



INTRODUCING CAREER-BASED SYSTEM IN CIVIL SERVICE

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The latest European Commission Progress Report on Macedonia, once again pointed out the importance of pursuing thorough public administration reforms in the country. The EC explicitly demands that before starting accession negotiations, Macedonia should intensively pursue public administration reforms with the focus on de-politicization of recruitment and advancement in the civil service. Evidently, this progress report raises some critical issues concerning Macedonia's public administration (PA) which was not the case in previous reports. Inefficiency, corruption and politicization of PA have been identified as obstacles of overall quality of reforms. Because of this, many believed that reforms in PA shall continue with a fresh enthusiasm and tackle the deep-rooted malformations of the system and head for fundamental systematic change. Understandably, actions aimed for systematic change require decisiveness and sometimes even controversial overhaul of the civil service that suppose to determine its new image. New policy discussion for changes in the Law on Civil Servants aimed at replacing the "position based" with "career based" civil service system is contributing in achieving the fundamental systematic change in the civil service. Although the policy discussion has been on agenda for some time, we suggest that career based approach should be discussed further, and once a new momentum is established conducive for needed reform, the issue is pursued and finalised by the governing authorities.

This report, as part of the public administration programme of Analytica, and as continuation of earlier reports in the area, aims at offering descriptive analysis to the policy makers on "career-based" system, its characteristics and refers to its applicability to Macedonian civil service. The report also observes possible risks and detects critical areas that might jeopardise the successful implementation of career system.

Preconditions needed when establishing a "career-based" system

The system of civil service can function as a system of a career or position based system or a hybrid of both. The system of career tends to be highly competitive, self-motivated and resistant to political pressure. Based on merit-system with a strictly defined career path development for each position, this model has become a basic tool for organising governance in many countries in Europe and other parts of the world. What makes this system functioning is the challenging environment in terms of not just ensuring the status

but also offering a system of development that provides the youth and future generations with opportunities and stimulations for promotion at professional as well as at personal level. At the same time, this is a highly demanding system that does not allow the employees to stagnate in their daily routine tasks. Having these characteristics, this system is very close to successful formula in keeping the administration “awake” and wisely neutralizing its bureaucratization. But establishing an appropriate structure for a career-based civil service requires a compatible legal, social, political and economical environment. Additionally, career based systems are typical for stable democracies where institutional performance is based on strictly defined legal acts and mutual dealings and it is less appropriate for countries in a transition. Therefore, Macedonian political and economic environment is hardly a fertile ground for proper career-based civil service.

Career- vs. position- based civil service system

We can not compare the two systems (career vs. position based) without mentioning that we can hardly find a country with a pure form of any of the systems, as they are always mixed with elements of the other system. Hence, we are actually speaking either of predominantly career-based or predominantly position-based systems.

The position-based system is more likely to be flexible but at the same time, it does not offer the employees career prospects. And the general impression is that one can barely progress regardless of the upgraded educational degree or outstanding performance results. While the career system is based on the principles of the specificity of the public service, requiring staff with special abilities that normally devote their entire working lives to serving the community.¹ The most frequent remark to the position-based system here is that due to current system of procedures, an employee obtains the status of civil servant following a vacancy notice published in media, notice of which is obligatory not just when the employee enters the service but whenever he/she is proposed to a higher position. For every promotion, there should be a new position opened for which already employed civil servant competes with applicants from outside.²

¹ Council of Europe, Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, “Civil Service Reform in Europe”, Doc. 9711, February 19, 2003.

² Borce Davitkovski, “Career System”, *Globus*, February 20, 2008, p.20.

Countries such as France and the United Kingdom have long tradition in operating career-based system and usually serve as models for young democracies reshaping the public management systems. Career system also has become a tendency for other countries in Europe. Germany and Portugal are other countries that have accepted this system mostly believing it will set out the principles of neutral, impartial, egalitarian public services as well as the need to guarantee the fundamental principles of democracy. The Central, Eastern and Southeastern European countries, considered as transitional democracies, have organised their civil services according to predominantly position based models.³

There are several aspects based on which these two systems (career vs. position-based systems) can be compared:

1. Recruitment procedures;
2. Qualification and skills required;
3. System of promotion and career development;
4. The system of remunerations and supplements; and
5. Legal , social and political conditions needed for relevant system introduction and implementation

	<i>CAREER-BASED System</i>	<i>POSITION-BASED System</i>
<i>Recruitment procedure</i>	The Law will define maximum recruitment age limit; working experience apart from the service in the public sector will not be considered relevant.	Recruitment upon vacancy notice for each position; no age limit; no specific requirements for working experience.
<i>Qualification and skills</i>	Specific knowledge and qualifications for each job position is needed.	Working experience is the only criteria for promotion or for specific job position.
<i>The system of remunerations and supplements</i>	Strictly defined system of remunerations and supplements.	Awards system is based neither on performance nor qualification and skills. It simply relies on the position and quantitative working experience.
	Based on the assumptions that the	The system of strictly defined legal

³ Council of Europe, Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, “Civil Service Reform in Europe”.

<i>System of promotion and career development</i>	career of each civil servant will include more than one different job position; career development is merit - based.	basis for career promotion.
<i>Legal, social and political conditions needed for relevant system introduction and implementation</i>	Stable democracies where institutional performance is based on strictly defined legal acts.	Countries undergoing transition usually need a flexible system.

Can the career-based system be established in the civil service of Macedonia?

It is crucial to estimate whether introducing career-based system will cure the present ills of Macedonian civil service or it will additionally cause difficulties and even worsen the existing status quo. It is perhaps too ambitious to expect that this reform would solve all the problems plaguing the institutions and the administration in Macedonia.

Analyzing both system features it is clear that career system has serious advantages compared to the position system and it will definitely lead to developing, efficient, professional and highly competitive civil service. Certain gaps of the existing system still remain and can easily infect the new system and eventually cause difficulties. Speaking about the current system’s weak points, at first place we are talking about lacking performance evaluation system as a precondition for career development, oversized administration as a direct reason for closing the service for new recruitments and the most important the insufficient professional development in terms of missing specific knowledge and skills among current civil servants. Moreover, the shift of one to another system can undermine the enthusiasm of civil servants and bring unrest and distrust among them as they might see another politically-motivated reshuffle. Without the above factors, successful implementation of carrier system is hardly possible and therefore they should be considered vulnerable aspects and special attention should be put exactly in their improvement.

Finally, durable structural improvements in administration are never simple and quick, but difficult and time-consuming. They require commitment and more important genuine ownership. Establishing career-based system in Macedonian civil service is a remarkable step

forward and visible indicator that Macedonia has serious approach to reforms in public administration. Although it might look like a “technical” change of the current legal framework, the fact is that this will indisputably lead to substantial change of the whole system. Hopefully, this will bring trust and seriousness in country’s response to EU requirements in the area of public administration reform. The implementation of the career based system definitely correspond with recently reaffirmed requirements set by EC among which full implementation of Law of Civil Servants, improving administration transparency as well as full implementation of the Civil servant Code of Ethics are among the short and medium term priorities.