

# NORMATIVE ASPECT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ETHICS

## Abstract

Managing of ethics is an essential part of public administration in democratic countries. Normative aspects of ethics is often considered as a necessary basis of public administration ethics. The main aim of this study is to identify the importance of ethical norms for employees in the conditions of Slovak cities. The article is trying to answer following research question: What is the importance of ethical norms for employees in the conditions of Slovak Republic cities? Besides that, the core part of study concentrates its attention on analysis of selected group of ethical norms for employees, and thus stirring up a pressure to find some recommendations in the context of contemporary inconsistencies. Moreover, the article examines, with the help of deductive and inductive method, the potential of qualitative improvement of normative aspect of public administration ethics. Findings suggest that normative aspects of public administration ethics should be perceived as an important factor of employees' regulation. At the same time, normative aspect of ethics should be perceived as fundamental basis for other aspects of public administration ethics, which quality is based on other aspects of public administration ethics. Besides that, practical implications should be identified in the context of achieving higher ethical standards in public administration organizations. Finally, various limits and perspectives of examined issues are discussed in the final part of the article.

**KEY WORDS:** codes of ethics, normative systems, ethical requirements, employees, cities

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Public administration is a fundamental part of contemporary democratic societies. At the same time, public administration of 21st century faces many challenges. Decentralization of competencies on local self-government units, effectivity of public finances, transparency of public administration or fighting

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against frauds and corruption are the most discussed challenges of public administration in Slovak Republic. Many challenges are similar for other countries of Central Europe. In this sense, we could identify an objectively existing effort to make public administration functioning more transparent, more accountable and more ethical as well. Besides that, there is an ambition to decrease the level of corruption perception. These objectives are examined by public administration ethics, dynamically developing part of applied ethics. The main goal of this part of applied ethics is to formulate ethical requirements linked to the sphere of public administration.

Public administration should be perceived as a complex system of organizations everywhere in the world. Slovak public administration consists of three dominant subsystems, which are state administration, self-government and public institutions. However, based on the ambition of presented study, which is mentioned in the following section, the exact analysis of whole public administration is due to the quantity of organizations very difficult. If we consider the contemporary initiatives in the Slovak public administration, than local self-government units should be perceived as an appropriate base for our analysis. Local self-government is an expression of democracy in the sphere of public affairs at the closest level to the citizens (Jesenko, 2017). Moreover, according to the theory of power distribution, local self-government limits central power in its vertical sense, what could be perceived additionally to horizontal distribution of power realized by the system of checks and balances at the central level (Paluš, 2017). Based on these opinions, we may argue that ethical initiatives of local self-government units fully correspond with their potential to reflect contemporary needs of the public. But, there are still almost 3000 organizations and further concretization is more than desirable. We might concentrate our attention on the 140 local self-government units with the city status. In this sense, we should emphasize personal, financial and organizational ability to manage ethical aspect of everyday activities. The legitimacy of selection is confirmed also with scope of performed activities, such as variety of procedures, applying of legislative, decision-making and implementing public policies too. From what was said, the following text will be focused on normative aspect of public administration ethics in Slovak cities.

Based on abovementioned, the ambition of presented study is to highlight the importance of normative aspects of public administration ethics. The purpose of this research is based on constraint, that legislative as primary regulation mechanism is not flawless. Moreover, the ability of legal norms to regulate every human activity is limited. In this sense, another mechanism linked to regulation of individuals' behaviour is more than desirable. The main aim of study is to identify the importance of ethical norms for employees in the conditions of Slovak cities. The article is trying to answer following research question: What is the importance

of ethical norms for employees in the conditions of Slovak cities? In this context, the hypothesis is based on the statement, that code of ethics for employees is an important tool of employees' regulation in the sphere of public administration. The introductory part is devoted to theoretical basis of ethical norms in public administration. The core part of this study concentrates its attention on analysis of selected group of ethical norms. Besides that, this part of the study, with the help of inductive and deductive methods, is trying to answer the following partial questions: How often do cities use codes of ethics to regulate professional behaviour of their employees? Which factors do determine the content of analysed codes? Which ethical requirements are mentioned in selected group of codes? The article ends with a discussion about the perspectives and limits of ethical norms for employees.

