

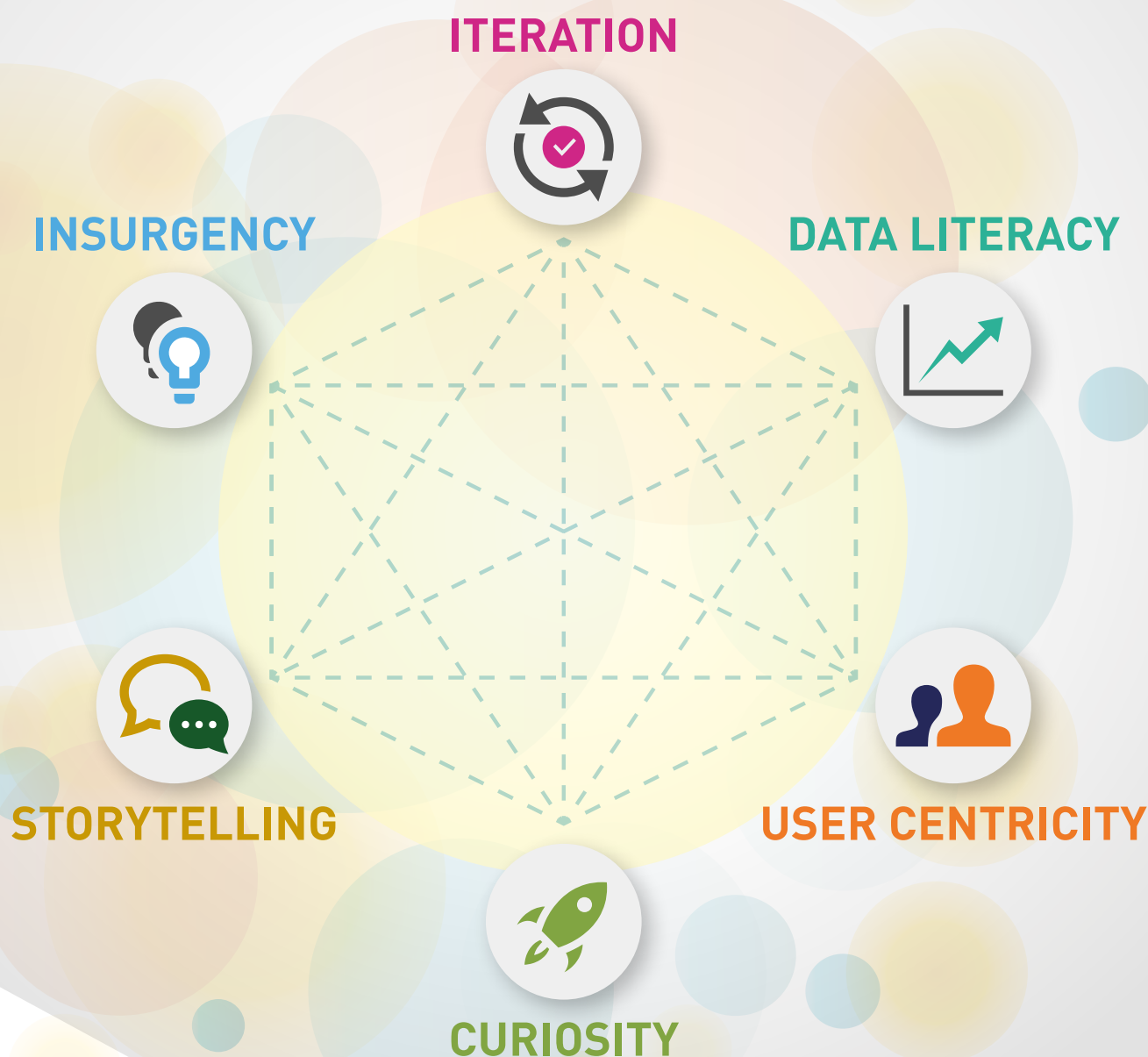
PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE WESTERN BALKANS



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE



ReSPA activities are funded
by the European Union

August 2022



**PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS
AND COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS
IN THE CIVIL SERVICE ADMINISTRATIONS
OF THE WESTERN BALKANS**



ReSPA activities are funded
by the European Union

Authors:
Kaido Paabusk
Ansi Shundi
Damir Ahmetovic
Milena Muk
Irena Najdov
Vladimir Vlajkovic
Tatjana Verli-Gorenšek
Lina Daujotaitė-Prūsaitienė
Pádraig Love

for
The Regional School of Public Administration
Danilovgrad, Montenegro

The Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. As such, it helps governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and helps prepare them for membership of and integration into the European Union (EU). The members of ReSPA are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

DISCLAIMER
“This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or of the Regional School of Public Administration. Neither the Regional School of Public Administration nor any person acting on its behalf is responsible for any use which might be made of the information contained in the present publication. The Regional School of Public Administration is not responsible for the content of the external websites referred to in the present publication.”

COPYRIGHT
© 2022, Regional School of Public Administration
All rights reserved. Any re-printing and/or reproduction is prohibited without prior written permission of ReSPA.

