedom from state control*" (Chapman & Austin, 2002). Therefore, public universities' autonomy is "*the freeing of the university from some measure or governmental authority or control*" (Chapman & Austin, 2002). More precisely, according to the EUA Autonomy Scorecard, it is described by four key elements. Firstly, their "*organisational autonomy (covering academic and administrative structures, leadership and governance)*", secondly their "*financial autonomy (covering the ability to raise funds, own buildings, borrow money and set tuition fees)*", thirdly their "*staffing autonomy (including the ability to recruit independently, promote and develop academic and non-academic staff)*" and finally their "*academic autonomy (including study fields, student numbers, student selection as well as the structure and content of degrees)*" (Bennetot Pruvot & Estermann, 2017) and (European Higher Education

Ministry of Education and Science lays special emphasis both on the "export" of education and on attracting foreign students to HEIs." (European Commission, 2017).

⁴ See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A28010102_2.

⁵ Confirmed by (Gül H., Gül S. S., Kaya E., Alican A., 2010).

⁶ It is also confirmed by the articles 8, 9 and 11 of the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour (see <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/publication/en/3510>).

Association, 2005). In the same way as for institutional autonomy, the level of Russian university autonomy is lower than the European one. Indeed, it appears that the Ministry of Education and Science controls on average 70-80% of every state higher education institution's funding (European Commission, 2017). On the other hand, the Lisbon Declaration set the basic dimensions of autonomy for the EU in 2007. It coincides with the EUA criteria except for the *"academic autonomy"*, which is replaced by the *"organizational autonomy"*. It is the university's capability to set their own structures and statutes, as well as to make contracts and elect decision-making bodies (LabsExplorer, 2017). *"In Europe in general, 60% to 70% of the total university income comes from government allocations"* (LabsExplorer, 2017 and de Dominicis et al., 2011)⁷. It coincides with the fact that within the last three to ten years, 43% of European universities considered important a *"more diversified funding"* and *"more autonomy"* (Gül et al., 2010).

Despite these differences in terms of institutional autonomy, the European and Russian educational cooperation can be compared as they are guided by the principles of the Bologna Process of the Council of Europe, which the Russian Federation joined in 2003. Thanks to this Process, countries, institutions and stakeholders of the European area *"continuously adapt their higher education systems, making them more compatible and strengthening their quality assurance mechanisms as part of the European Higher Education Area"*. In that regards, the Bologna Declaration introduced the university autonomy in its core. Indeed, it asserts that *"the university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage [...] its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power"* (European Higher Education Association, 2005). Moreover, *"student and academic mobility programmes in Russia contribute to the reinforcement of people-to-people contact between Russia and the European Union. Russia remains among the leading non-EU participant countries in EU academic programmes"* (European Union External Action, 2019). Therefore, comparing them still appears relevant despite the difference between the levels of their autonomy degrees.

The overall scientific objectives of this research are firstly (1) to assess the perceived level of modernisation specific public administration students, professor-researchers and university administrative staff were in contact with when visiting a European Union member country and/or in the Russian Federation (to study or work) through their sending university: the International Relation Office. Secondly (2), to compare the perceived levels of modernisation of the International Relations Services in the European Union and in the Russian Federation. This country data study therefore compares the level of modernisation as presented in the official data to the one perceived by the civil servants working in these IROs in the European Union and the Russian Federation, and to the one experienced by students or professors-researchers

⁷ *"Government is still today the main funding source for European universities. For the majority of universities in the ERA countries, government core funds account for around 60 % or more of the total university income"*.

who have dealt with IROs in the same areas. The official data refers to all the documentation related to the level of modernisation of the public administrations situated in the EU and the Russian Federation. Such documentation includes national policy documents, reviewed relevant evaluations, empirical studies, reports, academic articles, statistical analysis: all related to the four dimensions of the modernisation of public administrations as defined by Max Weber. The studies directly related to Universities IRO were preferably chosen. However, as such documents did not exist in the vast majority of cases, analyses concerning European and Russian public administrations was considered. As for the measurement of modernisation perceived by the civil servants and the students or professors-researchers, a survey was performed.

The survey includes Russian (former) students, (former) professors-researchers, and (former) University civil servants, who travelled to a European member country and had contacts with the International Relations Office of their home university and/or the host university. Inversely, the study also involves European (former) students, (former) professors-researchers, (former) University civil servants, who dealt with the International Relations Office of their home university and/or one situated in the Russian Federation. The survey was divided into two groups of questionnaires. The first one, available in English on the Internet since the 23rd of April 2019 targeted the civil servants. It was available in Russian on the Internet from the 6th of October 2019. Among the fifteen persons who filled it up, seven worked in a European IRO and two in a Russian IRO. The second survey targeted the IROs users — students and professors-researchers. It was available on the website dedicated to the publication of different types of surveys, called “Sondage online”, as the others, from the 22d of April 2019.

Before distributing the questionnaires, a pilot study comprising two steps was conducted. The first step was to interview two Russian public administration experts. One, with Vladimir Gel'man⁸, was conducted by telephone and the other one — face-to-face, but the interviewee requested to remain anonymous. The second step was the initial experimental distribution of the users' questionnaire within a small sample of respondents, both Russian and European⁹. Once the questionnaires were created, I sent emails with links redirecting to the survey to 240 university IROs situated in the European Union and in Russian Federation. The targeted European universities were the ones having organised student exchanges with the Russian Federation, and vice versa. I kindly asked to share the users' survey link with their students and staff, and to fill in and share the one

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⁹ Two French people, two English people, a German person and three Russian people filled the experimental users' questionnaire.

intended for civil servants. I also published those links on Facebook, on different groups linked with student exchange and foreigners being either in the Russian Federation, or in the European Union¹⁰; as well as on LinkedIn.

The overall statistical analysis objectives were: (1) to assess the global level of perceived modernisation of European and Russian modern public administration, illustrated by the specific public administration available in both areas. Every time the results of the survey are presented, the percentages of the most common answers are presented. This is done by mentioning the percentage and the corresponding number of respondents. Other percentages can be mentioned as exceptions, when it appears necessary for the analysis. Another objective is (2) to observe what factors correlate the most with the pattern set by Max Weber, as measured with the questionnaires. This second objective allows identifying the biggest trends by analysing the questions to which the replies reflect a very marked position, that is to say, by having 100% of the respondents agreeing on the same fact.

In total, forty-four people filled the questionnaires. This survey's participation rate is therefore of 16,66%¹¹. The fact that it is low can be explained by several elements. Firstly, "it is estimated that the response rate in the web survey on average is approximately 11% lower than that of other survey modes" (National Social Norms Center, 2010). Moreover, "generally, e-mail surveys have a lower response rate than mail surveys, even when access to the Internet is not an issue" (Bright Ideas, 2009). Furthermore, even if larger sample size gives more power to a survey, the interest of taking into consideration smaller sample size, as this one, can reside in the quality of the sample¹². Indeed, only two civil servants completed the questionnaire concerning the Russian IROs, and three concerning the EU IROs. Their responses were still taken into account in order to fulfil the second objective of this study as well as not to only give an overview of the IROs' users' opinion, knowing that more studies already exist taking them into account. Moreover, they nuance global trends. For instance, only one civil servant who worked in the Russian Federation stated that he and his other colleagues

¹⁰ For instance: "Academic Writers and Researchers (Thesis, Projects, Reports & Assignments)"; "Erasmus Bordeaux 2019-2020 (only speak English)"; "International students in Russia"; "Russians in France, Paris"; "SPbU exchange students"; "TSU-Online"; "Летняя Школа / Summer School Kaliningrad on International and European Law".

¹¹ The term "participation rate" is preferred to the "response rate" as it is defined "*as the number of respondents who provided a usable response divided by the total number of initial personal invitations requesting participation*" (The American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2011). Moreover, "*the number of people surveyed may include surveys with some answers left blank or only those where every question was answered*" (Bright Ideas, 2009).

¹² See also "*In summary – the contemporary literature on survey research generally views higher response rates as useful for reducing the possibility of nonresponse bias, but some new research suggests that the influence of low response rates on bias may be less straightforward than has been the assumption among researchers.*" (Saldivar, 2012). See also: "*In general, online surveys are much less likely to achieve response rates as high as surveys administered on paper—despite the use of various practices to lift them.*" (Nulty, 2008).

occupying the same position complied with the same rules and procedures. However, it represents one third of the respondents regarding this question. Moreover, the other two could not state if they were following the same rules and procedures as their colleagues occupying the same position, even if they asserted that the official rules and procedures they are following are “rather clear” and “rather simple”, which brings a non-negligible nuance. The same goes for the civil servants who worked or are working in the EU IROs. Indeed, even if two of them asserted that they had to comply with the official administrative rules and procedures during their work, only one said he did not. Nevertheless, the latter case appears as important and interesting as the first one.

