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Preface to the Issue of the *Annales*

Local governance and municipalities play an important role in the provision of public services. Modern municipal systems evolved after the mid-19th century. This period was not only the beginning of modern public administration and administrative law in Europe, but also the era of the industrial revolution, which transformed Europe. The administrative systems have been transformed during the last two centuries. Welfare states evolved during the 20th century, and the role of public services provided by public bodies increased. Public service provision has been influenced by European integration and the multilayer governance of Europe resulted in new challenges.

Because the phenomena of public service provision and autonomous bodies can be interpreted as a complex one, different approaches are applied for analysing them. The different regulations on service provision are compared, but with a new approach formed by the evolution of administrative sciences: comparative local governance and the comparison of the different socio-economic systems has become a recent topic for different types of publications. Multi- and interdisciplinary analyses have evolved during the last decades: clearly, discrete legal, economic, social etc. analyses could not show the whole picture of these phenomena. This interdisciplinary approach is similar to a kaleidoscope: if not in motion, we can only see colourful pieces of glass. When the kaleidoscope begins to move, it creates beautiful patterns.

As such, these phenomena cannot be analysed in a monochrome work. Important transformations of the last decades, such as the revolutionary progress of ICT, the fourth industrial revolution and Industry 4.0 transformed the socio-economic environment, and European integration has created and faced new challenges; for example the joint monetary system can be interpreted as a new economic environment for these services. The economic crisis in 2008/2009 hit European systems as well, and new challenges and threats have emerged. Recentralisation tendencies have evolved and the concentration of service provision became a more recent issue.

This issue of the *Annales* is intended to be a kaleidoscope: it focuses on the different approaches and phenomena of public service provision. It contains traditional legal analyses, but even sociological, political, geographical and economic analyses can be found here. Not only are the methods used in the chapters in this book diverse, it analyses different elements and phenomena as well.

Interdisciplinarity is also represented by the authors of the journal. Although the majority of them can be classified as (administrative) lawyers, other fields of jurisprudence – for example European Union law and civil law – are represented by the

authors as well. Economists and experts in regional studies can be found among them to mirror the wide scope of administrative sciences. The articles of the issue are based on a conference organised by the Department of Administrative Law of the Faculty of Law of ELTE Budapest. The participants represented the United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Portugal and Serbia. The conference *'Public Services and Autonomies in the Member States of the European Union'* was held in 2017 with a focus on recent questions of the local public service provision in Europe and was supported by the Ministry of Justice of Hungary. We would like to express our gratitude to the patron of this conference.

We wish for the readers of this issue of the *Annales* to see the colourful picture of the 'kaleidoscope' of European public service provision systems, offering different but at the same time very similar views on the transformation of the European systems.