## 2 NORMATIVE ASPECT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The interest in ethical dimension of public administration has been growing constantly in last decades. Normative aspects of public administration ethics is mostly discussed in the context of transparency, ethical competence or fighting against corruption. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative aspects of some requirements are difficult to reach, but we might say that they are objective and legitimate. Besides that, ethics should be perceived in wider social circumstances. Public administration of 21st century should reflect contemporary challenges, otherwise it would not be able to realize its basic functions and satisfy expectations of the public. The understanding of ethics are because of its ability to guide individuals in a contradictory situations very important in the contemporary dynamically changing world (Konkolski, 2008). The existence of appropriate and consistent ethical standards seems important because of prevention of ethical chaos, reduction of professional erosion, increasing motivation of employees and increasing of public confidence and legitimacy (Haque, 2011). Based on above mentioned, we may argue that ethical requirements should be complementary and additional element of individuals' regulation besides legally adopted requirements mentioned in legal norms.

Ethical requirements for employees are mostly mentioned in the codes of ethics. Managing ethics in the context of selected units of local self-government is part of public administration ethics as a whole. That is the main reason why this part of study concentrates its attention on the concept of public administration ethics. On the other hand, the attention is put on specific characteristic of ethical management in the context of local self-government units.

Public administration ethics is a complex field of study. In this sense, there are other aspects which are irreplaceable, such as organizational aspects and ethical virtues. Furthermore, these significant attributes of public administration

ethics closely relate to examined normative aspect of ethics. Ethical workplace, relationship between employee and supervisor, creation and functioning of specialized ethical bodies are important part of ethical program in the organization of public administration. Expert on public administration ethics C. E. Johnson (2017) stated that clear and unambiguous specification of relations between ethical bodies and employees is an important part of high quality code of ethics. Moreover, systematic ethical education and ethical training framework should be included in the codes of ethics as well. The main purpose of these ethical tools is to develop ethical virtues. In this sense, ethical virtues theory could provide guidance on how to behave in ethically complicated situations. Virtues should be perceived as praiseworthy qualities of individuals, which help ethics to regulate behaviour on non-rule basis (Seknička, Putnová, 2016). In this sense, normative aspects of public administration ethics is not the only one, but following text is primarily focused on this aspect of ethical practice.

Finally, according to ambition of presented study we have to stress following significant fact. Decisively, we have to agree with the experts on public administration ethics that most frequently used tool of ethical management is code of ethics (Dyck, Neubert, 2010; Ondrová, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Menzel, 2017). Importance of normative aspects of public administration ethics is typical for both democratic countries and countries, which tries to become more democratic (Menzel, 2015). This fact is closely related to the normativity of professional ethics, which main goal is to formulate clear ethical requirements relevant to concrete profession. Based on these facts, following parts of presented study will be focused on theoretical conceptions and actual state of knowledge related to examined issues.

## **2.1 Ethical norms and public administration – theoretical basis**

Contemporary society is due to its complexity, dynamics and seemingly endless expansion constrained by numerous limitations, restrictions, rules and standards. The ability of humankind to regulate simply issues in a complicated way is aptly remarked by D. Greaber in his book *The Utopia of Rules*. D. Greaber argues, that if we create bureaucratic structure and its primary goal is to solve some problems, this structure automatically creates another problems, which could be solved only by another bureaucratic tools (Geaber, 2017). Despite of that, there is a need of regulation linked to the human behaviour through the ethical requirements. Individuals cannot be resistant to negative aspects of power and there is an objective need related to prevention of worst-case scenarios, such as abuse of authority, conflict of interests, misuse of information, unauthorized receiving of gifts and other hospitalities. In this sense, public administration employees and their behaviour is limited by legislative. Besides that, there is

ethical normative system as well. But, could ethical norms influence behaviour of public administration employees in a significant way? Moreover, we might say that due to simultaneous existence of these normative systems, ethical and legal norms should be characterized by their mutual relation. Ethical normative system should not be perceived as another package of rules and restrictions. Ethics should be perceived as a result of long-time and verified human values and principles, which needs to be implemented in the context of contemporary challenges.

The functioning of public administration is primarily determined by legal norms and each action must be based on law. Therefore, law as a normative system has significant importance for realization of public administration. According to ambition of study, there should be considered ethics as a normative system. The uniqueness of ethics is based on some level of self-regulation, because ethical requirements are shared and created by individuals of society (Brodeur, 2016). The necessity of complementary existence of mentioned normative systems could be perceived by the words of M. Durante (2017) that legal normative system could not work isolated in the 21st century and there are more and more opinions discussing theoretical and practical penetration of selected normative systems. Durante continues, that normative systems interact each other and in some situations legal terms could be properly interpreted by other normative systems.