In the same way, the civil servants who worked for a Russian IRO received “what they wanted”¹³ whether they followed the official rules and procedures or not. This trend reflects itself in the users’ responses and it allows a comparison even if the results cannot be extrapolated onto the entire targeted population. Another example of this trend is the fact that EU IROs’ users and civil servants perceive the rules and procedures they had to follow as “rather easy to comply with” and “rather clear”. If these low numbers were not to be taken into consideration, then some interesting differences of treatment would therefore not be analysed. For instance, the fact that the consequences of not following official rules and procedures are more important for the users than the civil servants.

As for the users, they may disagree about many things, thus causing a low rate of participation for certain questions (e.g. for the Russian IROs’ users: similarity of the informal rules; eventual contradictions in the information given), but at the same time there is only one other question to which all the participants gave the same response.. Consequently, it appears relevant to analyse this tendency even if a small number of respondents provided the answers. It seems even more relevant as these proportions, as feeble as they may be, reflect the same tendency concerning the Russian and EU IROs’ users (e.g., they faced problems even if they followed the formal rules and procedures, while getting what they wanted nevertheless). Another example lies in the fact that the same proportion of Russian and EU IROs’ users disagree on the reliability of the online services provided by these IROs. As a consequence, the aim of this study appears more to gain an insight of the perception of the university international relations services situated in the EU and Russian Federation’s modernisation than to generalize this perception to a larger population.

The respondents of the survey for civil servants working in a European and Russian IRO were 31-32 years old on average. Half of them were coming from European countries, the other half from the Russian Federation. Concerning the civil servants working in European IROs, out of the six respondents, three came from a big city (Lyon), and three from provincial cities (Lund in Sweden, Aix-en-Provence in France and Stirling in Scotland). However, their Universities mainly

¹³ In the survey, the question was “Did you receive what you wanted after having followed these official rules and procedures”. For instance, a document, a result, a reward, the acknowledgment of an accomplishment, etc. It can be material or not.

had exchange programmes (bilateral agreements and double-degree programmes) with big cities (nine big cities out of eleven) and all of them had contacts with other IROs situated in the European Union (four out of four¹⁴). The majority of them did not work there as part of an exchange programme (four respondents). The average time they worked in an IRO is slightly less than 3 years. Half of them worked under a permanent contract, and the other half under a fixed-term contract.

In what concerns the five civil servants working in a Russian IRO, two came from big cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg) and three from provincial areas (Tomsk and Kaliningrad). As for the civil servants who worked in a European IRO, the majority did not work there as part of an exchange programme (three respondents out of five). However, the ones who did mentioned Erasmus+ as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They all also had contacts with other IROs situated in the Russian Federation. The majority worked under a permanent contract (two respondents). Furthermore, they worked longer in a Russian IRO than the others did in a European one as the average time of stay was a year longer in total (roughly four years). In addition, civil servants could quote many more exchange countries than the ones working in a European IRO. Therefore, it can be deduced that Russian IROs have more numerous exchange programmes with the European ones than the other way round. The most quoted countries were Germany, Italy, Belgium, France, Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Slovakia, with which they mainly had bilateral agreements.

As for the survey whose respondents were IROs' users, twenty-four individuals filled it in, eighteen coming from a European University, five from a Russian one and one from an African university. Fifteen were coming from an urban area (Durham, Leeds, Verona, Paris, Lyon, Nice, Saint Petersburg, Utrecht, Bordeaux, Cardiff), and nine from a provincial area (Bamberg, Tomsk, Orleans, Göttingen, Strasbourg, Dijon, Korokocho). The most represented faculties were those of History and Law¹⁵. Moreover, 61,5% (sixteen respondents) were at Bachelor's Degree level. Most of them (52,2%, twelve respondents) had had experience with an IRO situated in the Russian Federation and in the European Union and participated in a bilateral exchange (56,3%, nine respondents) to be able to travel. Out of sixteen, nine went to a University situated in an urban area (as Lyon, Brussels, Saint Petersburg, Tartu and Oxford). The earliest a respondent participated in an exchange programme was in 2014, and the latest in 2019.

According to Max Weber, a modernised public administration should indeed be disciplined, performant, inspire trust and be impartial. In order to verify if it applies to the Russian and EU public administrations, four corresponding hypotheses were taken into account. These four domains will be examined in this order.

¹⁴ The number of respondents may vary, as not all of them necessarily filled up the entire questionnaire.

¹⁵ Three students came from each of these faculties. The others could come from International Relations, Modern Languages, Linguistics, Journalism, etc. for instance).

The discipline criterion

Max Weber's bureaucratic model affirms that public administrations must be disciplined. In this case, clear and linear rules the administrative management can apply are identifiable. Thus, their action has to be impersonal and organised according to the principle of division of labour, which implies there is an administrative hierarchy and that civil servants must comply with the resulting obligations. The related hypothesis asserts that "the International Relations Offices of the universities situated in an EU member country and in the Russian Federation are perceived as disciplined by the students, professors-researchers and university administrative staff who have dealt with these IROs". The hypothesis is divided into three variables that are: (1) the existence of established rules and procedures, (2) the existence of informal rules and procedures, (3) the perception of the permanence of the structure and established rules and procedures.

In the Russian Federation, the will to launch New Public Management reforms in accordance with Weber's rational bureaucracy led to several reform packages after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The Federal law of 1995 for example started to create a Civil Service based on merit. Then, in 1997-1998 a new Concept of Administrative reform was formulated but it did not pass through Parliament. In 2000, President Vladimir Putin as well tried to implement a public administration reform that had three main divisions: the Civil Service reform, the Administrative reform and the Municipal government reform. The first one led to a "Public Service Reform in the Russian Federation (2003-2005)" and various laws were adopted. One of them, for example, classifies three types and two levels of Public Service, with a specific legislative framework for each type of it. In 2004 as well, another federal law¹⁶ introduced important criteria the public administration needed to follow. For instance, the fact that permanent civil servants can be employed under a signed contract is inevitably depending on their results in a competitive examination. However, as this process can be long, pre-qualified pools¹⁷ can be appointed to temporarily occupy vacant positions. Regarding the administrative reform of 2003, its two main management ideas were to identify the different functions this body underlay, especially to avoid duplications and transfer some functions to other bodies if needed. The results were that *"5634 functions were reviewed: 1468 of them were found to be redundant, 263 – duplicative, 868 – subject to reformulation"* (Konov, 2006). Thereby, in March 2004, the number of government bodies diminished from six to three and their roles were distinctly demarcated between Ministries, Services and Agencies. Those important reforms allowed an improvement of Russia's public-sector quality. International organisations supported the Russian Federation in achieving this goal, *"such as The World Bank, the UK Department*

¹⁶ Law #79

¹⁷ "Pre-qualified pool consists of civil servants and other citizens that have been assessed during a competition against a standard of competence for a concrete position within the Civil Service" (Konov, 2006).

for International Development, the European Commission, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Swedish Ministry of Finance and others” (Konov, 2006).

The survey results show that civil servants who work or worked in a Russian IRO could not state how much information they could give at a permanent desk (two out of three). However, if users have an urgent question, the best way to contact them is by email (same proportion) and the Russian IROs’ users validated this (90%, nine respondents). This uncertainty can be reflected in the Russian IROs’ users’ perceptions. Indeed, a majority (five respondents) stated that they were provided less information at a permanent desk than expected. Moreover, all the civil servants agreed that there are official administrative procedures they must comply with in their work and that they were “rather clear”, as well as “rather easy” to comply with (two respondents out of two). However, only one could state that he and his other colleagues occupying the same position comply with the same official rules and procedures. As for the users, the majority (80%, eight respondents) also perceived that the Russian IRO provided them “with the official administration procedures [they] had to follow for [their] travel”. They also were predominantly perceived as “rather clear” (70%, seven respondents) and “rather easy” to comply with (60%, six respondents), although less than in the EU.

The two civil servants who completed the survey did not perceive that the official rules and procedures applied to their position changed while they were in that capacity. The same perception goes for their users (for 90% of them, nine respondents). However, if one civil servant had been provided contradictory information about them, the other had been not. Once again, the majority of the users appears to have the same perception as 60% (six respondents) did not receive “contradictory information on the official rules and procedures [they] had to follow”. Concerning the results of following these official rules and procedures, one respondent¹⁸ could not say but the other perceived that he received what he or she wanted after having followed them without any problem doing so. Similarly, all the Russian IROs’ users received what they wanted after having followed the official rules and procedures, without any problem. However, the civil servant received what they wanted as well even if he did not follow them, which questions the usefulness of following them in his case. In the same way, half of the users had problems even if they followed these official rules and procedures (five respondents did) and did not have problems even if they did not follow them. They could have tried to follow informal administrative rules and procedures then, but none received what he or she wanted, which can refrain from resorting to them. Contrarily, the fact that 60% (six respondents) of the Russian IROs’ users were not “recommended to follow official procedures instead of informal ones” can motivate it. In this case, the two users were invited to do so by a manager and an employee. However, the results show that Russian IROs’ users tend not to “follow informal rules and procedures” (80%, eight respondents, which is a higher rate

¹⁸ As the overall number of respondents is low, I took into consideration the very low percentages as well, especially when they nuance a global tendency. Moreover, suppressing the very low respondent numbers would mean suppressing most of the questionnaires’ results concerning the civil servants.

than in the EU). Those who did learnt about them from the Russian IRO itself (two respondents) as well as from “Facebook groups of previous international students, Russian students from “buddy programme”.

