

Reorganization of the Hungarian Regional Public Administration – in the Centre: District Offices

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Abstract

In my study I present a significant part of the Hungarian public administration's reorganization, the process of the formation of district public administrative level and district offices. In its frame, I draw a picture on the main characteristics of council district system which can be regarded as current district offices' historical predecessor; and I also provide information on the circumstances of the termination of district offices operating in the council system. Following this, via stepping to the present through the past, I review the theoretical bases of the formation of the modern district public administrative level, the main stages of the formation of district offices, including basic rules referring to "district agreements" to be entered into by municipal and county government offices and settlement local self-governments. After this, I provide information on district offices as sub-offices of municipal and county government offices; analyse district office's organization, task- and competence sphere and their management and leadership characteristics. As the closure of the study, I review experiences conducted from the operation of the district offices so far and present recommendations on the development of district offices

Keywords: district offices, metropolitan and county government offices, regional public administration, reorganization

1. INTRODUCTION

When the new Government was formed in 2010, the regional level of public administration's state administration subsystem was characterized by a great deal of fragmentation and organizational variety. If we made a snapshot of regional state administration at the time of the 2010 change of government, we would see that among regional state administration organs there were organs of general competence (regional state administration authorities) and of special competence (such as county land registries), if we investigated competency and operational area, we would see regional organs (regional administration of national pension), county organs (such as county office of justice) and organs operating with special competency (such as national park directorate). This diversity was increased by that some state administration organs with special competence operated organizational units of regional competence under county level (such as regional

land registry).¹ Besides the above mentioned diversity of regional state administration organs, a further specialty of the regional level was that certain organs acting independently from one another with the budget insured to them and used human resources 'freely' among legal frames, operated next to the weak coordination competence of regional state administration offices.

These disintegration processes could not be stopped by the always strengthening integration endeavours² either, up until 2010, when the new Government started to reorganize the Hungarian public administration.

As the first step of the public administration reform, metropolitan and county public administration offices³ were formed – again – with the effect of 1st September 2010, terminating regional state administration offices and as their legal successors. Simultaneously, the unconstitutional situation⁴ born with the formation of regional state administration offices – or rather their legal precursor, regional public administration offices – also terminated. The second step of the reform was the formation of metropolitan and county government offices as the Government's regional state administration organs of general competence, which legal base is given by Act CXXXVI of 2010 (furthermore referred to as Khtv.) on law amendments connected to the formation of metropolitan and county government offices and regional integration, and Government Decree nr. 288/2010. (XII. 23.) on metropolitan and county government offices. Metropolitan and county government offices were formed on the base of metropolitan and county public administration offices, as their general successor. Furthermore, a significant part of the until then mainly individually operating regional state administration organs became organizational units – special administration units – of metropolitan and county government offices through integration. As regards regional state administration organs falling outside of the integration – except National Tax and

¹ GYURITA, ERZSÉBET RITA: Reformok a területi államigazgatás szervezetében 2010-2013 között [Reforms in the regional state administration organization between 2010 and 2013], in PATYI, ANDRÁS – LAPSÁNSZKY, ANDRÁS (ed.): *Rendszerváltás, demokrácia és államreform az elmúlt 25 évben. Ünnepi kötet Verebélyi Imre 70. születésnapja tiszteletére* [Transition, democracy and state reform in the past 25 years. Festive volume for the 70th Birthday of Imre Verebélyi], 2014, Complex Kiadó, Budapest, 175. See also: GYURITA, RITA – HULKÓ, GÁBOR – KÁLMÁN, JÁNOS – TÓTH, TAMARA: The Organisation of the Hungarian Public Administration, in SMUK, PÉTER (ed.): *Transformation of the Hungarian Legal System 2010-2013*, 2013, Complex, Budapest, 155-184.

² The detailed analysis of government decrees referring to the integration attempts see: ZÖLD-NAGY, VIKTÓRIA – VIRÁG, RUDOLF: *A területi államigazgatás integrációja* [Regional state administration's integration], 2013, Nemzeti Közszolgálati és Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 35-48, 52-57.

³ Metropolitan and county public administration authorities were formed by Government decree 214/2010. (VII. 9.) on metropolitan and county public administration authorities.