Based on above mentioned, ethics is mostly perceived as additional guide on how to behave in ethically complicated situations, which are not regulated by legislative. In this sense, theoretical discussions are devoted to complementary existence of ethical and legal normative system. Anyway, ethical norms could not replace legislative at all. Legal norms regulate whole process of public administration practice, decision-making process, organizational issues or requirements of decisions. In this sense, legislative represents irreplaceable part of public administration. On the other hand, there are some terms which could be correctly explained by the theory of public administration ethics, such as ethical integrity, responsibility, accountability, corruption, mobbing or transparency and openness. Nevertheless, these ethical terms represent attributes, which help to precise managing ethics. But, many of these terms are important factor of satisfactory functioning public administration in accordance to imperatives, which are mentioned in legal norms.

Moreover, mentioned opinions should not be perceived as an ideas, which tries to decrease the importance of legitimate legal norms. At this point we might say that unambiguous interpretation of good or wrong should be considered by application of multiple normative systems. This objectively existing requirement should be understood as an importance of clear and satisfactory definitions of ethical requirements, which are formally included in codes of ethics.

Fundamental aspects of ethical norms should be correctly interpreted by deontological ethics. Moral credit of behaviour should be judged by its conformity

with obligation, which is not based on intuition, conscience or utility (Lawton, Rayner, Lasthuizen, 2013). Deontological ethics sets those ways of behaving, which could not harm other individuals and theoreticians could be distinguished only by strictness of restrictions (McNaughton, Rawling, 2007). However, there must be stressed that the most important is distinction between good and wrong, which leads us to definition of good through the impermissibility of some kinds of behaviour (Gluchman, 2010). This fundamental basis of deontological theory is important sign, which makes this ethical theory unambiguous. This theoretical conception is in its practical aspects reflected by the existence of codes of ethics. On the other hand, we have to mention limits of ethical norms. As it was mentioned by R. Chandler (2001) ethical norms could not completely replace personal, accountable and creative aspect of decision-making process, which is dominant and irreplaceable part of public administration practice. In this sense, there should be applied another ethical theories, such as consequentialist ethical theory or virtue ethics. But, according to ambition of this text, these important theories should be perceived as a secondary theories. Ethical norms, ethical standards and codes of ethics are important if organization tries to regulate ethical aspects of its practice. Codes of ethics helps to reach ideals, which are discussed by other ethical theories too. However, following text will be focused on deontological ethics, which is mainly connected with the normative aspects of public administration ethics.

## **2.2 Codes of ethics for employees – the evidence from cities in the Slovak Republic**

The ability of public administration to reflect ideals formulated by the theory of public administration ethics is limited. In this sense, we could say this about almost each field of study, which is interdisciplinary connected to the sphere of public administration. Anyway, we could identify independent initiatives realized by local self-government units. If we consider entire local self-government, codes of ethics for employees were also adopted by other subjects. But, following part of text is based on the analysis of ethical norms adopted by Slovak cities.

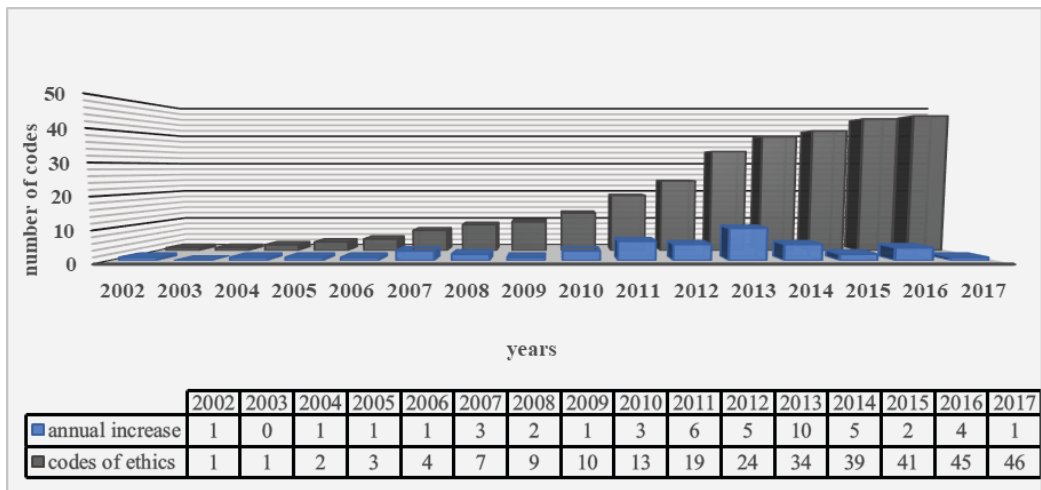
Based on the theory of public administration ethics, codes of ethics for employees are the most used tool of ethical management. But, could this universal formula be recognised in the conditions of selected group of local self-government units? The exact numbers regarding the complexity of Slovak Republic public administration could not be find anywhere in the scientific literature, national databases or on the internet<sup>2</sup>. That is another reason why this text concentrate its