As for the civil servant, the individual was recommended to follow formal rules instead of informal ones, but followed the latter. An acquaintance told him about them. These informal procedures were “rather clear” and “rather easy” to comply with, as were the official ones. Moreover, the respondent perceived that he and his colleagues occupying the same positions follow the same informal rules. They did not change while he was working there, even if different people provided contradictory information on the ones he had to follow. As for the formal rules and procedures, he received what he wanted after following these informal rules and procedures without having any problem doing so. Nonetheless, these informal rules and procedures were mainly perceived as “rather confusing” and “very confusing” (66,66% in total) and “rather difficult” or “very difficult “to comply with (three respondents) for the Russian IROs’ users. Furthermore, even if the two respondents who followed informal rules disagree on the fact that they were the same for all the users applying for the same exchange programme, as well as on the fact that “different people provided contradictory information” on them, they agree about the fact that they received what they wanted by following them. It is also the case for the European IROs’ users. It seems that the users in the Russian Federation faced problems doing so, as others in the EU did, in the same proportion. There is a risk that they carry on following them even if they have problems as the two Russian IROs’ users in question were recommended to do, one by a manager and the other by an employee (the same of for the fact to follow official rules and procedures).

In the EU, Member States have to follow administrative procedures¹⁹, that is to say, several steps defined in advance and easily accessed by the public. Firstly, the European civil servants must respect the Code of Conduct designed for the administrative staff during, but also after, the performance of their duties. In addition, they are also subject to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000 and to the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour of the 1st of March, 2002. During their activity, European officials must therefore comply with rules, regulations and official procedures. These are included in the Code of Conduct. It also contains “*a number of rights and obligations that govern their actions and behaviour in the exercise of their professional activity*” (European Commission, 2019). This activity is subject to change depending on the grades and steps (La Rédaction, 2019) that a civil servant has the opportunity to climb. This professional evolution, as well as the recruitment, must not meet discriminating criteria based on “*sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or belief, political opinions or any other opinion, belonging to a national minority, heritage, birth*”²⁰,

¹⁹ “An administrative procedure is the formal path, established in legislation, which an administrative action should follow” (Rusch, 2009).

²⁰ See the article 7 of the statute of the civil servants working for European Communities as well as the Council of the European Union.

disability, age or sexual orientation” (European Commission, 2019 and Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union, 2019). Selection and career development must therefore be egalitarian. In addition, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union specifies the rights and obligations of civil servants, in particular the article 41 which states the *“Right to good administration”*, 42 which establishes a *“right of access to documents”* and 43, entitled *“Ombudsman”*.

Good administration itself refers to two rights and one obligation. Firstly, it concerns the right of every citizen of the European Union to be heard before any adverse action is taken against him. Secondly, he also has the right to have access to any record concerning him as long as it respects the *“legitimate interests of confidentiality and professional secrecy and business”* (European Parliament, 2019 and European Commission, 2018). In addition, the aforementioned article 41 contains a right to compensation if an institution or an agent of the Community, while performing his duties, caused an injury to a person. For its part, article 42 of the Charter establishes the right of access for *“any citizen of the Union or any natural or legal person residing or having a registered office in a Member State”* (European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, European Commission, 2019) to the documents of the institutions having proclaimed this same Charter. Finally, its article 43 establishes the right of these citizens and persons *“to refer to the Ombudsman of the Union in the event of maladministration in the activities of the Community institutions or bodies, with the exception of the Court of Justice and the Court of first instance in the exercise of their jurisdictional functions”* (European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, European Commission, 2019) within two years after the plaintiff has become aware of the facts and after contacting the institution concerned in the first instance. The complainant may resort to it even if the case of maladministration does not concern him directly and he has no particular interest in reporting it. Knowledge and use of remedies are also rights declared in article 19 of the European Code of Conduct (Ombudsman, 2019) and in articles 263 and 228 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (European Union, 2019). Moreover, since the Charter has legal value equivalent to that of the treaties, any person can claim the latter right as well as the right to good administration, even though it is also found in the Code of Good Practice, which is not legally binding. It can, however, serve as a reference text for the creation of national legal acts in the Member States. Finally, the principle of good administration defined by this code is complemented by the case law of the Court of Justice as a general principle of European Union law, which binds States as their actions fall within the scope of the European law.

Created in 1992 at the end of the Treaty of Maastricht and based in Strasbourg, the Ombudsman’s position allows a better application of the democratic principle in the European Union while strengthening the rights of its citizens. The current mediator since the 1st October 2013 and for the following ten years is Emily O'Reilly. She is assisted by roughly thirty professionals and is dealing with the

complaints of European citizens²¹ or investigates on her initiative, through the ninety offices across the Union in cases of “*maladministration*”. This last term “*denotes breaches of the law, omissions from the principles of good administration and human rights abuses. More specifically, it can be unfair practices, discrimination, abuse of power, defects or refusal to provide information, undue delays, or incorrect procedures*” (Toute l’Europe.eu, 2019). Nevertheless, the principles of good administration can be found in the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour. One of the purposes of this Code is to share the good practices of European civil servants, but also to promote “*a harmonized and citizen-centred administrative culture*” (Ombudsman, 2019), but not only, since it also draws on the relationship between European administrations and companies, as well as stakeholders and associations. Another objective of this Code is to provide guidelines for achieving greater efficiency and transparency of the European institutions, as well as for opening them up and making them more accountable, for the public’s interest. This Code is therefore comparable to an evaluation grid to which these institutions should adhere. Even if there is no direct sanction mechanism, users of institutions’ services can refer to this Code when they do not understand their rights or want to enforce them, and the Ombudsman as an institution²² will act accordingly. As its decisions are not legally binding, she can make recommendations and reports to the Commission and the Parliament, which will decide whether or not to follow them. Conversely, officials and agents subject to the same status and the same regime applicable to them may refer to it in the exercise of their functions, this guide being intended to be concrete. For example, civil servants can refer to the principles of the public service to guide them.

These public service principles constitute the ethical standards of the administrative and service culture, and two of their principles will be examined in this section. The first of them that the European civil servants must respect is the “*commitment to the European Union and its citizens*” (Ombudsman, 2019) which recalls the necessary concordance between the objectives of the Treaties, the work of the institutions and their officials. These must in fact converge towards the public’s interest and in particular the interests of the Union as well as those of its citizens. For this, civil servants must do their best in their work and aspire to “*show irreproachable professionalism in all circumstances*” (Ombudsman, 2019). This is in line with the article 12 of the same Code, which states that if the official made an error in the performance of his duties, he must inform the person concerned, apologize to him and correct the negative consequences of the harm done to his rights and interests. To do so, the citizen in question must be able to correct the erroneous document, according to article 15 of the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour (Ombudsman, 2019). Lastly, the official must inform the citizen of the remedies available to him in respect of the decision of the institution in question. Moreover, European civil servants must respect both

²¹ Complaints can be filed following the steps indicated on the opposite page: <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/fr/make-a-complaint>. Article 26 of the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour reaffirms this right in the European Ombudsman.

²² “This is the contribution of my institution to meet these challenges” (Ombudsman, 2019).

their colleagues and the citizens who call on their services. For this purpose, two means are indicated in the Code, namely an effort to understand the discourse of others and the use of language that is clear and as simple as possible. It is especially the case regarding information about an administrative procedure, as pointed out in article 22 of the Code (Ombudsman, 2019).

The articles of the Code refer to general provisions, personal and material scope of application, the legitimacy of public servants' acts (based on the European law), equal treatment to "*members of the public in the same situation*" (Ombudsman, 2019). In case of discrimination, article 5 of the Code provides that the official must be able to justify it in an objective and relevant manner. The following article of the Code puts forwards the principle of proportionality to be applied to the decision-making of European civil servants (European Commission, 2018)²³, in particular between public and private interests. An example of disproportion is the imposition of constraints or restrictions of rights that are incommensurate with the objective pursued by the official. In the absence of respect for this article, the latter would then testify to a possible abuse of power, as stated in article 7 of the Code.

In what concerns the European Universities' IROs, the majority of the survey respondents (two respondents) asserts that users usually ask more than what the civil servants provide when users come at a permanent desk²⁴ of their office. However, the majority of the users (five respondents) stated that the civil servants working in the European IRO they dealt with provided as much information as they expected at a permanent desk. None of them could not contact the IROs by e-mail and the majority (66,7%, eight respondents) could call it. However, 50% (six respondents) never did. Furthermore, out of the three civil servants who completed the survey, two asserted that they had to comply with official administrative procedure during their work. They also informed their users about "the official administrative procedures [they] had to follow during [their] travel" in a majority of the cases (81,8%, nine respondents). According to the civil servants, these rules are/were "very" and "rather clear", and they both stated that they were "rather easy to comply with". The European IROs users' perceptions are concordant, as these rules are "rather clear" for 90,9% of them (ten respondents) as well as "rather easy" to comply with (81,8%, nine respondents). However, civil servants disagreed on the fact that they and their colleagues occupying the same position comply/complied with the same official rules and procedures. Indeed, one perceived they were, another that they were not, and the other could not say. As for the permanence of these rules, the only one who could answer stated that they changed while he or she was in that capacity, but it is not due to the fact that people provided contradictory information on the official rules and procedures the person had to follow. On the contrary, most of the European IROs' users (72,7%, eight respondents) did not perceive that "the official rules and procedures that

²³ This principle of proportionality is also recalled in the specific case of the members of the European Commission (European Commission, 2018).