⁴ See the presentation of the unconstitutional situation born upon the formation of regional public administration authorities in details: VEREBÉLYI, IMRE: Válságban a magyar középszintű közigazgatás, quo vadis? [In crisis the hungarian middle level public administration, quo vadis?], in *Új Magyar Közigazgatás*, Vol. 1. No. 2. (2008), 1-5.

Customs Administration Directorate and law enforcement organs⁵ –, the metropolitan and county government office practices coordination and investigative rights. Metropolitan and county government offices started their operation on 1st January, 2011. It is important to highlight that government windows⁶ that is, integrated governmental customer services were formed at that time as inner organizational units – with tighter task- and competence sphere – of metropolitan and county government offices' general office.

The Government set the formation of a good state as its objective, for which completion it launched two further significant administration programs in 2011, besides the public administration reform: juridical reform and reform of local self-governments.

The Magyary Zoltán Public Administration Development Programme (furthermore referred to as Magyary Programme) was elaborated in 2011, which on the one hand set down the legitimacy and results of the reform started in 2010, on the other hand, appointed the public administration reform's further main tasks. The Magyary Programme also elaborates on the characteristics of the good state, according to which „the State creates a lawful and equitable balance between a number of interests and needs, allowing the enforcement of claims in this way and provides protection. On the other hand, the State proceeds with due responsibility in the interest of the protection and preservation of the nation's natural and cultural heritage. On the third part, the only self-interest of the State is that it should, under any circumstances and effectively, be able to enforce the above two elements of the common good; in other words, the State should create an effective rule of law, therefore should provide the functioning of its institutions, and should provide the honouring and accountability of individual and collective rights.”

The Magyary Programme defines the complete renovation of regional public administration as the most significant part of the public administration's innovation. The Government arrived to the next significant step of the renovation of regional public administration in 2013, as district offices started their operation as sub-offices of metropolitan and county government offices on 1st January. As it was worded in the 2012 publication of the Magyary Programme, „the purpose of the Government is to create contemporary, modern-age administrative districts which contribute to the coming into being of a system that operates at lower social costs than today's public administration”.

In my study I would like to present the circumstances of the formation of district offices as well as significant characteristics of their organization and operation.

⁵ Metropolitan and county government offices only practice coordination tethers over law enforcement organs.

⁶ See the formation, organization and operation of metropolitan and county government offices in GYURITA, ERZSÉBET RITA: A fővárosi és megyei kormányhivatal [The metropolitan and county government office], in *Új Magyar Közigazgatás*, Vol. 7. No. 2. (2014), 8-19.

2. HISTORY – DISTRICTS IN THE SYSTEM OF COUNCIL

Via investigating the history of Hungary's state structure, we can see that districts as regional organizational units⁷ placed between the level of county and settlement, as a basic regional unit of Hungarian public administration has continuously been present in the Hungarian state's history from the 15th century – except twenty-eight years – and has had a decisive role during the completion of public administration tasks.⁸ Unfortunately, the study's extent limitations do not allow me to provide a comprehensive picture of the history of the institution of districts⁹ but I have to mention the district organization operating in the system of council prior to the transition, which can also be regarded as the „ancestor” of the current structure of districts.

Article 29 of the Constitution¹⁰ accepted in 1949 (furthermore referred to as Constitution) stated that the People's Republic of Hungary consists of counties, districts, towns and villages from state administration point of view. According to paragraph 30 of the Constitution, the state power's local organs are county council, district council, village council and town district council.¹¹ Hence, district was determined as a constitutional regional level.

Detailed rules on the organization and operation of local councils – as elected organs – can be found in Act I. of 1950 (furthermore referred to as: the first council law) on local councils. At that time, district council's operation sphere expanded to all towns and villages, however, with the individual decision of the council of ministers, certain bigger towns were subtracted from the authority of county and district council.¹²

Act X of 1954 on councils (furthermore referred to as: the second council law) altered the regional fragmentation, based on which all towns were subtracted from the authority of the district council and towns with county and district rights were formed.¹³

Act I of 1971 on councils (furthermore referred to as: the third council law) brought about a significant change with regards to the district level of public administration as it terminated district council organs and institutionalized district offices. District councils, as unified, individual organs of the county council's executive committee, carried out state administration tasks belonging to the competence of the council with relation to those villages which were not qualified

⁷ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 19.