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<sup>2</sup> Public administration ethics is partially examined by Transparency International Slovakia. Based on the selected ambition of this text, we have to emphasize the initiative, which is called “Transparentná samospráva”.

attention on cities and not local self-government units or public administration as a whole. The following figure tries to illustrate this issue more clearly. The figure one consist of column graph and summary of data. This figure provides an information on number of codes adopted by Slovak cities until 31st December 2017.

Figure 1 Quantification of codes of ethics for employees in the conditions of Slovak cities



Source: own processing

The presented column figure shows, that there are 46 codes of ethics for employees in the condition of Slovak cities, which represents nearly 33% of all cities. As we could see, the majority of codes were adopted in the last seven years. The most codes of ethics were adopted in the 2013. We tried to quantify normative aspect of ethical management in the conditions of Slovak cities. Answering of this issue is important for the next part of the text. What's more, this ambition is closely related to separation of cities, which try to manage ethical aspect of their practice from those who do not. On the other hand, codes of ethics are basic documents of ethical management. According to this fact, if we can identify all codes of ethics, than we could say which other tools of ethical management are used by selected local self-government units. The purpose of this quantification was to gather existing codes of ethics. This step may be considered as a crucial for the next part of the study.

Moreover, another important part of examined normative issues is the quality of codes. We should evaluate the quality of codes of ethics for employees by using the content analysis. The content of codes is determined by many factors. But, there is one significant paradox, which needs to be stressed. Ethical norms in public administration should represent interests of organization. On the other

hand, this issue of normative aspect is mostly influenced by the environment and the external factors. This important detail is based on the character of public administration organizations and their ambition to serve to the public.

Managing of ethical aspect is important part of public administration and some countries established specialized institution of ethical character. The practical results of their activities include conceptual documents, model codes or other types of documents focused on ethical guidelines. But, institution, board or commission with mentioned roles does not exist in the condition of Slovak Republic. Therefore, logical consequence is absence of ethical documents, which could be used by organizations of public administration and cities as well.

Nevertheless, we could identify a non-systematic effort linked to managing of ethics in the public administration and some indications should be explored in the following documents. Firstly, we have to stress that there is no official conceptual document, which concentrates its attention on examined issue. But, some initiatives could be identified in the Yearly Activity Report of Slovak Ombudsman from 2007. The attachment of this report called Principles of good administration (2007) concentrates its attention on principles of legality, impartiality, objectivity, timeliness, predictability, assistive approach, decision-making, cooperation of public administration, accountability and transparency. Mentioned principles do not consider some important qualities of public administration ethics, such as ethical integrity, accountability, receiving gifts or conflict of interests. In this sense, importance of mentioned document could not be decreased because managing of ethics is not a centre of attention of ombudsman activities. Moreover, there are some documents adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic. Strategic Plan for Fighting Corruption (2017) contains some recommendations, such as necessity of codes of ethics for state administration employees, judges or elected representatives. On the other hand, we may identify an existence of commitment linked to adoption of codes and implementation of included rights and duties (Action Plan for Strengthening the Slovak Republic as a State Governed by the Rule of Law, 2015). These documents could be perceived as an indication of indirect and vague political commitments. The evidence from other countries of Western Europe shows that political commitments should be an elemental impulse. Moreover, mentioned commitments represent basic aspect of ethical management, which is represented by the codes of ethics. Foreign literature and evidence from other countries show that contemporary ethics in public administration should be based on the concepts of ethical integrity and accountability. But, based on existing circumstances, the precision of normative aspect of ethics is the first step on how to improve this important part of public administration practice.