²⁴ A permanent desk was presented in the survey as a "specific room where there is somebody who could answer your questions" at the IRO.

applied to [their] exchange programme changed while [they] were preparing for it". The fact that different people did not provide "contradictory information" about them can be an explanation, as a majority (63,6%, seven respondents) asserted it.

However, the aforementioned civil servant who completed the part of the questionnaire dedicated to the rules' permanence received what he or she wanted after having followed the rules and procedures and did not have any problem doing so. It is interesting to underline that this person also received what he or she wanted even without having followed these official rules and procedures and did not have any problem doing so either. This means that this respondent also followed informal rules and their existence was later confirmed in the survey as it was asserted that the individual was recommended to follow official rules instead of informal ones, by a manager. The contrary was not perceived. Regarding the users who dealt with an IRO situated in the European Union, they too received "what [they] wanted after having followed these official rules and procedures" (100% said so). The majority did not have any problem to follow them either (72,7%, eight respondents). However, the difference with the civil servants is that for those who were able to respond, the majority could not "receive what [they] wanted [when they] did not follow these official rules and procedures", which stresses stricter consequences for the users than for the civil servants in case the rules and procedures are not respected. It is confirmed by the fact that for those who did not answer "cannot say" (which represented 54,5% of the answers, that is to say, six respondents), the majority had "problems because [they] did not follow these official rules and procedures". Another argument in this sense is that half of users were "recommended to follow official procedures instead of informal ones," mainly by secretaries (for two respondents) and employees (in the same proportions). The fact that the majority of the European IROs' users did not "follow informal rules and procedures" (63,6%, seven respondents) validates this. However, those who followed them, learnt about them equally from their "own experience" (two respondents) and from the European or Russian IRO (one respondent for each). They mainly perceived that these informal administrative procedures were "rather clear" and "rather easy" to comply with. Moreover, all of them received "what they wanted after having followed these informal rules and procedures", as for the informal ones, but half of them also had problems doing so. Three respondents also had problems because they did not follow these informal rules and procedures, which underlines a major difference. Indeed, civil servants working for a European IRO did not have trouble following the rules or procedures (whether it was official or informal rules and procedures), but users did when dealing with the European IRO. It was even worse if they did not follow the rules and procedures. It is worth adding that they mainly were not "recommended to follow informal procedures instead of official ones" (81,8%, nine respondents). In case they did, it always was by a manager (two respondents).

However, more users think that they and their "fellow students applying for the same exchange programmes" do not comply with the same informal rules and procedures. The fact that they perceived themselves as being provided

contradictory information about the rules and procedures they had to follow could be an explanation, but no clear majority emerged. Finally, a clear task assignment was perceived (one respond out of one).

The performance criterion

According to Max Weber, administration officials, considering their submission to administrative discipline, must obey only to the obligations that go with their office. To occupy their office, they should hold a professional qualification, a diploma attesting successful examinations and once they are recruited, they can be controlled. Nevertheless, a proof of the recruitment must exist in the form of a contract which entitles the official to privileges, such as a life job, bonuses, specific career perspectives depending on seniority, pensions, etc. These qualifications and controls are a means for the administration to ensure the efficiency of their employees. Indeed, even if the officials work in a public administration, they should work as if they had company efficiency objectives. This is a criterion for a modern public administration. The performance concept applies both to their work and to the results of their work, that is to say, to the services rendered to the citizens. It also takes into account the civil servants' accountability, which can be quantitative or qualitative. The quantitative efficiency refers to the number of requests or programmes applied, to the response time or to the production of legal texts. The qualitative one is for instance linked to the services' accessibility, the personnel's amiability, thus to the users' satisfaction rate. More generally, *"efficiency means that the programmes are in line with the priorities and the objectives of the Government and have the expected or desired impact"* (Schick, 2003). However, unlike companies, institutions are not in competition and citizens consider their services as a due. To analyse an institution's efficiency, it is necessary to compare the performances it targeted to the ones it attained. Therefore, the definition according to which performance is doing *"the right thing in the right way"* (Van Dooren, 2018) has not been taken into account, especially as this definition does not consider economies of scale as a viable solution, in particular in what concerns public administrations.

Finally, evaluating a public administration's performance also supposes the existence of recourse to electrotechnical means, as the communication on the Internet and the access to online services and procedures (OECD, 2004). According to Moon, there are several developing steps to what is possible to call an "e-institution"²⁵. The first one resides on the institution having a unilateral communication towards the citizens. Its higher level is a two-way communication, where citizens can question the institution, which will have the obligation to reply. Moreover, there is a *"vertical and horizontal integration"* (Van Dooren, 2018), in reference to the one taking place in and between the institutions. Finally, the citizens can be given the opportunity to participate in politics. The related hypothesis in the survey asserts that "the International Relation Services of the universities situated in an EU member country and in the Russian Federation are

²⁵ The expression is based on the existing *"e-gouvernement"* one.

perceived as working like a company according to the students, professors-researchers and university administrative staff who have dealt with both". This hypothesis is divided into five variables, that are (1) the overall perceived efficiency of the Services²⁶; (2) the time the IRO took to process the requests directed to it (OECD, 1999); (3) the use of online services²⁷; (4) the recruitment system²⁸ and (5) the perception of a corporate culture²⁹.

In the Russian Federation, policy-makers repeatedly manifested their complaint against the performance of country's civil servants, especially because they could not secure the implementation of policies they enhanced. In 2015, a Russian Member of Parliament from the left wing said that a failure to execute them should be considered a criminal offence. Therefore, *"heavy fines for failing to properly execute presidential orders would boost discipline among civil servants and help the State get rid of irresponsible officials"* (Nikolskyi, 2015). This way, the division of labour would be respected, and the administration could not be irresponsible anymore. Indeed, in 2002, 48% of the executive orders issued by the president in 2001 were fulfilled and even if the percentage was higher for presidential decrees, the problem was still there in 2015. According to the OECD, the Russian Federation public administration needs to be more transparent and its decisions should be more disputable, especially by non-judicial means, so that citizens can question it more easily. For the OECD, this situation can be explained by the government's will to intervene and control, regulate it. According to its report, the Russian Federation public administration's quality is poor and does not allow the State to endorse the structural reforms the country needs.

Moreover, this inefficiency takes a toll on ordinary citizens' everyday life as *"the poor quality of public bureaucracies creates real day-to-day hardships for private citizens engaged in such routine tasks as renewing passports, registering poverty purchases or having their cars inspected"* (OECD Economic Survey 2006). Therefore, improving it appears to be an important matter for both the Russian authorities and the citizens who resort to it. A reform of the administration and the civil service was undertaken in 2000 and renewed in 2006-2008, to actualise it. The first one can be defined as *"the reorganisation of executive bodies and fundamental changes to their methods of work, particularly the way in which they*

²⁶ The presentations of the results show it has been addressed under those terms, see: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc-cross>; the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) and (OCDE, 1998).

²⁷ Those procedures are called *"e-procurement"* and can be defined as *"the use of information and communication technologies in public procurement"* (OECD, 2013). 97% of the OECD member countries say they tend to resort to them (OECD, 2013).

²⁸ Many OECD countries sought to increase their productivity, especially if they endured a crisis, and for that invested in innovative tools to rationalise acquisition processes and achieve a better capital gain and bigger economies of scale. *"In particular, these tools include the increased use of e-procurement platforms, framework agreements, pre-qualification systems, electronic reverse auctions and contracts with options"* (OECD, 2013).

²⁹ *"Corporate culturism, I argued in Strength, "seeks to construct [...] consensus by managing the culture through which employee values are acquired. [...] Corporate culturism [advocates] a systematic approach to creating and strengthening core organizational values in a way that excludes [...] all other values."* (Willmott, 2003).

interact with one another and with citizens and organisations” (OECD, 2006). For its part, civil service reform is concentrated on *“the formation and management of the civil service”* (OECD Economic Survey 2006). Moreover, 73,9% of social services employees declared that the quality of their work does not affect their wages, and 15% of them declared that it was influencing it (Romanov, 2008). Finally, satisfaction with quality and efficiency was of 75% for primary and secondary education. It appears the public administration with the best satisfaction rate is education in general (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2010). However, those evaluations tended to decrease as in 2016 all of them diminished of approximately 10%. The exceptions are the traffic police and official documents services, for which it was the contrary, as well as for the unemployment benefits, which stayed unchanged (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2016).

