

# REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR THE YEAR 2023

## SUMMARY

As in the previous period, the Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2030 remains the umbrella document for the work of public administration. Although at the time of writing the report, the Government has not been formed yet, i.e. no guidelines have been given for the work of the administration through the Work Programme of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the priorities related to raising the capacity of public servants in the coming period remain defined in strategic documents, primarily through the Economic Reform Programme of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2024. The list of structural reforms, among others, includes the following: youth policy, lifelong learning and the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework system, improving the quality of public service provision through the optimization and digitization of administrative procedures, increasing the use of electronic administration services, providing the necessary technical infrastructure, but also creating a stimulating environment for development innovative and solutions based on artificial intelligence, creating a stimulating environment for the development of start-ups that will contribute to economic growth based on the knowledge economy, strengthening the competitiveness of the economy, as well as recognition both on the national and global level.

Analyses<sup>1</sup> show that Serbian public administration, using a systematic approach regarding the application of digital technology for providing public services, has led to an increase in their availability. At the same time, and in order to increase the availability of Serbian eGovernment services, it is necessary to introduce systematic monitoring of the performance of service provision and user satisfaction at all levels of administration. A lack of digital skills and knowledge was also identified, as well as a lack of knowledge in other areas relevant to digital management, such as agile approach, methods of developing future strategies, methods for promoting innovation and achieving system resilience.

In March 2022, permanent programme committees were formed, namely: for electronic administration and digitization, for management of international development aid and European Union funds, for public finance, for trainer training and for management in public administration. The permanent programme committees have started working on recommendations and directions for improving the content and developing new thematic units within the 2023 training programme.

In the previous year, with the support of experts from the National School of Administration from France - "*Ecole Nationale d'Administration*" (ENA), within **the Action Plan for the period from 2021 to 2025 for the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2030**, the introductory training programme for work in the public administration was improved for trainees, persons on probation and

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<sup>1</sup> Ex-post analysis of the eGovernment Development Programme in the Republic of Serbia 2020-2022, Support for public administration reform within the framework of the Sectoral Reform Agreement, May 2022

persons who get employment in the public administration and are not on probation. In the course of 2022, the implementation of the new concept of the programme was piloted and based on the experience gained, it was concluded that, in addition to preparing for the state professional exam, the programme should also include basic training that develops special functional competencies in order to facilitate the introduction of new employees into work. It is recommended that these trainings are done online.

As in the previous period, the administration's priority remains training related to the provision of services to citizens and the economy. In this context, training in the field of work and communication with clients is particularly important, with a special emphasis on working with clients with special needs. Also, for the sake of a more expedient overview of the field and in order to make the content better accessible to the trainees, it is recommended to combine the trainings *Establishing electronic services* and *electronic document, electronic identification, and trusted services in electronic business*.

The success of the further development of e-government implies raising the capacity of employees in the field of quality management for the purpose of optimizing processes and products/services, reengineering the management and business processes, using agile management as well as SDM - service design methodology (HCD - Human Centered Design) with the focus on the end users when designing policies, programmes, products, i.e. services.

Creating a stimulating environment for the development of start-ups that will contribute to economic growth based on the knowledge economy, strengthening the competitiveness of the economy, as well as recognition at the national and global level, will have a particularly important place in the coming period. The strategy for the development of the start-up ecosystem of Serbia for the period 2021-2025 defines the framework for start-up business, which will lead to further development of the start-up ecosystem, along with the implementation of incentive measures related to research and development determined by other strategic frameworks, primarily in the field of smart specialization and artificial intelligence. The intention is to encourage public and private investments in this area, enable the development of the domestic entrepreneurial capital market, the development of high-tech entrepreneurial culture and the raising of entrepreneurial capacities through educational programmes and the strengthening of the capacities of support organizations, above all public administration.

In the field of **corruption prevention**, there is a need for advanced training in the field of whistle-blower protection. At the same time, the dominant thematic unit is *Ethics and Integrity*, for which as many as 1,089 officials expressed a need, which further implies the need for the development of an online training in order to meet the expressed need.

In the previous period, the Government of the Republic of Serbia passed a number of important documents that **ensure anti-discrimination, gender equality, social inclusion of Roma men and women, as well as the inclusion of civil society**. In this sense, raising the capacity of public administration in this domain is a priority.

In the domain of **public policy management**, that is, study and analytical work, the focus remains on data analysis and data-based decision-making. Additionally, bearing in mind the importance of including all stakeholders in the process of making public policies, the training related to eConsultations gets its full importance. Also, in accordance with the Strategy for Gender Equality, gender-responsive planning of departmental policies is of particular importance.

