

SUMMARY OF THE 2022 REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The newly adopted **Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2030¹** and the **Action Plan for the period from 2021 to 2025**, prescribe the directions of development and changes in the field of public administration operations for the following ten-year period. It includes three action plans - human resources management, service provision and accountability and transparency, as well as three programmes - in the area of planning and coordination of public policies, public financial management, and reform of the local self-government system.

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 from 2021 to 2030 foresees the improvement of the introductory training programme for the work in the public administration for trainees, persons on probation, and persons who get employment in the public administration and are not on probation. The need to redefine the existing training programme was expressed in order to facilitate the integration of new employees into the public administration system, better cohesion, and the development of team spirit in the public authorities. In this context, with the support of experts from the National School of Administration from France - "*Ecole Nationale d'Administration*" (ENA), a comparative analysis of the content of the training programmes of relevant institutions was prepared, and work on a new training programme concept was started.

The resources needed to provide services (human, financial, technical-technological) are not adequately distributed either by areas of service provision, or among different levels of government, which is why some public administration bodies face difficulties in providing services to citizens and ensuring their quality. Human capacities are limited, and the level of qualification of civil servants for service provision is not adequate, while the training in the field of service provision should be increased. Moreover, it is necessary to include in the NAPA 2121 training programmes the training for civil servants and training implementers **regarding innovations and public services** in accordance with the concept of focus on end users, since it is a fundamental shift in the way of thinking and working in public administration compared to the previous practice in that area.

The application of new technologies in the provision of services can greatly facilitate procedures, reduce waiting time and also reduce corruption. The development of e-government and the provision of services is also encouraged by the **Study on the feasibility of using blockchain in the work of public administration in the Republic of Serbia²**, which recognizes the technological potential of blockchain in the development

¹ "Official Gazette of RS", number 42/2021

² The study was made by a team of young experts from Seoul, lecturers at the Serbian-Korean Information Access Center, within the project of MoPALS and the National Agency for Information Society of the Government of the Republic of Korea <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/Blockchain-studija-NIA.pdf>

of e-government in the Republic of Serbia. In this sense, familiarization of civil servants with the possibilities of new technologies will condition their greater application in daily work.

Reform processes in the field of service provision can be grouped into two streams: **the development of e-government**, which is implemented through the Programme for the Development of e-Government in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2022, and regulatory reform and **simplification of administrative procedures**, which is implemented through the "e-Papir" Programme. The availability of human capacities for these processes is limited, and the level of qualification is not at a satisfactory level, which is why this aspect should be given special attention.

At the same time, one of the priority goals of the ***Action Plan for implementing the Government's programme for the period from 2020-2022***³ is the improvement of services and transparency of public administration. Improved capacities of employees in public administration are a result that contributes to the achievement of that goal, while one of the indicators is "developed training programmes in the field of innovation and public service provision". Bearing in mind these elements and the target value for the year 2022, which is 18 developed training programmes in the field of innovation and service provision, it can be concluded that the training programmes for the year 2022 need to incorporate this type of training.

In the previous period, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a series of important documents that ensure **equality and protection of the rights** of both women and the disabled, as well as members of national minorities. In this sense, raising the capacity of public administration in this domain is a priority.

An important novelty that was introduced in the previous period is the obligation of public authorities to conduct training of employees and managers regarding the **ethical behaviour of civil servants**.

Special mention should be made of the importance of the introduced **framework of competences** in the work of state bodies, as well as the need to better align training programmes with the prescribed framework. The developed and implemented training programmes contribute to the development of the competences of civil servants, and it is also necessary to make a clearer connection between these two concepts, as well as to work on their better promotion. ***The Decree on determining competencies for the work of civil servants***⁴ defines behavioural, general functional and special functional competencies in certain areas of work. Indicators of behavioural and general functional competences, i.e. areas of knowledge and skills for special functional competences for fourteen areas of work represent thematic areas and thematic units of the professional training programmes.

In the domain of **public policy management**, i.e. study-analytic work, the quality of strategic planning is still assessed as weak, which is why it is necessary to pay attention to the analysis of the effects of public policy documents and regulations, especially the analysis of their financial effects, as well as the monitoring of their implementation. The focus is still on data analysis and data-driven decision making. Full implementation of the Law on the Planning System is possible through a comprehensive training programme for development, medium-term and budget planning.

Trainings in the area 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 employed in the work of drafting and monitoring the application of regulations in order to perform these tasks in state bodies more

³ <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/dokument/45678/strategije-programi-planovi-.php>

⁴ "Official Gazette of RS", number 4/2019

efficiently and effectively. Assessing the risk of corruption in regulations as a mechanism for preventing corruption is gaining importance again, and special attention should be paid to the training of civil servants in this area.