As for the civil servants who worked in a Russian IRO, two respondents out of three had trouble saying how their superiors were assessing their performance at their job³⁰. Concerning the appeal to online services, the majority of the respondents (two out of three) asserted that “processing administrative formalities online is/was a priority in my IRO”, so is “providing relevant and accurate information online”. However, and the same goes for the European IROs, they disagree on the reliability of the online services in equal proportions. As for the Russian IROs’, users disagree with the Russian IROs’ civil servants as five respondents think that they did not “have access to relevant and accurate information about rules and procedures online”. Therefore, even if it is a priority for the Russian IRO, it is not perceived as one by the users. Moreover, only one respondent out of ten never got an answer by email from the Russian IRO he or she dealt with. All the other received an answer between a few hours and within the week, which is even faster than in the EU. They also could call the Russian IRO, but a higher proportion could not say whether it was the case or not (four respondents in the Russian Federation, against two respondents in the EU). Indeed, a large majority (70%, seven respondents) never called, just like in the EU. A reason why they would write an e-mail or call the IRO is to be informed about the progress of the service they asked for, and it was perceived as being more easy than difficult (three individuals said it was “rather difficult” but the four others that it was “very easy” or “rather easy”).

As performance is linked to the detention of diplomas according to Max Weber, it appears that it is the case for the civil servants who worked in a Russian IRO, whether they were directly employed (one respondent out of one) or participated in an exchange programme (same percentage). In the same proportion, if one had to pass an interview and have “experience in political science, international relations, law, governance or public administration” in order to be recruited, the other had to participate in the exchange programme. However, to be recruited, they did not need to pass competitive examination, while they had to in order to participate in the exchange programme. This does not follow Max Weber’s theory.

³⁰ They responded “cannot say”.

However, performance appears to be an important objective, for the civil servants as well as for the IRO in general. Indeed, the two civil servants “somewhat” agreed that their Russian IRO valued performance as well as good relations with students and professors; and cared about its reputation. Moreover, even if both asserted having responsibilities in their IRO as well as performance objectives, those being “adequate” and “rather adequate” (two respondents out of two) to their work position, they disagreed on the salary. Indeed, for one it matched with his diploma and for the other it “did not quite match”. Regarding the perception of their colleagues’ performance, it was generally positive. Indeed, the majority (three respondents out of four) asserted that they were exceeding their goals. As for another IRO situated in the Russian Federation they had contacts with, they all asserted that they were “as capable as [they] expected” and all of them had a good perception of the quality of the work of others Russian IROs (one qualified it as being “excellent” and the four others as being “good”). The Russian IROs’ users generally agreed with these perceptions. Indeed, 70% (seven respondents) affirmed “they were as capable as [they] expected”. The users who did not justify their answers by saying, for one, that “they were not productive enough” and for the other that “they did not speak a word of English. They were not polite at all. They were not trying to help [...] because they don’t know their own work”. It is concordant with the fact that a majority (four respondents) “somewhat disagree” with the fact that the Russian IRO they dealt with value performance. However, they were as numerous to think that the IRO “values good relations with students and teachers”. In general, they felt that the “IRO cares about its reputation”.

In what concerns the EU at large, the European Commission concedes that “*the past two decades of reforms in Member States have somewhat improved the cost effectiveness and efficiency of public administration*” (The European Commission, 2016). In fact, it is one of the best reform achievements noticed, after “*service quality*” and “*fair treatment of citizens*” (Gerhard, 2013). States who are members of the EU since 2004 carried out significant administrative reforms to prepare for EU membership, but countless reforms across Europe are political or budgetary based more than human based, which limits the change of the administrative structure and culture. Even for the newly arrived Member States, reforms were hard to carry out and “*sustainability was often compromised by a lack of political consensus about substance and direction, a failure to tackle underlying politicisation, and weak, unstable core government institutions*” (The European Commission, 2016). This report also underlined the gap between the modernisation amendments and the working practices. Indeed, the executive capacity does not always follow the legal one, especially for Greece, Cyprus and Hungary, contrary to Denmark, Finland and the UK. For example, eGovernment services have been launched but it does not necessarily mean the country is more performant than the others, that did not put in place this modernisation programme. Indeed, if they are well-designed, they can enhance the quality and the efficiency of public administrations, as well as the services they provide. For some EU countries, the use of online services is compulsory (half of them made one or more online services obligatory), but the public does not always know how

to use them³¹. Moreover, countries such as Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Croatia, Romania and south-eastern countries in general do not have a good performance ratio³². Indeed, it is lower than 50%, while the Nordic countries one is higher than 75% (The European Commission, 2016). Many OECD countries also sought to increase their productivity, especially if they endured a crisis, and for that invested in innovative tools to rationalise acquisition processes and achieve a better capital gain and bigger economies of scale. *“In particular, these tools include the increased use of e-procurement platforms, framework agreements, pre-qualification systems, electronic reverse auctions and contracts with options”* (The European Commission, 2016). Indeed, through them, citizens can be better informed and have better access to the procedures they must follow, and follow them online. It can also reduce administrative clutter and decrease the time of task completion. Those procedures are called *“e-procurement”* and can be defined as *“the use of information and communication technologies in public procurement”*. 97% of the OECD member countries say they tend to resort to them. Thus, among the OECD countries, twenty of them use a national central e-procurement system and e-procurement systems of specific procuring entities to publish procurement plans about estimated government need.

In order to enhance countries' working standards and rules, conferences can take place. On the 10, 11 and 12 of May 2000 for example, the first Quality Conference for Public administrations in the EU took place in Lisbon. Its main objectives were to share best practices among all fifteen Member States and *“to explore the experiences and achievements of the public administrations in seeking high standards in public services, using a variety of approaches and methods”* (French Department of the Public Service, 2001). The targeted sectors were public management, excellence, the use of new technology and the stress on citizen service in public administration. The European Commission also targeted the efficiency of public administration by setting an EU Cohesion Policy fund and reforms under the *“Thematic Objective 11”* for 2014-2020. The other objective was to furnish *“Technical Assistance for strengthening the administrative capacity for the management of the funds”* (The European Commission, 2018). More precisely, the goal of this Thematic objective 11 is *“to create institutions which are stable and predictable, but also flexible enough to react to the many societal challenges, open for dialogue with the public, able to produce new policy solutions and deliver better services”*, according to the same source. The Commission specifies that those objectives should be developed in accordance with Country Specific Recommendations, Economic Adjustment Programmes and National Reform Programmes. Nevertheless, *“some public managers tend to sacrifice the administrative procedures for the sake of efficiency”* (Rusch, 2009). However, to maintain equity, transparency and the quality of public services provided or produced in those States, those procedures should be

³¹ *“The online channel is the default channel for up to 43% of citizen services. However, 48% of EU citizens needing to use public services are still unable to use the online channel”* (The European Commission, 2016).

³² *“Performance is measured as an average of scores for top level benchmarks: user centricity, transparency, cross-border mobility, key enablers”* (The European Commission, 2016).

respected. Indeed, it allows for control during the procedures and it is a guarantee that the public decision remains predictable and respects individual expectations. This control can be done according to the administrative law which protects the individuals' and citizens' personal rights and interests and balances them with the public authorities' will. Moreover, public administrations' organisation influences both the eventual economic growth and the well-being of the citizens of a country. *"This generates pecuniary benefits and enhances trust in institutions, which in turn increases tax compliance"* (European Commission, 2018).

The survey results show that in European Universities' IROs all the civil servants agreed (five respondents) that sending an email was the best way to contact them if users have an urgent question. Therefore, soliciting their services through the Internet appears to be an important option given to the users. The users' survey confirmed that, as 91,7% could contact IROs by email. During their work as well, three civil servants asserted that "processing administrative formalities online is/was a priority in my IRO", which is concordant. The users' perception confirms this as well as the majority of them received an answer by e-mail from the European IRO "within two days or less" (three respondents) and "within the week" (50%, six respondents). Equally, the majority of the civil servants "completely" agreed (three respondents) and "somewhat" agreed (one respondent) that "providing relevant and accurate information online is/was a priority in my IRO". In the same way, 75% of European IROs' users (nine respondents) perceived that they had "access to relevant and accurate information about rules and procedures online". However, no majority is emerging about the reliability of the online services, and it is the same for the Russian IROs' users. Indeed, if two civil servants completely and somewhat agreed that they were reliable, two others "somewhat" disagreed about it. It is as well reflected in the users' answers, as an equal proportion stated that they could and could not "complete administrative formalities online". Therefore, even although it is important to provide accurate and relevant online information, it is perceived as not being the case in the majority of the cases. Indeed, "the content is not always updated"³³.