⁸ IVANCSICS, IMRE – TÓTH, JÓZSEF: A járások múltjáról és lehetséges jövőjéről [On the history of district and on their possible future], in: *Területi Statisztika*, Vol. 15. Issue 1. (2012), 6.

⁹ Ibid. 6-33, makes a complete review of the institution's history in this theme.

¹⁰ Act XX. of 1949 on the Constitution of the Hungarian Republic.

¹¹ IVANCSICS – TÓTH: *op. cit.* 9, Act XX. of 1949 on the Constitution of the Hungarian Republic, Art. 29 and Art. 30.

¹² IVANCSICS – TÓTH: *op. cit.* 10.

¹³ Ibid. 11.

as suburban villages. As for suburban villages, competences of the district office or its head were practiced by special administration organs and the secretary of the town council's executive committee.¹⁴

The application of the suburban model continuously spread in the 1980s.¹⁵ Finally, the system of district offices was terminated with the effect of 1st January 1984 and was replaced by the new administration system, the suburban administration. Though, it is interesting that 83 districts and 61 suburban administrational units existed before the reorganization, while 179 new suburbs were formed after the reorganization.¹⁶

3. THEORETICAL BASES OF THE FORMATION OF DISTRICT OFFICES

The basic objectives determining the directions of the public administration's reorganization and the formation of the Good State are written in the Magyary Programme (furthermore referred to as Magyary Programme 11.0), drafted by the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice in 2011. The formation of district state administration and simultaneously with it, local self-government reforms were already marked as tasks to accomplish in Magyary Programme 11.0, as a result of which the partition of local public affairs and state administration affairs between district offices and village local governments is being realized.¹⁷

After the formation of district as state administration level, upon the wish of the Government, the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice took the necessary steps for creating scientific basis¹⁸ for districts and the formation of district offices.¹⁹

As the result of the theoretical preparation work, the Government, as a formal decision, published Government decree 1299/2011. (IX. 1.) (furthermore referred to as Government decree) on the formation of districts, determining the formation of districts. Point 1 of the Government decree sets the more effective, more inexpensive and client centred regional state administration as the objective of the district system. Furthermore, the Government decree also recorded the conceptual principles regarding the formation of districts. The Government decree obviously stated that districts must be formed with 1st January 2013. Besides setting the date, we can put the organizational principles and expectations of the Government decree into four main groups:

¹⁴ Art. 66 of the Act of 1971 on councils.

¹⁵ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 19.

¹⁶ IVANCSICS – TÓTH: *op. cit.* 12.

¹⁷ Magyary Zoltán Public Administration Development Programme (MP 11.0) 25. available at: <http://magyaryprogram.kormany.hu/admin/download/d/2c/40000/Magyary%20kozig%20fejlesztesi%20program%202012%20A4.pdf> [cit. 2014-06-01].

¹⁸ The Ministry of Public Administration entrusted the HÉFTA Research Institute with the carrying out of preparatory tasks. The study can be retrieved from: <http://hetfa.hu/terhasznalatvizsgalat/> [cit. 2014-06-01].

¹⁹ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 170.

- a) principles to follow during determining districts' regional extension and competence area;
- b) principles referring to selecting districts' seat;
- c) principle of the distribution of local self-government and state administration tasks;
- d) principles referring to districts offices' organizational system and their physical realization.