Trainings in the field of the **legislative process** are aimed at acquiring basic knowledge related to the legislative process as well as at strengthening the capacity of civil servants in the work of drafting and monitoring the implementation of regulations in order to perform these tasks in state bodies more efficiently and effectively. In addition, the need for more advanced, practical training for the specified target group is highlighted. Bearing in mind

the new methodology for assessing the risk of corruption in regulations as a mechanism for the prevention of corruption, the existing training should be harmonized with it.

Continuous training of inspectors is also vital in terms of sustainability and implementation of tasks from the scope of public administration bodies. Topics such as *Skills required for inspection supervision* - online training and *Inspection supervision* - online training are, with a high level of priority, needed by civil servants for further development and training, and even over 360 officials express the need for them.

In the area of **administrative and legal affairs**, the need for advanced workshops and the exchange of experiences of officials assigned to the duties of conducting administrative proceedings and deciding on administrative matters and training for the implementation of the Law on Administrative Procedure in practice was recognized.

Bearing in mind the reform processes in the field of **public finance**, especially the Public Finance Management Reform Programme, capital investments and raising the capacity of officials for the implementation of IPSAS standards remain a priority in the coming period. Moreover, the need for training officers for foreign exchange operations was identified, and the officers themselves recognize in particular the need for training in the field of E-invoices.

In order to enable the proper application of regulations in the field of **public procurement**, it is necessary to ensure adequate administrative capacities. Emphasizing anti-corruption principles and prevention of conflicts of interest in this area is particularly important. The trainees particularly emphasize the need for additional workshops in the field of preparation of tender documents and implementation of the procedure.

The newly adopted Public Finance Management Reform Programme for the period from 2021-2025 foresees the preparation and implementation of the Programme for continuous **training of internal auditors**, as well as the modernization of training and training resources in the area of IFKJ and the expansion of e-learning modules. Financial management and control are making a constant and steady progress, but it is necessary that the training programme in the field of FMC is implemented on a larger scale by NAPA in order to enable the Central Unit for Harmonization to focus on the monitoring of FMC among users of public funds and the further development of methodological material in the field of FMC.

The largest number of authorities expressed the need for professional training in the field of **human resource management**. The topics that got the biggest interest among the trainees were Evaluation of work performance, Anti-stress workshop, Labour relations in state bodies - application in practice, Strategic management of human resources, Analysis of job descriptions and drafting of regulations on internal organization and systematization of jobs, and Mobbing - prevention and protection against abuse at work. Work is underway on drafting the revised Action Plan for strengthening the capacity of HR units in state administration bodies for the period 2022 to 2024, which aims to improve the analytical capacities of employees in these units. Given that the Public Administration Reform Strategy defines the council of managers in connection with professional training, trainings in this area take on a new role.

Membership in the European Union is a strategic commitment of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and in accordance with that, it is necessary to train all officials about the EU, its institutions, as well as about the practical aspects of the implementation of the SAA. Also, special emphasis should be placed on the training of managers in connection with the accession of Serbia to the EU.

Professional training of officials who work in the **management of programmes and projects financed from EU funds** due to the high turnover of employees is of particular importance in the functioning of the system. At the same time,

structural funds and cohesion policy are gaining importance, and training in these areas should be more comprehensive.

Bearing in mind the Regulation on the determination of required competencies of civil servants working in the field of **public relations**, it is necessary to supplement this thematic area with trainings related to emergency public relations, management of social networks, writing announcements and statements for the media, i.e. in connection with the preparation of short messages which emphasize the value of the story and announcement (pr pitching), as well as with confidence-building techniques and body language in public speaking.

The strategic framework related to the work of experts who perform **IT-related work** remains the same, while a new programme for the development of electronic administration is also being prepared. The continuous education of IT experts includes, in particular, licensed training for system administration, security, and more, and is a priority in the coming period.

Trainings related to the processing, opening, and reusing of **data**, as well as the creation of reports, remain the focus of both strategic documents and the officials themselves, both at the national and local levels. The opening of data leads to an increase in the transparency of the work of the authorities, and in this way affects the greater information of citizens. The analysis found that officials lack knowledge and skills both in relation to data analysis and in relation to the preparation of reports on the conducted analyses.

Knowledge of **foreign languages** is recognized as a special functional competence for certain jobs, especially the languages of the countries with which the Republic of Serbia has significant cooperation: French, German, Russian and English. Additionally, for officials at the local level, especially representatives of national minorities, the need to implement Serbian language courses was recognized.

**Digital literacy** of all public servants is a prerequisite and the foundation of several reform processes. Particularly significant is the work of several project teams that, in order to implement the strategic framework, contribute both to the analysis of the situation in this area and to raising the competencies of all servants.