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 5

1. INTRODUCTION.....8

 Competence or competency?10

 Future orientation13

 Why competencies?14

 How are competency frameworks applied?15

 Job categorisation17

 Analytical approach18

2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS20

2.1. How are job requirements defined?.....20

 Job categorisation20

 General job requirements.....26

 Future orientation of job requirements.....37

2.2. Three dimensions of the application of job requirements41

 Vertical integration.....42

 Horizontal integration.....43

 Implementation.....52

 Wrap-up.....54

3. EU PRACTICES55

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....58

Literature.....63

ANNEX 1: EU practices: The Case of Ireland65

ANNEX 2: The EU practices: the Case of Lithuania74

ANNEX 3: The EU practices: the Case of Slovenia.....82

ANNEX 4: Self-assessment framework for analysing the professional requirement and competency frameworks90

Abbreviations

ALB	Albania
ASPA	Albanian School of Public Administration
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CBM	Competency-based management
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CSA	Civil Service Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina administrations
DoPA	Department of Public Administration of Albania
EU	European Union
FBIH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRMA	Human Resources Management Authority of Montenegro
HRMS	Human Resources Management Service of Serbia
IT	Information Technology
KSAO	Knowledge, skills, attitudes and other attributes
LAS	Law on Administrative Servants of North Macedonia
LCSSE	Law on Civil Service and State Employees of Montenegro
MISA	Ministry of Information Society and Administration of North Macedonia
MNE	Montenegro
NAPA	National Academy of Public Administration of Serbia
MKD	North Macedonia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPSI	Observatory of Public Sector Innovation of the OECD
PA	Public Administration
PAR	Public Administration Reform
RS	Republika Srpska
SCS	Senior Civil Service
SIGMA	The SIGMA Programme (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management), a joint initiative of the OECD and European Union.
SRB	Serbia
TMC	Top Management Corps in Albania
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
WB	Western Balkans

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study assesses the extent of implementation of professional requirements and competency frameworks at central level in civil service administrations of the Western Balkans and their effectiveness in supporting key aspects of human resource management (HRM) in these administrations. Since the quality of most HRM tools is largely dependent on the professional requirements specified for civil servants, it is important to ascertain whether these requirements are meaningful and relevant and whether all necessary input is provided for applying such tools.

The scope of this study extends beyond behavioural competency frameworks to analyse the professional requirements of the civil service in accordance with the Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes and Other Attributes model (KSAO) to attain a broader and deeper understanding of what is expected from civil servants in terms of professional requirements and competencies.

The study set out to test the following five **hypotheses** about the current state of affairs in the civil services of Western Balkan administrations:

- That job requirements are likely to be mostly *knowledge-based*, neglecting other components of the KSAO model.
- That more complex and sophisticated approaches for describing job requirements are not likely to be widely used.
- That the application of more complex approaches is likely to be challenging because the current categorisation of jobs is too general, making it difficult to establish competency profiles with sufficient specificity.
- That existing KSAOs are not likely to be aligned with the future skills required of civil servants.
- That although well-designed systems of selection, assessment and development may be in place, their effectiveness is probably limited because the KSAOs do not establish a sufficiently strong basis for their implementation.

Given that professional requirements are primarily determined by **job descriptions**, the first step of analysis was to assess whether the ways in which jobs are evaluated and categorised in current job descriptions provide sufficient input for setting meaningful KSAOs for each post. This step of analysis confirmed that job descriptions and categorisations at central level in Western Balkan

administrations are of rather limited value for defining professional requirements and competencies. This is because the level of generalisation is quite high, and in some cases job descriptions do not even exist at specialist level, including in Montenegro, Republika Srpska, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH). Although all the administrations surveyed for this study have complemented formal knowledge and basic skills-based requirements with behavioural competency frameworks, at least for some categories of civil servants, **professional requirements are overly general** in all cases except Serbia.

Serbia has the most comprehensive competency framework in place, based on four different groups of competencies for all categories of civil servants. North Macedonia and the BiH Institutions both have a competency framework in place for the entire civil service. In Albania and Montenegro, behavioural competencies are currently defined only for the senior civil service, though these administrations plan to extend the competency framework to the entire civil service, as do Republika Srpska and the FBiH. Except in the case of Serbia, however, all these frameworks are presently rather generic, which limits their practical use in different areas of HRM.

Analysis of the **future-orientation** of professional requirements in the civil service and their **vertical integration** with the strategic priorities of governments revealed that these aspects are inadequately reflected in the expectations currently set for civil servants. These professional requirements appear to have been devised in isolation without reference to developments in the external environment of the civil service.

The **horizontal integration** of professional requirements was assessed in four key areas of HRM. Although evidence was found of horizontal integration in processes of recruitment, performance appraisal and training, such integration was mostly formal in character and much weaker in practice. This is partly because the overly general nature of professional requirements impedes any deeper integration, though also because of a lack of skills and other resources at institutional level to apply more complex HRM tools. Behavioural competency models require fully professional HR and management functions at institutional level, which is not always the case in the Western Balkans. The study found neither formal nor practical integration with the workforce planning process, which is currently used only as a headcount and/or recruitment-planning tool. This lack of integration with planning constitutes a major weakness in job requirements and the use of competency frameworks in the administration surveyed.

Figure 1 summarises the basic assessments of the hypotheses tested in this study:

Job requirements in WB civil services are mostly knowledge-based, ignoring other components of the KSAO;	⊖
The more complex approaches for describing the job requirements are not widely used;	⊖
The application of more complex approaches is difficult because of the too generalised categorisation of jobs, which does not allow establishing sufficiently specific competency profiles;	✓
The existing KSAOs are not aligned with the future skills required from civil servants	✓
Therefore, despite having well designed selection, assessment or development systems in place, their effect is limited as they do not establish a strong enough basis for them.	✓

As shown in Figure 1, two of the five hypotheses were found to be invalid. First, job requirements in the Western Balkan administrations are not based only on knowledge but also on certain other aspects of the KSAO model. Second, almost all of the administrations surveyed do in fact employ more complex approaches for defining job requirements, mostly in respect of behavioural competencies. However, the study confirmed the validity of the remaining three hypotheses. In particular, the use of generic job descriptions was identified as a significant impediment to the development of more specific competency profiles. Current KSAOs were also found to be rather weakly aligned with future needs and government priorities. These findings confirm that the level of integration of KSAOs with different HRM processes remains inadequate, significantly reducing the practical value of present job requirements.