4. FORMATION OF DISTRICT OFFICES

On 25th June 2012, the Parliament created Act XCIII of 2012 (furthermore referred to as District law) on the formation of districts and the modification of laws connected to it, which Act determined the legal frames of the formation of districts and transferred the law amendments²⁰ necessary for the reorganization of tasks. During the formation of districts, the District law justified it as a primary standpoint that the newly formed district offices shall be formed on the base of local self-governments 'assets and human resources ensuring the completion of tasks taken over from the local government, and on the base of metropolitan and county government offices' sub-offices, hence, the central budget shall be less burdened by the introduction of the new lower-middle public administration level, therefore, not only the operation but the formation shall also be done in an inexpensive way. As for human resources, it is significant to note that only those public officials could be transferred from village local self-governments who met the conditions necessary for fulfilling the tasks.²¹ I must note that with regards to certain village local self-governments the first thing to determine was the number of positions of the staff complement of the mayor's office to be taken over by the given metropolitan and county government office in the ratio of the transferred task- and competence circles. Hence, the staff complement of district offices was not influenced by the circumstance that certain public officials did not meet the qualification conditions, or the village self-government decided not to give any public officials, as in these cases metropolitan and county government offices took over empty positions which could be freely filled among legal frames. It can be seen that therefore person and position was separated from each other. The self-government assets serving the completion of tasks was taken to the metropolitan and county government offices' free utilization,²² the legal relation of the public officials who were taken over became governmental service relation by the power of law.²³ Details of the transfer of positions and self-government assets serving the completion of tasks transferred from local self-governments was completed by the

²⁰ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 182.

²¹ The applicable qualification conditions are determined in Government decree 29/2012. (III. 7.) on the qualification conditions of public officials.

²² District law, Art. 2. para. (1).

²³ District law, Art. 7. para. (3).

agreement between metropolitan and county government offices and village self-governments. The agreements had to be conducted until 31st October 2012.²⁴ In cases if it did not happen at all or not adequately happened, the agreement was done between the given metropolitan and county government office with a decree, and it decided on unsettled questions of the agreement with a decree.²⁵ There was no place for further legal remedy against this metropolitan and county government office decree in the public administration organization, the affected village self-government could hand in judicial supervision request against it.

Government decree 218/2012 (VIII. 13.) (furthermore referred to as District government decree) formed as an executive decree of the District law had the sample²⁶ of agreement between metropolitan and county government offices and village self-governments, and the detailed rules of concluding agreements and the handover of self-governments' assets.

The District government decree appointed²⁷ the competence area of district offices and determined their organizational structure. Based on the regulation, 23 district offices in Budapest and 175 district offices in the counties could start their operation on 1st January 2013.

5. LEGAL BASE OF DISTRICT OFFICES

The District law – among others – modified the Khtv., which hence determined district offices' place in the system of metropolitan and county government offices, set the rules of competence practicing and finalized the practice of employers' rights.²⁸

According to Khtv., district offices operate as sub-offices of county government offices, and district offices operate as sub-offices of the metropolitan government office.²⁹ Based on the regulation by law, district offices – similarly to special administration organs – became metropolitan and county government offices' organizational units with individual task- and competence sphere with that functional tasks³⁰ ensuring district offices' operation are carried out by the general office of metropolitan and county government office. This solution ensured the operation-financial advantages coming from the unified organization with regards to district offices, too.³¹

District offices' organizational structure follows the organizational structure of metropolitan and county government offices, according to which the district

²⁴ District law, Art. 5. para. (2).

²⁵ District law, Art. 5. para. (5).

²⁶ District government decree's appendix 2 contains the text of the agreement.

²⁷ The District government decree's appendix 2 contains district office's competence area.

²⁸ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 186.

²⁹ Khtv. Art. 20/A. para. (1)-(2).

³⁰ The determination of functional tasks is written in Art. 1 of the District Law.

³¹ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 186.

office consists of the district general office led by the head of the district office (furthermore referred to as district general office) and specialised district organs.³²

As regards the organizational structure of the district general office, KIM order nr. 3/2013. (I. 18.) (furthermore referred to as KIM order) on organizational and operational structure of metropolitan and county government offices has resolutions. Based on the KIM order's investigation, it can be concluded that the district general office characteristically consists of an *authority department* and the *department of the office of government issued documents*. In case of district offices with greater number, a *department supporting operation* has also been formed in frames of the district general office for carrying out certain functional tasks.³³ Government windows with extended competences³⁴ were formed in 2014 as the newer stage of the public administration reform (furthermore referred to as district government windows), which windows started their operation as the district general office's organizational units. In connection with district government windows we must notice that they were formed from the merging of departments of the office of government issued documents and those government offices which previously operated as organizational units of metropolitan and county government offices' general office. In the new type of government offices one can arrange cases belonging to the sphere of the office of government issued documents and cases belonging to previous government offices' task and competence sphere, as well as cases of special administration organs' task- and competence sphere (such as true copy of title deed). Not all district offices have such new-type of government windows yet, their formation is continuous. Currently, office of government issued documents and *department of government windows* can simultaneously operate next to each other.