Pursuant to the Regulation on the determination of competencies for the work of civil servants and the Regulation on the determination of competencies for the work of officials in the bodies of autonomous provinces and local self-government units, general functional competence - **Business communication** refers to verbal and non-verbal communication, knowledge of the spelling and grammar rules of the Serbian language, as telephone and electronic communication, which is important for all officials, bearing in mind the importance of the citizen and economy oriented administration. In this area, the need for additional training on assertive communication, as well as on anger management, was recognized.

The development of **behavioural competencies** of both state and local civil servants is a process related to the objective assessment of one's own capacities, the continuous development of knowledge, skills and abilities and the application of acquired knowledge and skills in order to improve the quality of work and mutual relations, to strengthen the motivation and productivity of the organization. In this sense, trainings that contribute to more efficient performance of work, self-motivation, improvement of interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and especially those that contribute to a better balance between personal and professional life are particularly important.

Bearing in mind the improved Coaching Competence Framework developed by the National Academy for Public Administration with the support of the Council of Europe project, in the coming period, special attention will be paid to workshops for the development of personal, intrapersonal, and functional coaching competencies. In this context,

workshops on a training design preparation, i.e. working with difficult trainees, would further enrich the training offer in this area.

The existing **training programmes for managers in state bodies** include the training programme for senior civil servants and the training programme for civil servants who are preparing or are in managerial positions. In accordance with the experiences gained during the realization of the trainings, it is necessary to improve the existing programmes. In this context, it is necessary to change the form of implementation of training for senior civil servants so that they reflect a new and modern way of implementation, i.e. they include combined learning with the application of online training and consultations.

In accordance with the Law on Employees in Local Self-Government Units, the introductory training programme for employees in local self-government units includes professional training for employees who get employed for the first time, as well as preparation for taking the state professional exam.

In the field of administration in the service of citizens, trainings on communication between officials and services users, as well as training for electronic office operations, stand out.

Special mention should be made of the importance of the introduced **competence framework** for work in local self-government units, as well as the need to better align training programmes with the prescribed framework. The developed and realized training programmes contribute to the development of the competences of civil servants, it is additionally necessary to make a clearer connection between these two concepts, as well as to work on their better promotion. The Regulation on determining competencies for the work of civil servants defines behavioural, general functional and special functional competencies in certain areas of work. In this context, the development of new training programmes is expected, which contribute to the development of the knowledge and skills that have not been recognized in training programmes so far and are necessary for the development of competencies in accordance with the Regulation.

In the field of **public policies**, the training offer needs to be supplemented with training for identifying the resources necessary for managing public policies - "costing", while in the field of **administrative procedures**, a comprehensive, general training related to administrative procedures is needed.

Trainings in the field of **inspection supervision** should reflect the system of introductory and continuous training, i.e. training on taking the inspector exam and training for experienced inspectors, with a special emphasis on the e-Inspector information system

Bearing in mind the EU accession of the Republic of Serbia, training in this area will remain significant in the coming period, especially in the area of **cohesion policy**.

With the introduction of the competence framework, the need to set aside a new thematic area - **public relations** - was identified. Trainings related to these jobs were also an integral part of the programme in the earlier period, with the fact that in the upcoming programme, their content should be supplemented so that in addition to the comprehensive trainings on public relations, they include event management, business protocol, foundations of marketing, as well as media literacy.

Both in the state administration and at the local level, the continuous **education of IT experts** includes the implementation of trainings for the system administration, security, databases, as well as the management of web presentations of the public authorities.

**The sectoral programme of continuous professional development** of employees in local self-government units particularly contributes to the development of special functional competences, and in relation to this, it is necessary to bring the analysis of the competence of the current programme into the newly adopted framework of competences. Bearing in mind that all areas of knowledge and skills are included in the existing training programmes, there is a need to further improve the programmes in those areas that are not sufficiently represented. These trainings include: basics of data processing and security, e-Invoices, basic training for internal auditors and for financial management and control, urban development management, information system for human resources management and introduction to work and career development of employees, training of persons in charge of gender equality, the fight against discrimination, models for improving youth employment and informing young people in local communities, as well as good governance in the context of disaster risk reduction and emergency management.

**The training programme for managers in local self-government units** includes the training programme for officials and senior civil servants in LGUs and the training programme for managers in internal organizational units of city (municipal) administration. Bearing in mind the fact that the areas of knowledge and skills provided for by the Regulation on the determination of competencies for the work of civil servants in the bodies of autonomous provinces and local self-government units are the same for all levels of management, the programme should be prepared accordingly. At the same time, behavioural competencies differ for the rank level, and the training intended for this target group should also include strategic planning.