Considering the findings related to staff turnover from public administration bodies, there is a noticeable influx of new employees in **inspection jobs** (as many as 156) and in this sense, a special emphasis should be placed on training in the field of professional development for taking the inspectors' exams, but also on continuous training of inspectors.

Bearing in mind that the full implementation of the Law on General Administrative Procedure⁵ has been in place since 2017, and that there is now a comprehensive body of administrative practice, in addition to the development of skills and knowledge of newly employed, i.e. civil servants who lead **administrative proceedings** until a decision is made or have the authority to resolve in administrative procedure, the need was recognized for the exchange of experiences of civil servants assigned to the tasks of conducting administrative procedures and deciding on administrative matters, and training for the application of Law on Administrative Procedure in practice.

Bearing in mind the results achieved so far in the area of budgeting and planning of public expenditures, further reform steps within the framework of the implementation of the **public finance reform** will primarily refer to the improvement of processes in three key segments: monitoring and reporting on the performance of budget programmes, the creation of medium-term plans and the ranking of capital investments according to priority goals.

The establishment of accrual-based accounting is planned as a long-term goal, until 2030. **Raising of the capacity of civil servants for the application of IPSAS standards** as well as the overall capacity in the accounting system is also related to this.

Public procurement has an important impact on general economic growth by ensuring the efficient use of public funds, developing competition and improving the conditions for innovation in business. *The public procurement development programme in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2019 - 2023*⁶ and the *Action Plan for 2021* highlight the modernization of the public procurement system. In order to enable the proper application of regulations in the field of public procurement, it is necessary to ensure adequate administrative capacities, as well as training and auxiliary materials (manuals, guidelines, instructions).

The newly adopted *Public Finance Management Reform Programme for the period from 2021-2025* foresees the preparation and implementation of the Programme for continuous **development of internal auditors**, as well as the modernization of training and training materials in the area of Internal Financial Control in Public Sector and the expansion of e-learning modules. Financial management and control are constantly and steadily progressing, 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.

In accordance with the Public Administration Reform Strategy, and with the aim of strengthening the **capacity of HR units** in public administration bodies, in the coming period the Academy will focus its

⁵"Official Gazette of RS", number 18/16 and 19/18

⁶"Official Gazette of RS", number 82/2019.

activities on improving skills and knowledge in the field of human resources management, as well as improving the quality of the HR management process in public administration. In particular, the Academy will create an online archive of instructions, recommendations and explanations for the tasks of HR management and consider the possibilities of using the LMS platform for this purpose. With the same goal, NAPA should identify the training needs of employees in the HR unit, prepare a training programme and implement it for priority groups of employees. In addition, the need for training development, introduction to work and career development of employees and collective negotiation was recognized. Although the Regulation on the determination of competencies for the work of civil servants, as an area of knowledge and skills for a special functional competence for the area of work the human resources management does not recognize the area of safety and health at work, this thematic unit by its nature belongs to this thematic area.

Membership in the European Union is a strategic commitment of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. In accordance with that, it is necessary that the civil servants who carry out **the tasks of international cooperation and European integration** improve, that is, that all civil servants acquire basic knowledge about the EU, its institutions, sources of law, the criteria for admission to EU membership and the procedure for acquiring the status of an EU Member State, and to acquire basic knowledge related to the practical aspects of the implementation of the SAA in order to improve knowledge of the EU integration process. Although the application of the competence framework of **local civil servants** has not yet started, the same jobs, that is, trainings, have been recognized for this target group.

The professional training of civil servants who work in the **management of programmes and projects financed with EU funds** aims to improve the knowledge and skills of civil servants and accelerate the process of Serbia's accession to the EU, i.e. to contribute to the increase of absorption capacity at the national level for the full use of EU development aid. Special training is needed for new employees in IPA structures, for employees in the planning and implementation of projects, and employees in the contracting and financing of EU-funded programmes/projects.

Public relations tasks include public relations management, marketing and management fundamentals, communication strategies and channels, event management, media relations, social group behaviour, organizational behaviour and ethics, lobbying, negotiation and conflict resolution strategies, as well as methodology and tools for data collection and analysis. Media literacy additionally represents one of the basic competencies of the 21st century that develops various skills of employees. It represents the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and produce messages in different communication forms. The new circumstances caused by the Covid-19 virus pandemic have accelerated digitization processes and directed communication to the online environment for the first time. It is therefore necessary to empower civil servants for giving public speeches in this new format.