As a key overall finding, the study concludes that the current professional requirements of civil servants in the region typically reflect either an extreme focus on formal knowledge and skills or an excessive focus on behavioural competencies. It is important to note that there are more practical and less complex options available between these two extremes and that these alternatives might be more appropriate in some of the administrations surveyed.

1

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation, digitalisation, climate change and other complex and rapidly unfolding challenges have placed many professions under pressure. These pressures raise questions as to whether the types and sets of knowledge and skills currently required in professions are adequate to cope with ongoing and future developments. Such concerns arise especially in the case of the professional competencies required of civil servants.

The issue of competencies in the civil service institutions of the Western Balkans often arises in discussions between government officials and international partners on the most challenging issues for human resource management (HRM) in these administrations. The Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) has conducted several studies related to HRM in the Western Balkans public services over recent years, all of which have highlighted the need for more adequate specification of professional competencies:

- From the 2015 analysis on merit recruitment (p. 13):¹ *"It is recommended that comprehensive competency frameworks be developed. They will provide the basic criteria for the examination of candidates at different levels and/or for different groups of positions in the civil service."*
- From the 2019 evaluation report² on merit-based recruitment (p. 12): *"ReSPA Members should generally focus on developing the capacity to implement the examination procedure and explore innovative examination methods such as competency-based interviews."*

The need for civil services in these countries to adopt competency-based approaches as a prerequisite for effective performance management has been stressed not only in recruitment-related studies but also in analyses of other HRM areas. For example, the 2021 guidelines on effective performance development³ dedicated a whole chapter to this issue (*Chapter 5 – Towards competency frameworks*:

Differentiating between 'hard' and 'soft' objectives). Moreover, competencies have been mentioned frequently in papers and recommendations produced by various international organisations and donors, including in the latest SIGMA monitoring assessment reports on Montenegro (p. 58),⁴ North Macedonia (p. 77),⁵ and Serbia (p. 64).⁶ The need for competency-based HRM is also often mentioned in meetings of the Public Administration Reform Special Group across the region.

Although key stakeholders have repeatedly identified a need for improvements in ensuring the competencies of civil servants in the Western Balkans, it is not clear precisely what form these improvements should take. The abovementioned studies conducted by ReSPA and OECD/SIGMA mostly focused on 'How?' questions, analysing the design and regulation of processes and procedures in recruitment, appraisal, and professional development and whether these HRM areas ensure a merit-based approach and an adequately professional civil service. To date, however, there has been little focus on the question of 'What?', meaning we still lack detailed knowledge of exactly what is required of civil servants in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and other attributes (KSAO). For example, there is only one criterion in the Methodological Framework of the Principles of Public Administration⁷ related to what is actually assessed in testing senior civil service candidates. This criterion is found in sub-indicator 5 of the framework: *"Requirements contained in job descriptions or job announcements are aligned with responsibilities expected in the position."* Although this generality is understandable insofar as the wide scope of the Methodological Framework does not allow for the inclusion of details relating to all HRM areas, the consequence is that we lack an important component in our understanding of the specific requirements of key HRM processes. Neglecting this component increases the risk of producing misleading assessments that praise administrations for their recruitment and development procedures when in fact these procedures still do not lead to the recruitment of civil servants with the appropriate skill sets needed to ensure an efficient civil service.

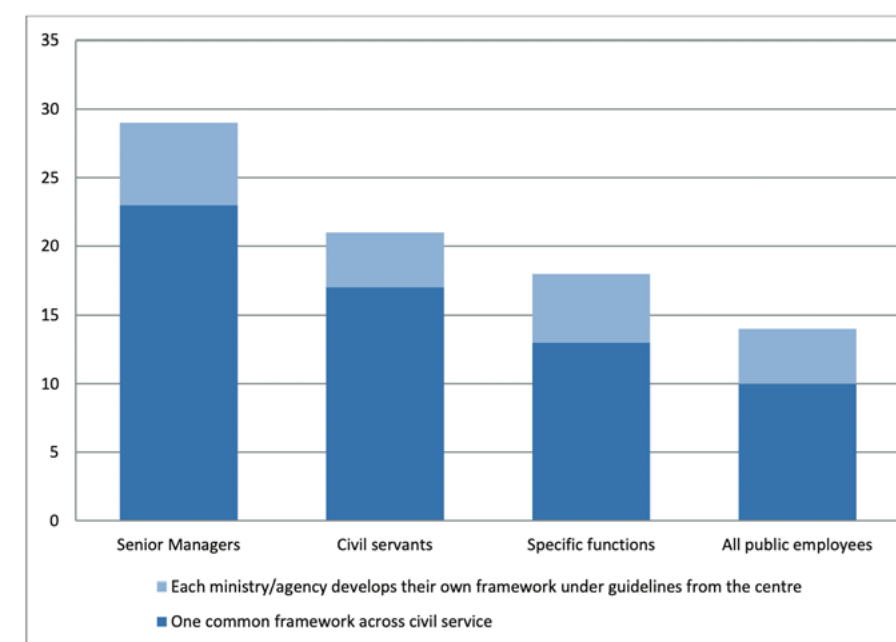


Figure 2: The use of competency frameworks in OECD countries

⁴ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Montenegro.pdf>

⁵ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf>

⁶ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Serbia.pdf>

⁷ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Methodological-Framework-for-the-Principles-of-Public-Administration-May-2019.pdf>