The following specialised district organs operate as organizational units of district offices:

- a) *district public trust office* for carrying out child protection and guardian tasks;
- b) district construction office to carry out construction supervision authority and certain legally determined construction authority tasks;
- c) *district building control and heritage protection authority* for carrying out construction supervision, certain legally determined construction authority tasks and cultural heritage protection authority tasks;
- d) the *district office's special administration organ of Animal Health and Food Control* for carrying out food safety, food quality-supervisory, fodder-supervisory, food chain-supervisory and animal health tasks;
- e) *district land registry* for carrying out property and ground formation tasks;

³² Khtv. Art. 20/A. para. (3).

³³ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 212.

³⁴ Government decree 515/2013. (XII. 30.) on government windows introduces the “second generation” government windows.

- f) *district land registry's labour sub-office* for carrying out employment, work force tasks;
- g) *district public health institution* for carrying out public health tasks.³⁵

According to para. (2) of the District government decree's Art. 2, the government decree can name other state administration organizations as the district authority's special administration organ. However, this has not happened since the setting up of district offices. It is important to highlight that not all district special administration organs have been formed in all district offices. It is only the district public trust office that operates in every district. Characteristically, all district organs can be found in bigger district offices and they practice their tasks and competence sphere expanded over more districts.

The fact that administration shall not fall further from citizens was a highly justifiable principle at the formation of district offices. To that end, the institution of sub-offices and case assistant has been formed. The District government decree states that the district office can carry out its tasks through sub-offices and case assistants with regards to villages belonging to its competence.³⁶ Sub-offices are district offices' individual inner organizational units, where the district office holds permanent administration. In those settlements where the district office does not operate sub-offices but still wishes to ensure the possibility of local administration, district office's case assistants may act. Details of the settlement case assistant service are set in the agreement conducted between metropolitan and county government offices and settlement local self-governments.³⁷

6. DISTRICT OFFICE'S DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP

6.1. *District office's direction*

The district office's direction is greatly similar to the leadership structure of metropolitan and county government offices, as the head of the district office can be regarded as a political leader to the extent that his/her appointment's condition is higher education and at least five-year public administration experience, however, in his/her case Khtv. accepts parliamentarian activity, chair of county assembly and fulfilling the role of a mayor as public administration experience.³⁸ It is a difference though that district office heads' charge is not connected to any governmental cycle.³⁹ The head of the district office is appointed and exempted by the minister upon the recommendation of the Government Commissioner. Employer rights over the head of the district office – expect appointment and exemption – are practiced by the Government Commissioner.⁴⁰

³⁵ District government decree, Art. 2, para. (1).

³⁶ District government decree, Art. 1, para. (1).

³⁷ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 223-224.

³⁸ Khtv. Art. 20/D. para. (2).

³⁹ FAZEKAS, MARIANNA: *Közigazgatási jog, Általános rész I.* [Public administration law – General part I.], 2014, ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, Budapest, 202-203.

⁴⁰ Khtv. Art. 20/D., para. (1).

The head of the district office is substituted by the assistant-head of district office. Theoretically, the assistant-head of district office is the district office's administrative professional leader, as one can be appointed as assistant-head of district office if s/he has basic degree and public administration management qualification, basic degree and international public administration management qualification, master degree and graduate public administration manager qualification, master degree and graduate European and international public administration management qualification, graduate jurist qualification achieved at master degree and at least basic degree and economist qualification.⁴¹ The assistant-head of district office is appointed and his/her legal relation is terminated by the Government Commissioner upon the recommendation of the head of the district office. Employer rights over the assistant-head of district office – expect appointment, termination of legal relation, initiation of disciplinary proceeding and cutting disciplinary penalty – is practiced by the head of the district office.⁴²