The training of experts who perform **IT tasks** is particularly important and recognized as very necessary in several strategic documents. ***The programme for the development of e-government in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2022 with the Action Plan for its implementation***⁷ contains the measure *Improving the human capacity of public administration for the establishment and application of information technologies in e-government* which envisages the continuous implementation of IT personnel training. ***The strategy for the development of digital skills in the Republic of Serbia for the***

⁷ "Official Gazette of RS", number 85 of 16 June 2020

*period from 2020 to 2024*⁸ recognizes the importance of digital skills of employees in public administration and as one of the measures proposes the development of digital competencies of employees in public administration that are related to the specifics of their workplace, but also the inevitable development and implementing a programme of continuous training of ICT experts in public administration.

The draft *Programme for the Improvement of Public Policy Management and Regulatory Reform for the period from 2021 to 2025 and the accompanying Action Plan* recognize the issue of an insufficient number of public administration employees, as well as their insufficient knowledge of analytical tools that are necessary for conducting the necessary analyses. In accordance with the amendments to the Regulation on principles for internal organization and systematization of jobs in ministries, special organizations and government services, in the coming period we expect the formation of organizational-analytical units for strategic planning, which have the task of establishing a permanent **data management** system, as public administration would begin to collect and use data in a systematic and appropriate manner. In this sense, it is necessary to place a special emphasis on trainings related to the processing, opening and reuse of data as well as the creation of reports. In addition, proactive publication of data held by public administration bodies leads to an increase in the transparency of the work of the bodies.

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, the need to implement Serbian language courses was recognized for civil servants at the local level, especially representatives of national minorities.

According to the Regulation on the determination of competencies for the work of civil servants, all civil servants should possess the competence of **digital literacy**, which includes knowledge and skills for basic computer use with a special emphasis on security aspects, then web searching, effective information retrieval and online communication, word processing and tabular calculations. In the time of the COVID-19 virus pandemic and the many social changes we are witnessing, there are changes in the way everyone works and does business, including public administration. Many employees are forced to work remotely, which requires the development of new skills. In such situations, the need to develop the ability of employees to work and collaborate remotely came to the fore. In addition, *the Strategy for the fight against high-tech crime for the period 2019-2023*⁹ recognizes the importance of raising the digital competencies of employees in the public sector in order to effectively address high-tech crime.

Pursuant to the Regulation on the determination of competencies for the work of civil servants, General functional competence - **Business communication** refers to verbal and non-verbal communication, knowledge of the spelling and grammar rules of the Serbian language, as well as telephone and electronic communication, which is important for all employees bearing in mind the importance of citizen-oriented and economy-oriented administration.

The development of *behavioural competencies* of both state and local officials 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 with the aim of improving the quality of work and interpersonal relations, strengthening the motivation and productivity of the organization. In this

⁸ "Official Gazette of RS", number 21 of 6 March 2020

⁹ "Official Gazette of RS", number 71 of 25 September 2018

sense, trainings that contribute to the development of behavioural competencies are particularly important.

Special attention is paid to the development of **coaching competencies** with the aim of continuous improvement of accredited implementers, as well as the empowerment of state and local officials for the transfer of specialist knowledge and skills in various fields. Thematic units of importance for this area are the training of lecturers, didactic-methodical workshops and especially the training of mentors.

Mentoring and coaching represent modern methods of training realisation and, according to the Public Administration Reform Strategy, a special priority in the coming period.

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 for or are already taking managerial positions. According to the Public Administration Reform Strategy, the programmes should be additionally improved with training on performance monitoring and work performance evaluation.

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

Thematic units of importance for all employees in local self-government units should be improved with training related to **public policies and the provision of services** to citizens and the economy. Trainings related to innovations and service provision, i.e. related to administrative procedures and requirements are a priority in the coming period. Additionally, LGU employees should be introduced to the possibilities of applying the LGU's advanced analytical reporting system.

As in previous years, local officials still recognize the need to improve their knowledge in the area of **application of regulations**, especially the Law on General Administrative Procedure and the Law on Inspection Supervision.

The development of digital competences of local officials covers the thematic units of e-Government development, transformation of data into information, training of IT specialists and computer use courses.

The current **Sectoral programme of continuous professional development** of employees in local self-government units includes seventeen thematic areas that improve the capacities of civil servants to perform tasks from the original competences of local self-government units. The programme should be further improved in accordance with changes in the normative framework, especially in the field of cooperation with civil society organizations, accessibility of public facilities and services, sustainable urban mobility, social welfare, as well as damage assessment after natural and other disasters. ***Programme for the reform of the local self-government system in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2025*** and the ***Proposal of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Employees in Autonomous Provinces and Local Self-Government Units*** refer to the introduction of human resource management processes in autonomous province bodies and local self-government units that are based on the competencies required for the effective performance of work in autonomous province bodies and local self-government units. In this sense, it is necessary to ensure the raising of the capacity of local civil servants in the field of competence-based human resource 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. Keeping in mind the priorities of the Government, the programmes should be further improved with trainings related to youth policy, communication of vision and mission, leadership styles and report on work performance.