¹ <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/Improving+the+implementation+of+merit+recruitment+procedures+in+the+WB.pdf/c4c49f156f2bd13cea31ee15f399dcd6.pdf>

² <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/Merit+based+recruitment+evaluation+report.pdf/d6a1b23800afbb393d6fd82319deb38a.pdf>

³ <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/Towards+Effective+Performance+Appraisal+in+the+WBs.pdf/7b629959a17409fff11bdf2ad049345c.pdf>

These observations do not imply that government officials and international partners are unaware of professional requirements for civil servants or that no mechanisms are in place. The general view is rather that existing requirements are too formal and mostly based on knowledge instead of other skills and attributes. One reason for this could be that administrations have interpreted the recommendations of international partners and observers for enforcing merit-based and objective selection tools too literally and applied them too simplistically without sufficient resources. After all, assessing *formal* knowledge is the easiest and most quantifiable means of testing civil service candidates, including as evidence of fair and meritocratic recruitment in court. This does not mean that recruitment based on such assessment methods necessarily provides the best predictive value in terms of future performance, however, which is why civil services in other countries with greater experience and knowledge of HRM have moved towards adapting more sophisticated procedures. Although these more complex procedures may not seem as *objective* as testing knowledge or years of experience, evidence shows they are much better at predicting professional qualities (Schmidt & Hunter 1998).

Relying on easily quantifiable methods can provide a false sense of confidence based on invalid assumptions. In addition to issues related to validity, knowledge-based testing may also be biased in favour of certain types of professional backgrounds. In the context of the Western Balkans, this bias may explain the prevailing overreliance on civil servants with law degrees, resulting in overly legalistic administration. This is by no means to downplay the value of legal knowledge but rather to highlight that current requirements and selection tools may discourage candidates from other professions whose knowledge and contributions could enrich the administrative ecosystem.

It has been almost two decades since competency-based management (CBM) first started to be applied more widely in civil services. Initial doubts about whether CBM might prove merely a ‘passing fad’ have long been dispelled (Hood & Lodge 2005), with the latest OECD data showing that most of its member states’ civil services are using competency frameworks for at least some categories of recruitment. Globally, there is a clear trend towards adopting more complex models in managing the skills of civil servants. Indeed, this is probably one reason why competency models are so often mentioned in discussions of HRM in the civil services of the Western Balkans by government officials and donors alike.

Competence or competency?

Although competency-based management approaches have been in wide use for over forty years, and despite growing consensus on the practical value of competency frameworks, there is less agreement on key concepts and terminology (Hood & Lodge 2004). Even the use of the term ‘competency’ as compared to ‘competence’ is not universally agreed upon or consistently applied, potentially causing confusion when reviewing different papers on CBM and other practical models in use. Nevertheless, a useful distinction commonly drawn between the terms ‘competence’ and ‘competency’ is that *competence* focuses on more traditional values and is concerned with what people need to do to perform a job, whereas *competency* relates to the behavioural aspects that influence competent performance (CIPD 2021; Horton et al. 2002; OECD 2010). The most widely used definition of ‘competency’ is that provided by Boyatzis (1982) and now used by the OECD, defining competency as “the behavioural characteristics of an individual that are causally related to effective or superior performance in a job” (OECD 2010). As summarised in Figure 3, a distinction was also drawn in the early literature on competencies between the **traditional** approach and the **competency** approach:

Traditional approach	Competency-based approach
Emphasis on jobs, formal qualifications and experience as the main predictors of likely performance	Varied knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours are needed to achieve strategic objectives and lower-level goals derived from these objectives
Poorly co-ordinated and poorly linked HR policies	All aspects of ‘people management’ are in focus as integrated elements of a performance management system
Externally driven rather than self-driven performance	Greater employee self-direction and responsibility
Standard performance	Excellence

Figure 3: Traditional vs competency approach to HRM (based on Horton et al. 2002)

The adoption of a competency approach was widely understood as a cultural change, with advantages of this approach including “consistency in identifying and measuring people quality at all stages in the employment cycle” and the fact that that CBM “also seeks to identify skills, motives, personality characteristics and other attributes, which tend to differentiate poor, average and superior performance” (Horton et al. 2002, p. 4). The cultural change involved in adopting CBM consists in the fact that this approach starts from the premise that *people* are the key resource in any organisation and the source of that organisation’s success or failure. It is notable that even two decades after the widespread adoption of CBM, this dichotomy still resonates with present discussions in the Western Balkans. For example, the prevailing current approach to HRM in the administrations of this region is often criticised for being too closely aligned with ‘traditional’ views, with proposals tending to recommend these administrations approximate more closely to a competency-based approach. Indeed, this dichotomy has been simplified and exaggerated by analysts on both sides of the debate.

Hood and Lodge (2004) have documented the application of competencies in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany since the 1950s, developing their own categorisation of competency approaches. Below we paraphrase Kruyen and Van Genugten’s (2020, p.120) summary of these categories:

- **Behavioural traits associated with excellence.** This concept and approach to competency is based on the work of David McClelland (1973), who argued that Western education systems should be less preoccupied with assessing intellectual capacities and focus more on assessing and training key traits that students need in real life, i.e. in their careers. Boyatzis (1982) later enhanced this approach by insisting that these key traits should be understood as those that differentiate ‘excellent’ from ‘average’ performers. Applying these competencies specifically to the civil service, Gertha-Taylor (2008) has since defined critical collaborative skills as ‘differentiating competencies’ for civil servants.
- **Core competencies.** This approach endeavours to identify the capacities that organisations consider as their main or ‘core’ assets that cannot easily be copied by other organisations.
- **Minimum abilities required to tackle specific jobs.** This approach takes account of the skills, abilities and attitudes that civil servants need to apply to perform their jobs effectively. Rather than exclusively considering competencies as abilities that distinguish excellent from average performers, this approach focuses on the “**minimum abilities required to tackle specified jobs**” (Hood and Lodge 2004, p. 781).