Having regard to that district offices are organizational units of the metropolitan and county government offices which operate as a unified budgetary organization, and to that they are only individual regarding their task- and competence sphere, the organizational leader entitlements of the head of the district office are quite limited. Most of the organizational tasks are practiced by the Government Commissioner.⁴³ In this sphere, the head of district office has the widest room for manoeuvre regarding employer rights, which is only limited in a way that regarding the appointment and termination of the district office's government official, the Government Commissioner has the right to object. On the person to be appointed or terminated as the district office's government official, the head of the district office – in case of specialised district organ after having consulted with the head of the specialised district organ – informs the Government Commissioner who can object against the person to be appointed or against his/her termination within fifteen days after having received the information. The objected person cannot be appointed as government official, or cannot be terminated.⁴⁴

The employer right over the head of the specialised district organ means an exception from the main rule, as the head of the specialised district organ is appointed by the head of the county special administration organ upon the recommendation of the head of district office – if the government decree does not make an exception – and s/he practices the employer rights connected to his/her appointment. On the person to be appointed or terminated as the head of the specialised district organ, the head of the county special administration organ informs the Government Commissioner who can object against the person to be appointed or against the termination within fifteen days after having received the information. The objected person cannot be appointed as head of the specialised district organ, or cannot be terminated.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Khtv. Art. 20/E, para. (2).

⁴² Khtv. Art. 20/D. para. (1).

⁴³ FAZEKAS: *op. cit.* 204.

⁴⁴ Khtv. Art.20/B.

⁴⁵ Khtv. Art. 20/F.

The head of district office, the assistant-head of district office and the head of the specialised district organ are government officials appointed for an unlimited period.

6.2. The district office's leadership

A similar structure is present in district offices like the one in metropolitan and county government offices' double (parted) leadership. The difference is that – according to the previous point – the Government Commissioner has organizational management tether over district offices. In practice it means the functional carrying out of tasks that ensure the operation of district offices (such as appointments, practising the right to object in case of exemption, practising covenant for the charge of the government office in case of procurement ensuring the district office's carrying out of tasks, approving the district general office's order of business; etc.).

Besides organizational leadership entitlements, the professional leadership tether over district offices has also been institutionalized. The professional leadership's essence is that the given branch's responsibility for the carrying out of professional task and the determining of professional requirements remains.⁴⁶ Professional leadership's legal tools are especially a) annulation of decision, order for carrying out of a new procedure, if needed, b) decision's precursory or follow-up approval in legally determined cases, c) issue individual order for the carrying out of tasks or complementing a default, d) obliging for a report or statement.⁴⁷ Professional leadership over district offices parts with relation to organizations having the given task sphere according to the followings:

- a) with regards to state administration cases belonging to the sphere of the district general office, the professional leadership tethers are practiced by the Government Commissioner;
- b) with regards to tasks carried out by the office of government issued documents operating in the district general office for reporting and accounting, the tether is practiced by the Public Administration and Electronic Public Services Central Authority's chair;
- c) the professional leadership of social tasks belonging to the sphere of the district general office is carried out by the metropolitan and county government office's social and public trust office;
- d) with regards to specialised district organs, the chair of the county special administration organ carrying out the professional leadership is entitled to practice the professional leadership tethers.⁴⁸

7. DISTRICT OFFICE'S TASK- AND COMPETENCE SPHERE

Having regard to that according to basic principles determined by the Government,

⁴⁶ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 243.

⁴⁷ District government decree, Art. 3. para. (1).

⁴⁸ District government decree, Art. 3.

district offices' most important task is to carry out state administration tasks below county level, district offices' – also meaning specialised district organs – task- and competence sphere consisted of the following elements:

- a) authority cases belonging to the sphere of the notary – exceptionally the mayor, or the administrator of the mayor's office;
- b) affairs belonging to the task- and competence sphere of metropolitan and county government office's special administration organs' subregional and district sub-offices.⁴⁹

Significant differences prevail during the actual realization of the original idea of competence-division, as the complete transfer of state administration authority tethers being in the competence of notary has not happened yet, hence, a very mixed and complicated system has been formed in the area of practicing lower level state administration authority tethers.⁵⁰