In general, civil servants who worked or work in a European IRO think that their superiors evaluate them as being very performant at their job. Indeed, two respondents perceived they were exceeding their goals and three respondents perceived their superior would say they are matching their goals. However, only one respondent out of three had performance objectives and this person declared it as being "adequate" to his or her work position. Accordingly, one respondent (the only one regarding this question) completely agreed that his IRO values performance and good relations with the students and professors, as well as it cares about its reputation. In what concerns their own perception of their colleagues' performance regarding their tasks, the only respondent to that question affirmed that they were achieving their goals. Moreover, all of them (six respondents) stated that they were in contact with another IRO situated in the European Union and that "they are as capable as [they] expected". Concordantly, they all answered that the work of the other European IRO they were in contact

³³ Respondent's answer to the question "please explain why".

with was good. The users' perception of the working capability of the civil servants in the European IRO matches these own perception, as all the users answered that "they were as capable as [they] expected". Moreover, the majority thought that the European IRO they dealt with "values performance" (63,64%, seven respondents) and "good relations with students and professors" (54,55%, six respondents), as well as that it "cares about its reputation" (five respondents).

The eventual link with the possession of a diploma is not clearly marked, except for participation in an exchange programme (two respondents) and the fact that the civil servants had to pass an interview in order to be recruited (two respondents). This means that the respondent did not need to possess "a diploma in political science, international relations, law, governance or public administration [...] for recruitment at the IRO". They did not have to pass an interview to participate in the exchange programme. However, the majority of them (two respondents) think that their salary does not match neither their diploma, nor the efforts they provide at work, these two respondents having responsibilities in their IRO.

Transversal questions were asked and it appears they are directly linked with performance. Indeed, being able to communicate, especially in English, appeared to be an important factor for the users. The survey results regarding the communication between Services and the ability to write and speak in English are the following. All the civil servants who worked in a European IRO (four respondents out of four) perceived they could communicate with the civil servants working in another European IRO in case they encountered a problem during an administrative process linked to an exchange. This perception is confirmed by the users' one because the majority of them (58,3%, seven respondents) mentioned that the European IRO could communicate with the Russian one if the user "encountered problems regarding the administrative process". This is also true the other way round (five respondents). Moreover, the vast majority of the civil servants perceived their colleagues could speak English (two in an excellent, two in a good and one in a fair manner) and write in English (two in an excellent and three with a good ability). The generally good level of English is perceived as well by the European IROs' users. Indeed, none of them stated that they had a "not good" or "poor" ability to speak or write in English.

The three civil servants who worked in a Russian IRO perceived they have a good ability to speak and write in English. The ones who worked and had contacts with Russian personnel working in the Russian IROs perceived they have an "excellent" (one respondent) and "good" (four respondents) ability to speak and write in English. However, the Russian IROs' users did not entirely agree with this. Indeed, even if five said they have an "excellent" or "good" ability to speak English, four said it was "not good" or "poor", which is the main difference with the European IROs. It was a problem for the users in half of the cases. For the users of the IROS situated in the Russian Federation, civil servants working (in) there have a better ability to write in English. However, here too, three said they have a "not good" or "poor" ability to speak English (out of ten), while it was not perceived at all for the European IROs. It has been a problem for 66,7% of the respondents (two individuals).

The trust criterion

According to Max Weber, a purely bureaucratic administration, based on compliance with acts, the so-called bureaucratic-monocratic administration, is precise, permanent, disciplined and rigid. As it is predictable and transparent for the ones who hold power as well as for citizens, it inspires trust. In this context, transparency can be defined as *“the quality of being done in an open way without secrets [...] so that people can trust that they are fair and honest”* (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018). The related hypothesis asserts that the students, professors-researchers and university administrative staff perceived they could trust the International Relation Services of universities situated in an EU member country and in the Russian Federation they have dealt with. This hypothesis contains two variables that are (1) the overall perceived trust or mistrust (Bertok et al., 2006 and The World Bank, 2008) in the Services and (2) the overall perceived transparency of the Services³⁴.

There is a principle of transparency that should guide European officials in their activity according to the Code of Good Administrative Behaviour of the European Ombudsman. This principle requires public servants to be *“willing to explain their activities and to give reasons for their actions”* (Ombudsman, 2002). In addition, it gives citizens the right of observance over the conduct of civil servants, especially if the latter do not comply with the above-mentioned Code. In general, lack of transparency and accountability, for example allowing access to documents, are the reasons why the European Ombudsman was most affected in 2018. In fact, it accounted for 24.6% of the complaints she received (Ombudsman, 2018). As transparency is also linked to trust, it is important to state that the level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions that are the Council of the European Union, European Parliament and European Commission in 2014 was of 40% for the European Union (Eurostat, 2014).

However, citizens' confidence towards The Union is in free fall, having increased from 60% in the early 2000s decreased to reach 30% in 2017. The citizens' confidence towards the Commission is higher since it rose to 43% in 2018. However, 30% of the complaints lodged with the European Ombudsman were linked to transparency as they related to access to documents and information. In addition, 58.8% were directed to the Commission and Brexit is likely to further increase this number. However, the European Ombudsman argued that according to *“her experience, “the Council is the least transparent institution”*. Indeed, *“transparency in matters of conflict of interest cannot be an end in itself: on the contrary, this transparency, if it is not accompanied by measures to prevent or punish conflicts of interest, but only makes them more visible, can only exacerbate citizens' mistrust of the institutions”* (French National Assembly, 2017).

³⁴ The presentations of the results show it has been addressed under those terms, see: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc-cross> and the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR), the World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (PIA) and (The World Bank, 2008) and (OECD, 1999).

In comparison, confidence and satisfaction across government institutions in OECD countries is of 72% for the education system (OECD, 2013). Consequently, it is possible to say that Russian people trust their education and social security systems more in general. Moreover, even if, globally, Russian and OECD countries' governments have the objective to develop an open data strategy, they do not tend to always do it the same way. For example, the Russian Federation and OECD member countries have the objective to increase transparency³⁵ and openness³⁶, facilitate the creation of new businesses³⁷ and facilitate citizen participation in public debate³⁸. However, on the one hand, the Russian Federation is ready to create economic value for the public sector, contrary to any OECD member country. On the other hand, eleven Member Countries of the OECD are ready to improve the public sector and performance by strengthening accountability for outputs and outcomes. Fourteen are prepared to deliver public services more effectively and efficiently by improving internal operations and collaboration. Thirteen are willing to enable delivery from the private sector through data reuse. Sixteen are inclined to create economic value for the private sector or increase the volume of private sector business activity. Seven are predisposed to enable citizen engagement in decision-making processes, while the Russian Federation does not have those objectives (OECD, 2013). It can be explained by the fact that *"transparency is a relatively recent value in the administration of EU Member States except in Sweden where the right to anybody to view the files was established by a Law of 1766"* (Rusch, 2009). Additionally, among OECD countries, less than 50% of citizens have confidence in their national government. In the Russian Federation, this last was in 2012 of 45-47% (OECD, 2013) but, generally, this confidence is higher in BRICS countries that are Brazil, Russian Federation, India and China, than in the OECD. Moreover, thanks to the evolution of its administrative procedures, efficiency and transparency in public administrations could be better guaranteed.

As for the civil servants who worked in a European IRO, one (out of three) questioned the functioning of the Office but did not have any problems with doing so. However, one (the only who answered) "often" found himself in the situation when he did not have access to the information he needed to do his work. Therefore, he "often" asked his colleagues for this missing information (but never to do the task) as he can easily communicate with his colleagues. However, even if he asserted he "easily" communicates with his superiors, he "never" asked them for missing information. He asserted that his work was never being checked. As for the European IROs' users, the majority (58,3%, seven respondents) did not ask somebody in the Office to check if the task [they] asked for was taken care of. It can be explained by the fact that they largely (58,3%, seven respondents) could "be informed on the progress of the services [they] asked for" and that

³⁵ For seventeen of them.

³⁶ For sixteen of them.

³⁷ For fifteen of them.

³⁸ For seven of them.

getting “information about this progress” was “rather easy” for all of them. It is interesting to note that none said it was difficult, while some did for the Russian IROs.

Nevertheless, the two civil servants working in the Russian IRO asserted they both questioned the functioning of the Office but none had trouble to do so. The Russian IROs’ users also tended to ask civil servant more often “in the Office to check if the work [they] asked was being done” (70%, seven respondents). A majority of the responding civil servants “sometimes” find themselves in the situation when they do not have access to the information they need to work (three out of four), half ask their colleagues and superiors for the missing information (two out of four), while the other two never do so. Globally, they “completely agree” with the fact that they can easily communicate with their colleagues and superiors (three out of four). 75% of their work is being checked (three out of four), which is more than in a European IRO. The same goes in case they encountered problems during an administrative process linked to an exchange in the Russian Federation, as all of them (five out of five) could communicate with the other Russian IRO.