In summarising these approaches, Hood and Lodge (2004) note that the key concepts often overlap and became blurred in practice, not least because behavioural attributes are inevitably associated with specific knowledge and skills and the requirements of particular jobs, even to the extent that “competency started to look like another case of different approaches divided by a common language” (Hood & Lodge 2004, p. 318). In a recent factsheet on competence and competency frameworks, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2021) found evidence of growing awareness that job performance requires a mix of behaviours, attitudes, skills and professional knowledge, with growing recognition that these terms are now more often used interchangeably. Moreover, while competency frameworks originally consisted mainly of behavioural elements, the CIPD confirms that these frameworks have since become broader in scope to include more technical competencies.⁸

The aim of the preceding overview of this debate is not to solve the semantic conundrums surrounding key concepts in CBM but rather to highlight the need for caution when mobilising the terms ‘competency’ and ‘competence’. This is important because otherwise it is possible for people to agree on the need for having competency-based HRM systems or establishing competency frameworks while entertaining very different notions of what these entail. This ambiguity further implies that while the reported figures for OECD countries in Figure 2 can be used for illustrating general tendencies, these figures may in fact tell us very little about the actual content of the models in use, since two countries reporting a competency model may apply very different HRM tools in terms of their content and scope.

For the purpose of this paper, therefore, we do not limit ourselves to any specific competency approach or framework but consider the requirements set for civil servants in a more general sense. Accordingly, our focus of interest is not confined to behavioural aspects but rather to assessing professional requirements from a wider perspective, including more ‘traditional’ aspects. In analysing systems for ensuring the competencies of civil servants, we apply the KSAO categorisation often used in job analysis to measure knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics:⁹

- **Knowledge** refers to the body of factual or procedural information that can be applied in a job, such as knowledge of foreign languages or computer programming languages.
- **Skills** are the capabilities required to perform tasks accurately, including psychomotor activities such as typing speed and driving ability.
- **Abilities** are more stable characteristics that can include cognitive, sensory and physical abilities, including empathy.
- **Other** characteristics are traits that do not fit into the three categories above, including values, work style, personality, and degrees and certifications.

Our study adopts this KSAO categorisation as a sounder basis for assessing what is expected from civil servants in terms of their competencies according to existing job requirements in Western Balkan administrations. However, this study should not be understood as an assessment of the Western Balkans civil services *per se*, since there are no standard or commonly agreed frameworks available for defining KSAOs or for establishing competency frameworks. The aim here is rather to analyse current practices in the region based on the identification of loosely defined characteristics.

Future orientation

In analysing KSAOs it is important to understand that these refer not only to competencies that help civil servants address the complex challenges currently faced by public administrations but also to competencies relevant for coping with *future challenges*. In this regard, the COVID-19 crisis has proven an effective testing ground for public administrations not only in terms of their level of digitalisation but also their ability to adapt quickly to rapid changes in the environments in which they operate. Climate crisis and the security situation in Europe will inevitably bring more complex challenges in the coming years, hence it is important to assess whether the current professional requirements of civil servants will help administrations to anticipate and prepare for these challenges.

In its review of ‘Skills for a high performing civil service’, the OECD (2017a) listed the following skills as most critical for facing future challenges:¹⁰

- **Policy advisory skills** – leveraging technology and synthesising a growing range of evidence-based scientific insights (e.g., behavioural economics, data science, strategic foresight) and a diversity of citizen perspectives for effective and timely policy advice to political decision-makers.
- **Engagement skills** – working directly with citizens and users of government services to improve service experience, legitimacy and impact by leveraging the “wisdom of the crowd” to co-create better solutions that take into account service-users’ needs and limitations.
- **Commissioning skills** – designing and overseeing various contractual arrangements (outsourcing, PPPs, service level agreements, etc.) and managing projects to achieve impact through organisations (public, private, not-for-profit) that are best placed to deliver services due to their expertise and/or local position.
- **Network management skills** – collaborating with a range of independent partners to address complex/wicked policy challenges by developing a shared understanding of the problem, collectively identifying potential solutions, and co-implementation. If money and legal contracts are the key currency of supplier management, communication, trust and mutual commitment are the currency of network management.

In addition, the OECD’s Observatory of Public Sector Innovation has elaborated six core skills needed today in order to tackle the public policy challenges of tomorrow through **public policy innovation**. As summarised in Figure 4 (OECD 2017b), these core skills comprise iteration, insurgency, data literacy, storytelling, user centricity, and curiosity:

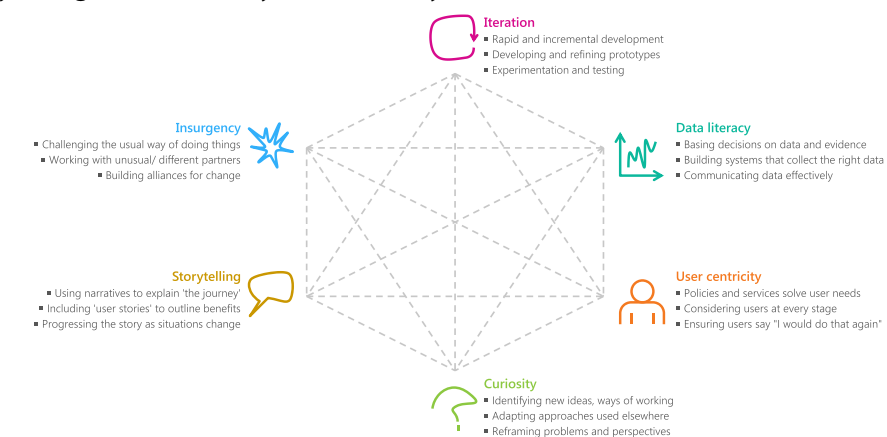


Figure 4: Core skills for public sector innovation (OECD 2017b)¹¹

¹⁰ OECD uses the term ‘skills’ in a wide sense compatible with the KSAO approach we adopt in the current study.