Besides some insignificant tethers (such as approval of circus menagerie), legislators put significant areas into the task- and competence sphere of district offices, especially from the point of view of metropolitan notaries. There has also been a tether-distribution in certain field of social administration. Furthermore, the district office became the general misdemeanour authority.⁵¹ Listing it one by one, the following cases were transferred from the notary to the task- and competence sphere of the district office based on legislations made until the end of 2012:

- a) tasks of the office of government issued documents;
- b) certain public trust and child protection tasks;
- c) certain social administration tasks;
- d) family support cases;
- e) public education tasks;
- f) right of asylum cases;
- g) authorization of sole proprietorship activity;
- h) certain communal-type cases (such as cemetery authorization);
- i) certain animal health tasks (such as authorization of animal shelter);
- j) misdemeanour tasks;
- k) management of local protection committees;
- l) certain water, environmental protection tasks;

⁴⁹ ZÖLD-NAGY – VIRÁG: *op. cit.* 205.

⁵⁰ The transfer of the notary's state administration task- and competence sphere to district offices in connection with the formation of district (metropolitan district) offices was regulated in Government decree 174/2012. (VII. 26.) on the modification of certain government decrees. Further tether-installation in connection with the formation of district (metropolitan district) offices was carried out by Government decree 296/2012. (X. 17.) on the modification of certain government decrees.

⁵¹ FÁBIÁN, ADRIÁN – BENCSIK, ANDRÁS: Régi és új szereplők a területi államigazgatásban: járási hivatalok és kormányablakok [Old and new actors in the regional state administration: district offices and government windows], in *Új Magyar Közigazgatás*, Vol. 7. No. 2. (2014), 22.

m) construction supervision, certain construction authority tasks.⁵²

The keeping of the mixed system of the lower level state administration authority's task- and competence spheres was explained by the Government with that those task- and competence spheres could not be transferred to the district office with regards to which the adequate practice of competence requires a more detailed local knowledge of local characteristics and local regulations.⁵³

As I have already mentioned it in point 6., from 1st January 2014, with Government decree 515/2013. (XII. 30.) on government windows (furthermore referred to as GW Government decree) entering into effect, the possibility for the formation of government windows with extended task sphere became possible, which government windows now operate as the district general office's inner organizational units.⁵⁴ Hence, the district office's task- and competence sphere was expanded with the task- and competence sphere of government windows, which can be grouped according to the followings:

- a)* cases carried out in their own competence sphere;
- b)* cases to be carried out as a contributory authority;
- c)* providing guiding information; and
- d)* general provision of information without having regard to competence sphere and authority.

8. SUMMARY

As I have already elaborated on it, some differences prevail between the original ideas on the formation of district offices and their actual realization – especially with regards to the formation of task- and competence sphere –, however, we cannot question the achieved successes of the formation and operation of district offices. The formation of district offices was a huge task in the life of metropolitan and county government offices, still, district offices started their operation without any trouble on 1st January 2013. It is important to highlight that there has been smaller fixes in district offices but there has been no need for significant changes, which perfectly signals their stable construction.

It can also be valued as a great success that citizens basically welcomed the formation of the new district office and the client-centred, service provider type of public administration, which is a significant objective of the public administration's reorganization and is being more and more realized.

Regarding district office's future, the direction of its improvement arose as a question. Numerous governmental ideas have born in connection with it. According to one proposal, in case of a possible, further governmental integration,

⁵² Magyary Zoltán Public Administration Development Programme (MP 11.0) 26. available at: <http://magyaryprogram.kormany.hu/admin/download/d/2c/40000/Magyary%20kozig%20fejlesztesi%20program%202012%20A4.pdf> [cit. 2014-06-01].

⁵³ White Book for the review of the regional state administration system and regional state administration competences. 31st August 2013. 16.

⁵⁴ GW Government decree Art. 1. para. (1).

the integration of the newly integrated regional state administration organs' district authority organizational units, the district office's individual organizational unit shall be accomplished. There was also a proposal regarding that based on the experiences so far, districts' area shall be investigated, and if needed, their border shall be modified – even through possible contraction – in order to reach a more effective public administration operation.

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