The impartiality criterion

The administration’s means are not the bureaucrats’ personal property, so they cannot appropriate them to themselves. In addition, modern bureaucracy distinguishes itself by the fact that a group of people must obey the chief’s orders, which are compulsory and always available. The chief exercises the power of commandments and constraints, divides his commandments and the constraints between them to maintain domination. Indeed, for those officials, this power of command is approved because the order considered compulsory and exemplary should exist. Therefore, this order appears to be legitimate and, in a modern State, people holding a high responsibility position should also obey this law order. Thus, administrative officials have to comply with the objective duty of their function, without taking into account who is the person in front of them (Treiber, 2016). It contributes to the depersonalization of their relations as well as to their impartiality. The hypothesis reflecting this is formulated as follows: “the students, professors-researchers and university administrative staff perceived they could trust the International Relation Services of universities situated in an EU member country and in the Russian Federation they have dealt with”. The hypothesis is divided into two variables that are (1) the overall perceived trust or mistrust (Bertok et al., 2006 and The World Bank, 2008) in the Services and (2) the overall perceived transparency³⁹ of the Services.

³⁹ The presentations of the results show it has been addressed under those terms, see: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc-cross> and the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR), the World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (PIA) and (The World Bank, 2008,) and (OCDE, 1999).

The Russian Federation is ranked the 135th most corrupted country out of 180 according to Transparency International (Transparency International, 2017). This organisation evaluated the perceived level of corruption in public sectors by experts and businesspeople. It used a scale of 0 to 100 and if 100 is very clean, 0 is highly corrupt, and the Russian Federation has a score of 29/100. Civil service pay can be an explanation of this high level of corruption. Indeed, “it has long been argued that one reason for endemic corruption is that civil service pay is too low overall and that civil service pay is too compact” (OECD, 2006), especially in comparison with the private sector. Therefore, it is possible to wonder if higher pay would encourage young people to work in the civil service, as a survey conducted in 2005 demonstrated it. According to this last, “17% of young Russian people would consider working in the civil service but [...] another 47% of respondents would consider a civil service career if the pay were substantially higher” (OECD, 2006). It also appears that the more the official occupies a position in a centralized administration⁴⁰, the more the official occupying this position earn. Thus, officials in federal institutions earn more than the ones at municipal level. Moreover, Meritocracy is hardly the rule as there are monetary encouragements but it is not necessarily linked to performance. Hence, the fact that senior civil servants may complete their low wages with bonuses and supplements that can reach more than fifteen times their original salary, which blurs the administrative hierarchy as defined by Max Weber.

According to the survey results, the majority of the civil servants (58,33%, seven out of twelve) considered continuing to work in the civil service for the next five years, even if they perceived that they earned “less than in the private sector” (nine out of fourteen). However, the majority (53,3%, eight respondents) of the IROs’ users was not considering entering the civil service as a career option. 86,7% (thirteen respondents) also thought they would earn “less than in the private sector”. It reflects the fact that even if doing a career as a civil servant did not appear to be an option to them, if it did, then the respondents would remain in the public sector. The fact that it is less paid than the private sector can be an explanation of this choice not to enter the civil service. In the survey, an eventual rapidity of career improvement was envisaged as being another explanation, but the results were not significant. Indeed, 33,3% (five IRO users) answered that their career would “improve faster in the public sector than in the private sector” in their native country⁴¹, while the same amount (four respondents) thought it would go “roughly at the same pace” or even “slower than in the private sector”. Moreover, the civil servants who answered the survey considered their job “more stable” than a similar one in the private sector in their native country (for nine out of thirteen of them) and it can be an explanation of this phenomenon. Equally, the majority of the IROs’ users (53,3%, eight respondents) think this work is more stable compared to a similar one in the private sector in their native country.

⁴⁰ Centralization is “the concentration of administrative power in a central government, authority” (Thesaurus.com, 2020).

⁴¹ With, for instance, career improvements, opportunities, promotions...

Consequently, the Russian Federation introduced a few laws to fight against corruption, among which the Federal Law enforced on the 25th of December 2008, more precisely its article 13.3. This article asserts that organisations are obliged to develop and implement measures to prevent corruption. It suggests it could be done by creating special units or the employment of officials whose job would be to prevent corruption. Another way of prevention is, as mentioned in the article, organisations cooperating with law enforcement bodies, but also developing and introducing standards and procedures aimed at ensuring a work without corruption. Moreover, the anti-corruption action underlies the adoption of a code of ethics and official conduct for employees. Finally, it relies on the prevention of the preparation of unofficial accounts. Another law which contributes to this fight is the article 575 of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation, dated from the 26th of January 1996 and then amended on the 23rd of May 2018, which prohibits donations. Indeed, it asserts that gifts other than ordinary gifts whose cost does not exceed three thousand roubles, are not allowed. This regulation concerns employees of educational organisations, medical organisations, organisations providing social services or similar, people holding public office in the Federation, notably the public offices of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Moreover, it also affects civil servants, municipal employees, employees of the Bank of Russia in connection with their official position or while practising trade. Nonetheless, this excludes donations in case of protocol events, business trips of other official events. In case the people mentioned above receive a gift whose value exceeds three thousand roubles, it becomes the property of the Russian Federation or municipal property (Consultant Plus, 1996). The last law that can be mentioned is the Federal Law #55, launched on the 27th of March 2003. As Weber asserted, civil servants' obligations should be defined and this reform established that as a job description was meant to counterbalance the *“excessive administrative discretion [as it] is considered to be among the most hazardous preconditions for corruption”* (Konov, 2006). For example, it regrouped the qualifications necessary to occupy the position but also performance indicators, as an administration must be as efficient as possible and attain technical perfection. Therefore, the more civil servant is competent, the better he should be remunerated and have the possibility to be promoted. Furthermore, this federal law was the first one to implement the term “conflict of interest” in law.

The survey results show that, according to the civil servants who work or worked in a Russian IRO, none has “ever witnessed a user bribing and/or offering a gift to an employee working in” his IRO. In the same manner, none has “ever perceived favouritism towards some users who dealt with” his IRO. The Russian IRO's users mostly have the same perception. Indeed, a majority (60%, six respondents) think that a Russian IRO cannot “ask to pay more than what is officially ask to have access to a service”, as well as to pay “for a bribe and/or a gift in return for services”. If yes, a manager and an employee did so. The differences with the users of the European IROs' perception is that more Russian IROs' users think they can be asked to pay more (20% against 9,1% for the European IROs) or for a bribe (none thought so in the EU). In the same way, if no European IROs' user perceived favouritism (four respondents) did in the Russian Federation, always towards students.

In the EU Member States, corruption can be perceived as well. Indeed, in 2012, for 74% of Europeans said corruption was a major problem in their country (European Commission, 2012). The most corrupt country was Bulgaria (Transparency International, 2019), and the less corrupted nation was Denmark (Jardine, 2011). Moreover, *“the areas in which reported petty corruption is higher, in terms of the percentage of bribe cases per contact, are on average: medical services 6.2%, land services 5%, customs 4.8%, judiciary 4.2%, police 3.8%, registry and permit service 3.8%, education system 2.5%, utilities 2.5%, tax revenue 1.9%”* (European Commission, 2012), that is to say, areas managed by public administrations, even if there can be massive differences between countries depending on the areas concerned. This has a cost, estimated at 120 billion euros per year, which represents 1% of the GDP according to the Commission Communication quoted in the same study. At a political level as well, even if the Member States tend to declare they fight those weaknesses, *“they are particularly weak when it comes to putting in place and enforcing anti-corruption safeguards”* (Transparency International, 2012), which underline the division between what the law declares and how it is implemented. The link with public administration can be created thanks to the fact that bribery or the use of connections is an easier way to access public services. Moreover, it can be noted when public funds are diverted. However, the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU in its article 83.1 asserts that corruption is a *“euro-crime”* and one of the most serious ones given to its international and cross-border dimension⁴², along with terrorism and trafficking of human beings. To measure efforts in this field, the Stockholm Programme was adopted. It gives the Commission, in cooperation with the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption⁴³, a political mandate for this and allows it to develop a comprehensive EU anti-corruption policy. For example, the Council of Europe adopted several legal instruments to fight corruption, such as the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (ETS 173)⁴⁴, the Civil Law Convention on Corruption (ETS 174)⁴⁵, twenty Guiding Principles against Corruption (Resolution (97) 24)⁴⁶, as well as two Recommendations. The first one is on the Codes of Conduct for Public Officials⁴⁷ and the second one on the Common Rules against Corruption in the Funding of Political Parties and

⁴² *“These areas of crime are the following: terrorism, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and children, illicit drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, corruption, counterfeiting of means of payment, computer crime and organised crime.”* (Europa, 2008).

⁴³ See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/home>.

⁴⁴ See: https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/173?_coconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_languageId=en_GB.

⁴⁵ See: https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/174?_coconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_languageId=en_GB.

⁴⁶ See:
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900016806cc17c>.

⁴⁷ See:
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900016806cc1ec>.

Electoral Campaigns⁴⁸. Notwithstanding, even if the Member States can have different anti-corruption policies, they may have a single national contact point to facilitate the exchange on anti-corruption policy. Moreover, in comparison with the Russian law to fight corruption, the *“Commission's anti-corruption efforts are centred around the following main pillars: mainstreaming anti-corruption provisions in EU horizontal and sectorial legislation and policy; monitoring performances in the fight against corruption by Member States; supporting the implementation of anti-corruption measures at national level via funding, technical assistance and experience-sharing; improving the quantitative evidence base for anti-corruption policy.”* (European Commission, 2018). In what concerns the EU and Member States officials, an anti-corruption Convention exists, dated from the 26th of March 1997. This Convention mentions passive⁴⁹ and active corruption⁵⁰. It encourages each Member State to take the necessary measures to avoid it.