¹¹ https://www.oecd.org/media/oecdorg/satellitesites/opsi/contents/files/OECD_OPSI-core_skills_for_public_sector_innovation-201704.pdf

⁸ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/performance/competency-factsheet>

⁹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/glossary/knowledge-skills-abilities-and-other-characteristics-ksaos->

Although these models were developed long before the outbreak of Covid-19, the competencies they emphasise have all proven crucial in dealing with the pandemic and its wide-ranging impacts. For this reason, our study assesses the extent to which current KSAOs defined for Western Balkans civil servants reflect these future-oriented skills.

Why competencies?

In addition to understanding what competencies and CBMs are, it is also important to know why they have been introduced in HRM and what they are specifically used for in practice.

Numerous different benefits have been attributed to the application of CBM in the HRM of civil services. For example, the OECD (2010, pp. 16–18) includes the following advantages of adopting this approach, as reported by its member countries:

- CBM enables greater responsiveness to the knowledge-based economy in which behavioural aspects have become more important;
- CBM is a useful tool for recruiting qualified people in an increasingly competitive environment;
- CBM responds to the trend of ‘flattening’ organisations, which requires revising organisational careers;
- CBM can be an effective means of bringing about cultural change and of injecting more flexibility, adaptability, and entrepreneurship into organisations;
- CBM provides support for wider cultural and organisational reforms of public administration, including transforming traditional bureaucracies into modern flexible organisations with a personalised culture;
- CBM provides a common language and understanding of the necessary and desirable behaviours needed to achieve organisational objectives;
- CBM includes effective communication tools for translating business strategy and structural changes into behavioural terms that are widely understandable.

The use of competency profiles and CBM has also been advocated on the grounds that managing people in terms of their competencies, talents, skills and capabilities is more effective for improving performance than HRM based on numbers and costs. By establishing a common language for discussing capabilities, for example, a common competency framework can provide a firm foundation for improved mobility and talent management.

Although the reasons for introducing CBM vary, the main benefits of this approach include flexibility, responsiveness to environmental pressures, and distancing from bureaucratic values. At a more practical level, the chief value of CBM lies in improving organisational performance through more competent and thus better performing staff. All these reasons resonate strongly with the issues surrounding public administration reform (PAR) agendas in the Western Balkans.

As Hood and Lodge (2004) have noted, however, the wider **political reasons** behind the technocratic arguments for adopting CBM cannot be ignored. For example, because this approach took off in the heyday of the ‘New Public Management’ doctrine, CBM appealed to politicians seeking ways to make civil servants more “managerial”. Adopting CBM not only offered a way to respond to high levels of dissatisfaction among lower-level bureaucrats with poor leadership and staff management but also helped senior civil servants to argue for higher pay and professional status. Interestingly, the CBM approach has also been seen as a tool for avoiding difficult questions about the boundaries between politics and administration. This is because behavioural competency profiles can provide

a convenient way to avoid more detailed and *objective* specifications of the tasks that senior civil servants are expected to be able to perform. Even in contexts where such political motives are not formally declared as the main reasons for introducing competency frameworks in public administration, it is important to bear in mind that these tools are not necessarily politically neutral.

It has also been argued that competency frameworks might be a **tool for promoting HR professionals** to stronger positions within their organisations. This is because CBM strengthens the link between competencies and organisational objectives, meaning HR professionals can presume closer involvement in strategic decision-making (Hood & Lodge 2004).

In sum, the establishment of competency frameworks may be based on very different agendas and is always closely related to the local political, historical, and administrative context. This underlines the importance, when establishing competency frameworks, of deliberating and agreeing upon the key values that should be included in competencies early on in the process of introducing CBM.

How are competency frameworks applied?

The public sector is inevitably fragmentary in that it consists of a large number of different institutions and professions. One of the benefits of adopting competency frameworks for the civil service is that they can serve as integrative tools for achieving greater cohesion and coherence. Such integration can be achieved through the adoption of a three-dimensional approach (OECD 2010):

- **Vertical integration** - aligning individual employees and their behaviour to the mission and strategy of the organisation.
- **Horizontal integration** – linking different HRM areas with each other.
- **Implementation** of competency-based management throughout the organisation