On the other hand, there should be considered impacts of contemporary ongoing globalization and integration processes. Actual trends in managing of



ethics are contained in the documents published by international organizations, such as United Nations, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or European Union<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, we cannot forget on inspirational power of ethical documents published by national entity abroad<sup>4</sup>. But, these initiatives cannot be perceived as something that needs to be implemented by Slovak public administration units. Nevertheless, if we consider the level of global interdependency and the porosity of the state barriers, some level of uniqueness could be very helpful.

Another factor is regarding the contemporary crisis of democracy very important and in accordance to trends very innovative as well. Codes of ethics should be consulted by regulated entities. The ambition of higher participation of employees is one of the biggest challenges related to public administration ethics. This approach should guarantee better identification with included rights and duties. But, this mechanism is very occasional in the condition of Slovak cities. Minimum codes of ethics contain statement about previous consultations with employees. On the other hand, some of them include statement, that text of code were consulted with the employees' representative or employees union.

Based on abovementioned, there are various factor, which could influence the content of codes. So far mentioned factors all come down to last determinant, which should be called as preferences of organization. Cities could adjust their codes in accordance to their activities. But, such adjustment is limited because of character of these organizations. The priority of analysed codes is serving the public and achieving the public interest. What's more, this decision fully depends on ambition of city to regulate ethical aspect of its practice. The preferences of each local self-government unit are transformed in ethical norms, which regulates selected aspects of employee's behaviour. Besides that, abovementioned factors are important too. The result of mentioned factors is a set of rights and duties or expected good behaviour of employees. Ethical requirements mentioned in analysed codes are formulated under the absence of universal national concept. That is the main reason why existing codes of ethics are so different. But, some rights and duties are formulated quite similar and some wording is almost identical.

3 Inspirations could be found in Code of Conduct for OECD Officials, Putting Ethics to Work, 1998 Recommendation of the OECD Council on Improving Ethical Conduct in the Public Service Including Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Service, Recommendation No. R (2000) 10 of the Committee of Ministers to Member states on codes of conduct for public officials, Public Service Principles for the EU Civil Service, Code of Conduct for Commissioners, Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament with Respect to Financial Interests and Conflicts of Interest.

4 Committee on Standards in Public life in United Kingdom published The Seven Principles of Public Life, Ethical Standards for Providers of Public Services and Ethical Standards for Providers of Public Services – Guidance. Office of Governmental Ethics in the USA published Ethical Service: Handbook for Executive Branch Employees, Standards of Ethical Conduct or 14 General Principles.

Codes of conduct for employees of local self-government usually consist of following rights and duties.

Generally we may say that fundamental basis of analysed codes of ethics is the existence of basic ethical principles. These principles are mentioned at the beginning of the codes in almost all cases. In this sense, ethical principle should be perceived as an essential interpretational rule. In some codes we cannot find principles, but these fundamental rules are named as values. The most frequently used principle is lawfulness, which is interpreted as an obligation to observe rights and duties included in legislation, internal standards and ethical norms. Some codes associate this principle with the principle of achieving the public interest, but some codes formulate this principle separately. Moreover, ethical principle of preventing the conflict of interest is closely related to principles mentioned so far. This principle is often concretized by separate section of code. Besides that, codes include following ethical principles, which are impartiality, independence, objectivity, openness, transparency, responsibility and accountability. But, especially in the context of transparency and accountability we may identify only minimal ethical requirements, which do not correspond with contemporary global trends of ethical management in public administration.

Conflict of interest is one of the most discussed problem of contemporary public administration. The most of analysed codes tries to minimize negative consequences related to this issue in the following way. Codes often characterize conflict of interests as situation, from which employee, his family, close relatives, entities in friendly, commercial or political relationship could gain some advantage. Based on these interpretations, employee must report potential or existing conflict and avoid the rise of this undesirable situation. An obligation to report is mostly formulated against supervisor or created ethical body. What's more, employees should not participate on activities, which could jeopardize properly realization of their duties. This issue is processed very precisely and many codes formulate their ambition in the context of multiple kinds of conflict. We may sum it up, that prevention of conflict of interest is important part of analysed codes.