The survey results show that out of two respondents of the survey directed to civil servants working in a European IRO, one could assert he “witnessed a user bribing and/or offering a gift to an employee of the IRO”. According to this individual, a student did so to a secretary. However, none “ever perceived favouritism towards some users who dealt with” their IRO. As for the European IROs’ users, 63,6% (seven respondents) did not “think that a European IRO can ask to pay more than what is officially asked to have access to a service”. In a concordant manner, none of them “think that a civil servant of the European IRO can ask for a bribe and/or a gift in return for services”, neither did they “perceive favouritism from the IRO’s staff towards some uses who were dealing with the European IRO”.

Conclusion

This research aimed at (1) assessing the perceived level of modernisation of a specific public administration that students, professor-researchers and university administrative staff have been in contact with when going to a European Union member country and/or in the Russian Federation (to study or work) through their sending university: the International Relation Office. Secondly, at (2) comparing the perceived levels of modernisation of the International Relations Services in the European Union and in the Russian Federation. The modernisation of the

⁴⁸ See:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900016806cc1f11>.

⁴⁹ Which can be defined as *“the deliberate action of an official, who, directly or through an intermediary, requests or receives advantages of any kind whatsoever, for himself or for a third party, or accepts a promise of such an advantage, to act or refrain from acting in accordance with his duty or in the exercise of his functions in breach of his official duties shall constitute passive corruption.”* (EUR-lex, 1997).

⁵⁰ Which can be defined as *“the deliberate action of whosoever promises or gives, directly or through an intermediary, an advantage of any kind whatsoever to an official for himself or for a third party for him to act or refrain from acting in accordance with his duty or in the exercise of his functions in breach of his official duties shall constitute active corruption.”* (EUR-lex, 1997).

abovementioned public administration was evaluated through four specific characteristics preconised by Max Weber: discipline, performance, trust and impartiality. IROs situated in the European Union and in the Russian Federation are not following them at the same perceived level and important trends⁵¹ can be observed.

If the discipline and the performance criteria appeared to be major patterns to follow by all the respondents, which validates the related hypothesis⁵², it was not the case for the trust and impartiality ones. Indeed, all the civil servants working in European Universities' IRO perceived the best way to contact them in case of emergency was by sending them an email, which relates to the availability of online services. They also stated that the civil servants working in other European IROs were "as capable as expected". As for the civil servants working in a Russian IRO, they all valued performance and good relations with the students and professors. All of them also mentioned that they care about their reputation and, like the ones working in the European Union, that their colleagues working in another IRO in the Russian Federation were "as capable as expected". On the contrary, the civil servants working in Universities' IROs situated in the European Union neither all perceive that they could trust the Services, nor that they were impartial. The related hypothesis are therefore invalidated. All the civil servants who worked in a Russian IRO perceived that they could communicate with another Russian IRO in case it encountered problems during the administrative process linked with an exchange in the Russian Federation, which relates to the trust criterion. However, the impartiality did not emerge as a major pattern. Regarding the discipline criterion, all civil servants working in both areas perceived that the administrative procedures they must comply with in their work are "rather clear" and "rather easy", even if those in the EU did not all agree that they must comply with them during their work, while they did in the Russian Federation.

As for the IROs users, the hypotheses related to discipline and performance are validated, but not the one linked to trust and impartiality. However, the one related to discipline is not entirely validated for the IROs situated in the EU and in the Russian Federation and the one linked with performance is only validated for the IROs situated in the European Union. In fact, all the users received what they wanted after having followed official rules and procedures. Nonetheless, all of them also followed informal rules and procedures. When they were recommended to do so, it was always by a manager in the Russian Federation. For its part, the performance hypothesis is only validated for the IROs situated in the EU because all the users could contact their IRO by e-mail. Besides, they all could get "information about the progress" of their demand in a "rather easy" way. Finally, the European IROs' users perceived that the civil servants "were as capable as expected", as the civil servants perceived themselves. In what

⁵¹ When all the respondents answered the same way to a single question, it has been considered as a main trend.

⁵² It is considered as validated a hypothesis where at least one variable has been approved by all the respondents of the corresponding survey.

concerns the impartiality criterion, the related hypothesis is validated by the users who dealt with a University IRO in the EU only as a result of the fact that none of the respondent users “think that a civil servant of the European IRO can ask for a bribe and/or a gift in return for services”. In the same way, no European IRO’s user perceived favouritism (while 40% did in the Russian Federation).

In conclusion, it is possible to say that following formal administrative rules and procedures appears to be important for the civil servants and users of the IROs, according to the legal frameworks and to the respondents’ perceptions. However, there are less official rules and legal frameworks in the Russian Federation. Moreover, following official rules is not the only way to obtain access to services, especially when following informal ones is recommended by people working in the IROs located in the EU and in the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation has more efforts to furnish and the gap differentiates it from the majority of the European Union Member States. Several reasons can explain it, and one of them is that the effective communication between federal executive bodies, the think tanks which are helping them, regional and other administrative levels exist and the citizens does not exist. Additionally, there are transparency and freedom of information issues. Mass media does not help it, as it does not debate civil service and administrative reforms much, which can explain the fact that citizens are not a lot involved in those subjects either. Another reason is that no peculiar main centre of control oversees and coordinates the reforms. Indeed, even if the Administration of President of the Russian Federation elaborates “*new legislation, communicates with international donors and coordinates the reform process*” (Konov, 2006), it needs an official mandate to be able to prompt a public administration reform, which it has not got. Finally, it appears people who drafted the reforms and legislation were not qualified experts but working groups united predominantly by personal relationships, such as lawyers, psychologists, civil servants, etc. To be qualified as experts, those people should have studied in schools specialised in those topics. The problem is, even if some universities are specialised, graduates prefer working in the private sector because it is better paid, as it was reflected in the survey directed to IROs users.

Performance is the most conclusive criterion, as it is observed by the official data and surveys. Indeed, in the EU and in the Russian Federation, it is an important objective for the public administrations and the surveys confirm that. Nonetheless, the legal frameworks would need to be more restrictive and more control must be coming from the hierarchy, as theorised by Max Weber, rather than the users. It is not negligible to add that this control can be restrained in the event of the resort to informal rules and procedures, which is happening in both areas.

Trust mechanisms are mainly officially put in place in the EU rather than in the Russian Federation, according to the official data. The different levels of transparency between them reflect this trend. However, even if the levels of confidence in the education system were the highest in both areas according to official data, it is one of the less validated hypotheses according to the surveys.

Indeed, it was only validated for the civil servants working in the Russian Universities' IRO, but not for the ones working in the EU, nor by the users of both categories of IROs.

Finally, impartiality is one of the most contested criteria as well. In fact, its level is low for the Russian public administrations according to the official data. Vladimir Putin asserted after the mass anti-corruption rallies that took place on the 26th of March 2016 in the Russian Federation that *“the issues of fighting corruption are constantly at the centre of public attention”* (Vetrov, 2017). However, he added that this effort should not serve people for political personal interests, for example, to promote themselves in the political arena on the eve of political events, such as campaigns. According to the survey results, even although no bribe or favouritism was perceived by a civil servant working in a European IRO, it was witnessed in an IRO situated in the Russian Federation, by a civil servant. It was asserted coming from a student towards a secretary. As a result, the survey matches the official data: the level of impartiality is higher in the EU than in the Russian Federation. However, according to the survey, European IROs' users perceived they did not face it at all, while some did in the Russian Federation. All the civil servants, in both areas, invalidated the impartiality hypothesis. This overall difference can be related to the divergence of autonomy between the EU and Russian public universities. Indeed, *“institutional autonomy is widely considered as an important prerequisite for modern universities to be able to develop institutional profiles and to deliver efficiently on their missions”* (Bennetot Pruvot & Estermann, 2017). However, this level of autonomy is varying between the European universities as well as between these and the Russian ones. Even although significant enhancements of the university autonomy could not be observed in some EU countries, developments allowed to support system modernisation. For instance, it appears that countries facing *“challenging economic context[s]”* (Bennetot Pruvot & Estermann, 2017), such as Spain, Portugal and Ireland, had difficulties to upgrade their university autonomy. Comparatively, the university autonomy degree is lower in the Russian Federation. Indeed, *“a historical lack of autonomy in Russia has resulted in chronic deficiencies in terms of strategic thinking, and in meaningless, formalistic institutional missions.”* For Russian higher education to demonstrate a higher level of accountability, multiple decisions can be taken, such as encouraging them to *“determine tuition fees and admissions procedures”, “switch to long-term, competitive, performance-based, block-grant funding”, diversify their funding, coming actually in majority from the government* (Volkov & Melnyk, 2018).

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