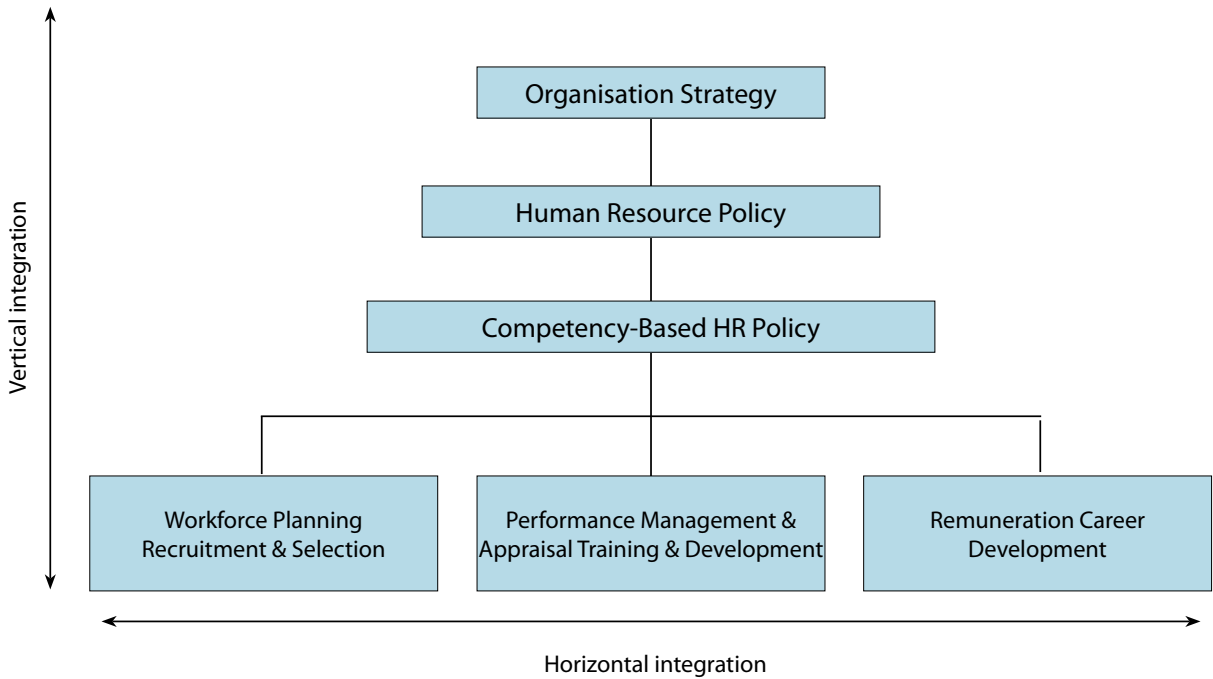


Figure 5: Horizontal and vertical integration of a competency framework (OECD 2010)

Although the CBM approach is mostly imported from generic HRM discourse typically based on micro-level practices at organisational level, it must be borne in mind that a *macro-level* perspective is required when discussing CBM in the context of the civil service. Although a whole-of-government approach entails considering public administration as a tightly integrated organisation, however, the fact remains that the civil service consists of large number of very different types of entities, greatly increasing the challenge and complexity of assessing these three dimensions across the civil service as a whole. For example, good **vertical integration** requires good integration of HRM practices not only with organisational strategies but also with sectoral (i.e., policy areas) and central (e.g., PAR) strategies.

CBM has mainly been perceived and used as a tool for **horizontally integrating** the following HRM practices (based on OECD 2010):

- **Workforce planning** – evaluating current future and future competency needs at individual and organisational level.
- **Recruitment and selection** – using competencies as selection criteria to inform the design of recruitment and selection tools.
- **Training and development** – using competency-gap analysis as a basis for assessing training needs assessment and the creation of personal development plans.
- **Performance management and appraisal** – in addition to measuring the achievement of tasks, competencies enable the inclusion of behavioural aspects in appraising how objectives have been achieved.
- **Remuneration** – rewarding people for the development and application of competencies identified as most important for organisational success. Separate pay schemes can be established for people with competencies beyond those required by the competency levels for their position.
- **Career development** – using competencies for developing personal career plans and identifying potential career paths.
- **Succession planning** – competency profiles at different hierarchical levels provide a practical reference for assessing potential replacements for positions becoming vacant and for preparing people with relevant competencies for leadership roles.

Although it is possible for competency frameworks to provide useful input for all these HRM areas, doing so would require a highly systematic design and application of HRM processes. This in turn would entail highly skilled HR professionals to establish and manage all these linkages, as well as professional managers able to apply these tools consistently in their everyday work. Rather than overloading a competency framework with too many high expectations, therefore, it is better to begin by linking the framework with key processes and subsequently build on this experience to expand the framework when necessary. The need for a cautious and gradual approach is why competencies are most often used in recruitment and development processes (CIPD 2021), while competency-based pay systems are unusual (Löfler, Busse & Hoppe, cited in Horton et al. 2002).

Good practice from the European Union: Slovenia

To adjust competencies to the goals, vision and specifics of the Slovenian public administration, the following strategic documents were reviewed:

- Public Administration 2020: Public Administration Development Strategy 2015–2020.
- Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy: Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion Policy in the period 2014–2020.
- Government of the Republic of Slovenia: Two-Year Action Plan for Implementation of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015–2020 for the years 2016 and 2017
- Government of the Republic of Slovenia: Partnership Agreement between Slovenia and the European Commission for the period 2014–2020

The Public Administration Development Strategy described the vision of the Government of Slovenia to foster a modern public administration that would reflect the principles and values of accountability, transparency, rule of law, cooperation, fairness and inclusion, consensus orientation, innovation, performance, and efficiency. This strategy provided the basis and guidance for the development and integration of competencies. The core competencies eventually established clearly reflect the values and vision of the government regarding public administration, i.e., a commitment to professional development, enhancing cooperation, proactive activities, and a focus on users. (For further details, see Annex 3.)

Regarding the dimension of **implementation**, it is important that central co-ordinating HRM bodies are sufficiently competent to understand the underlying principles of CBM and their application in practice. As Figure 2 clearly shows, more than half of OECD's member states do not apply competency frameworks across all levels of the civil service but focus rather on certain groups, most often on senior civil servants. The more heterogeneous the scope of the target group to whom the competency framework is applied, the more generic it will need to be to accommodate all their different needs. Another option is to incorporate some flexibility in applying the competency framework at organisational level, treating it more as a standardised structure with standardised terminology to be applied locally. As these points indicate, the proper implementation of CBM is far from a simple matter, especially since civil services in all countries are extremely complex and multi-faceted institutions encompassing many different types of organisations and professions. Applying a uniform model would thus require very strong capacities not only in central civil service co-ordination bodies but also in all institutions where the model is applied.