Public administration ethics tries to regulate another basic human activity, which must be in accordance to achieving of public interest strictly a clearly regulated by ethical norms. Based on this fact, another important part of codes is regulation of receiving gifts and other hospitalities. The most frequent formulation describes strictly obligation to reject acceptance of any gifts and other hospitalities. This rejection must be reported in accordance to established mechanism. On the other hand, we could identify sporadic but more precise mechanism which consist of clear formulated exceptions. Based on the text of codes, we may identify exceptions, such as maximum value of received gift or gifts of promotional, common or decency character. Moreover, some local self-government units established register of gifts. This mechanism helps to make

this issue more transparent. Anyway, obligation to reject any gift and hospitality which could affect realization of professional responsibilities should be judged positively. On the other hand, existing exceptions is innovative mechanism, which is used also by international organization and public administration organizations in other democratic countries.

The importance of mentioned ethical issues is undeniable. But, managing of ethics could not be reduced on these problems. Very important is question of reducing situations, which could be called as abusing of authority. Generally, the most frequent obligation related to this issue should be identified as unconditional duty to not to take advantage of employee status. Moreover, impermissibility of abusing superordinate relationship, mobbing or misusing of obtained information should be perceived as unconditional necessity. Based on abovementioned, understanding of this issue could be very extensive. But, mentioned situations could be perceived as serious threats, which could threaten achieving of public interests. Anyway, the majority of codes include separate part, which regulates these negative issues.

Another important part of ethical norm is obligation to report a misconduct. Generally, employees should report conflict of interests, abusing of authority, unauthorized using of public finances or receiving of gifts. Basic obligation to report a misconduct is formulated against superior or ethical body. Reporting of misconduct is a mechanism, which protects interests of organization, public interests and employees as well. Moral duty of each employee is to report any type of conduct, which is in a conflict with legislative or code of ethics. On the other hand, there is a necessity to protect whistle-blowers, who want to report any type of misconduct.

Moreover, normative aspect of public administration ethics and the existence of ethical requirements should be closely connected to sanctions. The existence of effective mechanism should be an important part of each code of conduct. But, sanctions is not an ordinary part of codes for employees in condition of the Slovak cities. The most used formulation identifies sanctions as a disciplinary sanction, which should be solved in accordance to legal norms. At this point of our discussion, we need to stress that there is some tension between legal and ethical normative system, when ethical requirements are sanctioned by legal norms.

### **2.3 Potential and limits of ethical norms**

Normative aspect of ethical management should be regarding the historical, territorial and social circumstances of Slovak Republic perceived as appropriate. This objectively existing fact should be confirmed by the words of J. Machyniak (2012) that it is a typical evidence everywhere in the world that public

administration functioning is not ideal and this imperfection is recognisable especially in the countries with non-democratic history.

From what was said, we may conclude that there is no general code of ethics or national conception which regulates behaviour of public administration employees in the conditions of Slovak Republic. But, if we consider contemporary circumstances in public administration, the adoption of this type of code is just an illusion for next few years. If such initiative should be successful, it will have to be based on the approach which is called “ten commandments”. As it was said by A. Lawton (2004) this type of code should be characterized by short and clear content, which formulates some basic principles of behaviour. But, there is unanswered question who should formulate this basic principles. In this sense, we could mention national ethical boards, committees or institutions established in other states. But, there is no similar entity in the Slovak republic. The absence of this institution should be compensated by permanent or ad hoc commission of experts. Anyway, cities adopted codes of ethics for employees without any Government or state intervention. On the other hand, the existence of national ethical documents could improve managing of ethical aspect. Cities without code of ethics for employees should adopt one. Besides that, cities with valid codes of ethics could revise their codes in accordance to contemporary trends.

Moreover, the revision process is important part of managing ethics. Some of analysed codes were adopted before ten or more years. We may agree with the opinion of F. G. Reamer (2015) that codes of ethics are live documents and in accordance to reflection of actual ethical challenges and new acknowledgements there is a necessity of periodical revision. The issue of revision is more complicated than it would seem. The successful achievement of this ambition exceed examined normative aspect of ethics. The revision and sophistication of codes is easier when ethical body of any character is involved in this process.

Moreover, another important attribute of normative aspect is the issue of sanction mechanism. We could identify some approaches, when violation of rights and duties mentioned in the codes should be solved by disciplinary mechanism. But at this point, there is a conflict of ethical and legal normative system. From what was said in the theoretical part of this study, we need to highlight the importance of complementary existence of mentioned normative systems once again. There should not prevail polemics over the objectively existing need to sanction misconduct. The most important thing is to sanction behaviour, which is in contradiction with legitimate ethical requirements. In this sense, ethical norms could regulate things, which cannot be regulated by legal norms and vice versa. This opinion should be applied when we want to sanction misconduct as well. But, theory and practice is not united and we may find many interpretations of this contradictory issue. Based on actual situation, the most important ethical requirements should be part of legal norms. In our

opinion, this solution looks regarding the existing conditions as only way how to solve mentioned inconsistencies. Based on abovementioned, this solution should be prioritized until the time, when ethical awareness of employees will be the primary guide of their behaviour.

Nevertheless, the way how to behave lies on individual. In this sense, we might argue that high quality ethical norm could not ensure ethical behaviour of employees. This issue is well discussed by M. de Vries and P. S. Kim (2011) who stated, that if employment in the sphere of public sector is not valued and appreciated enough, how we can expect honourable and ethical behaviour of public administration employees? But, we have to try to change this misleading public opinion. Moreover, we may use the words of E. Župová that managers of public administration should act more freely and more independent in accordance to achieve better results (Župová, 2014). According to K. Kernaghan and J. W. Langford (2014) there should not be used “top down” system of managing, there is a necessity of involving employees to co-create ethical requirements and appropriate sanctions as well. Based on our analysis, this participative approach is very unique in the conditions of Slovak cities. The majority of analysed codes were adopted without any dialogue. Moreover, the co-creators of ethical values should be both the public and employees. In this sense, public administration employees should not be perceived as a passive factor (Adamcová, 2012). Besides that, higher participation of employees and free hands of managers could improve both codes of ethics and managing of ethics.

We may conclude, that ethical aspect is often limited on simply permissions and prohibitions in the conditions of Slovak cities. In this sense, normative aspect of public administration ethics is just fundamental basis, which should be developed and enriched by another aspects of ethics. Based on abovementioned, organizational aspect of public administration ethics is another very important piece of puzzle. The potential of ethical bodies is linked to observance of codes, sanction mechanism, cultivation of ethical workplace or potential development of these important attributes. What's more, organizational aspect of public administration ethics should positively enhance both ethical aspect of managing and legal aspect of public administration. But, these two aspect do not reflect the highest achieved qualitative state in contemporary practice and theory. In this sense, we should identify approach which is based on the importance of ethical integrity and accountability. Employees act ethically because they want to act in accordance to ethical requirements and they are able to recognize negative aspect of their unethical behaviour. But, we may conclude that this state should be reached by progressive implementation of mentioned improvements. In this sense, we cannot expect benefits of properly functioning of public administration ethics without adequate quality of normative aspect, which is mostly represented by codes of ethics.

### 3 CONCLUSION

The presented study concentrated its attention on normative aspect of public administration ethics in the conditions of Slovak Republic. The core part of study analysed codes of ethics for employees in the Slovak cities. The hypothesis has been approved. The importance of normative aspect of ethics was confirmed by following findings. The main benefit of this paper is finding, that codes of ethics should be considered as important factor, which could affect behaviour of employees in the sphere of public administration. On the other hand, there is no national conception or national document, which could be used by cities. If we consider quantity of competencies and the total amount of public finances, than absence of some coordination is quite surprising. Nevertheless, codes of ethics for employees are the most used tool of ethical management in the condition of Slovak cities. In this sense, 33 % of Slovak cities adopted code of ethics for employees. In our opinion, this number of ethical norms should be considered in the context of wider society circumstances as appropriate. The content of codes is mostly influenced by the preferences city. But, there were identified another important determinants in the study. Analysed group of codes included especially following issues: ethical principles, conflict of interests, receiving of gifts and other hospitalities, abusing of authority, obligation to report and sanction mechanism.

From what was said, normative aspect is important part of managing public administration ethics. On the other hand, there were identified some imperfections in the study. The perspectives and some recommendations were discussed in the final part of the text. In this sense, the potential of complementary existence of ethical and legal normative system, possibilities of national ethical conception, need of higher participation of employees were identified as steps, which should improve managing of ethics in the sphere of public administration. Moreover, the sophistication process of ethical norms have to be perceived as important part of public administration ethics. Besides that, ethical norms should be perceived as irreplaceable basis for the existence of ethical bodies and efforts related to reaching adequate level of ethical integrity and accountability.

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