Job categorisation

Given the complexity of civil service organisations, the job analysis and categorisation methods applied in CBM are particularly important when establishing a competency framework. Descriptions of different roles are crucial for structuring the competency framework and should provide practical input for defining requirements. The logic to be applied here is that the level of detail of job descriptions or categories, groups, job families, etc. determines the possible level of detail of the competency frameworks. This means that very general descriptions of job tasks will only allow for similarly general definitions of KSAOs. In addition to analysing the requirements set for jobs, therefore, it is important to understand the essence of these jobs and the logic behind their categorisation to ascertain whether they are sufficiently informative to define meaningful and practical KSAOs.

Analytical approach

This study complements earlier studies conducted by ReSPA and previous SIGMA monitoring assessments of the procedural aspects entailed in ensuring merit-based recruitment and professionalism in the civil services of the Western Balkans. Rather than analysing **how** processes of testing or assessing competency are implemented, however, the focus here is on **what** is required from civil servants in terms of KSAOs. For this purpose the following tasks were undertaken in preparing this study:

- analysing job categorisation and how it supports the application of CBM in the civil services of Western Balkan administrations;
- mapping the requirements set for civil servants at different levels in these administrations;
- analysing the balance of requirements, including existing competency frameworks, by applying the KSAO model;
- assessing the fit of existing requirements with the future challenges likely to be faced by governments;
- assessing three dimensions of existing competency management systems, i.e. their vertical integration, horizontal integration, and implementation.

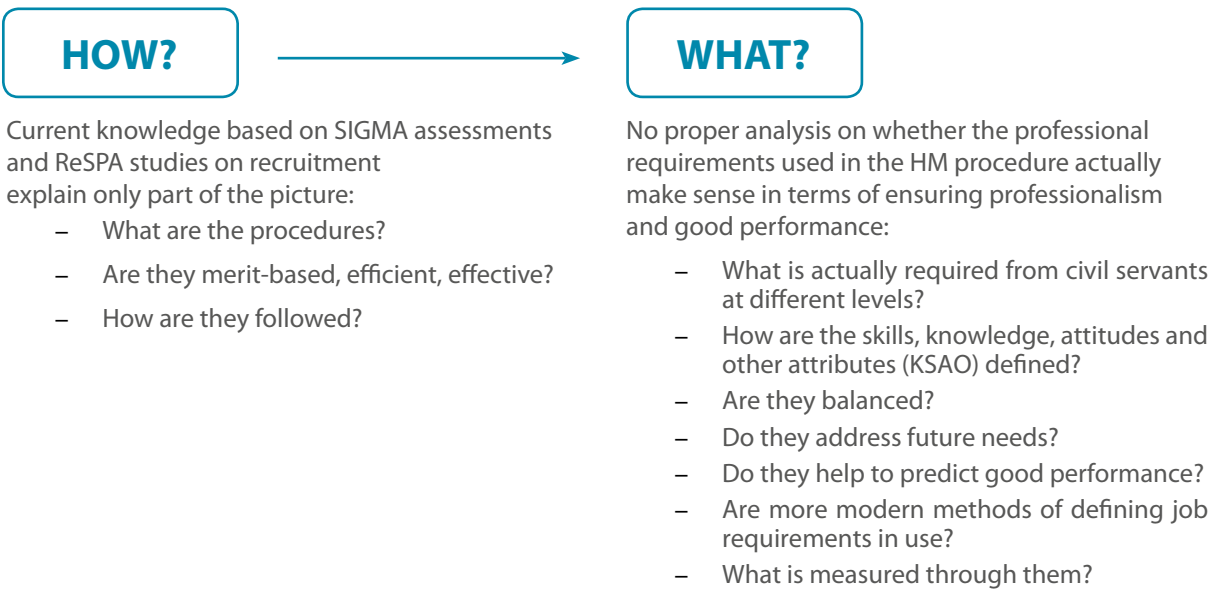


Figure 6: Focus on competencies in the Western Balkans

This study assessed the following five **hypotheses** about the current situation vis-à-vis job requirements and competencies in the civil services of Western Balkan administrations:

- Hypothesis 1 – that job requirements in the civil services in the Western Balkans are mostly *knowledge-based*, neglecting other components of the KSAO model.
- Hypothesis 2 – that more complex and sophisticated approaches for describing job requirements are not widely used.
- Hypothesis 3 – that the application of more complex approaches is challenging because the current categorisation of jobs is too general, making it difficult to establish competency profiles with sufficient specificity.

- Hypothesis 4 – that existing KSAOs are not aligned with the future skills required of civil servants.
- Hypothesis 5 – that although well-designed systems of selection, assessment and development may be in place, their effect is limited since they are not founded on a sufficiently strong basis.

These hypotheses were tested by analysing the legal frameworks for professional requirements and their practical application in each of the administrations surveyed. A questionnaire based on the analytical model shown below in Figure 7 was developed to collect survey data for analysing the present situation. The data obtained from this survey was then used for conducting comparative analysis (Chapter 2). The study was conducted in all of the ReSPA-member administrations. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it should be noted that the experiences of the Institutions at BiH level, the Federation of BiH (FBiH), and the Republika Srpska were analysed separately because practices differ considerably in these three administrations.

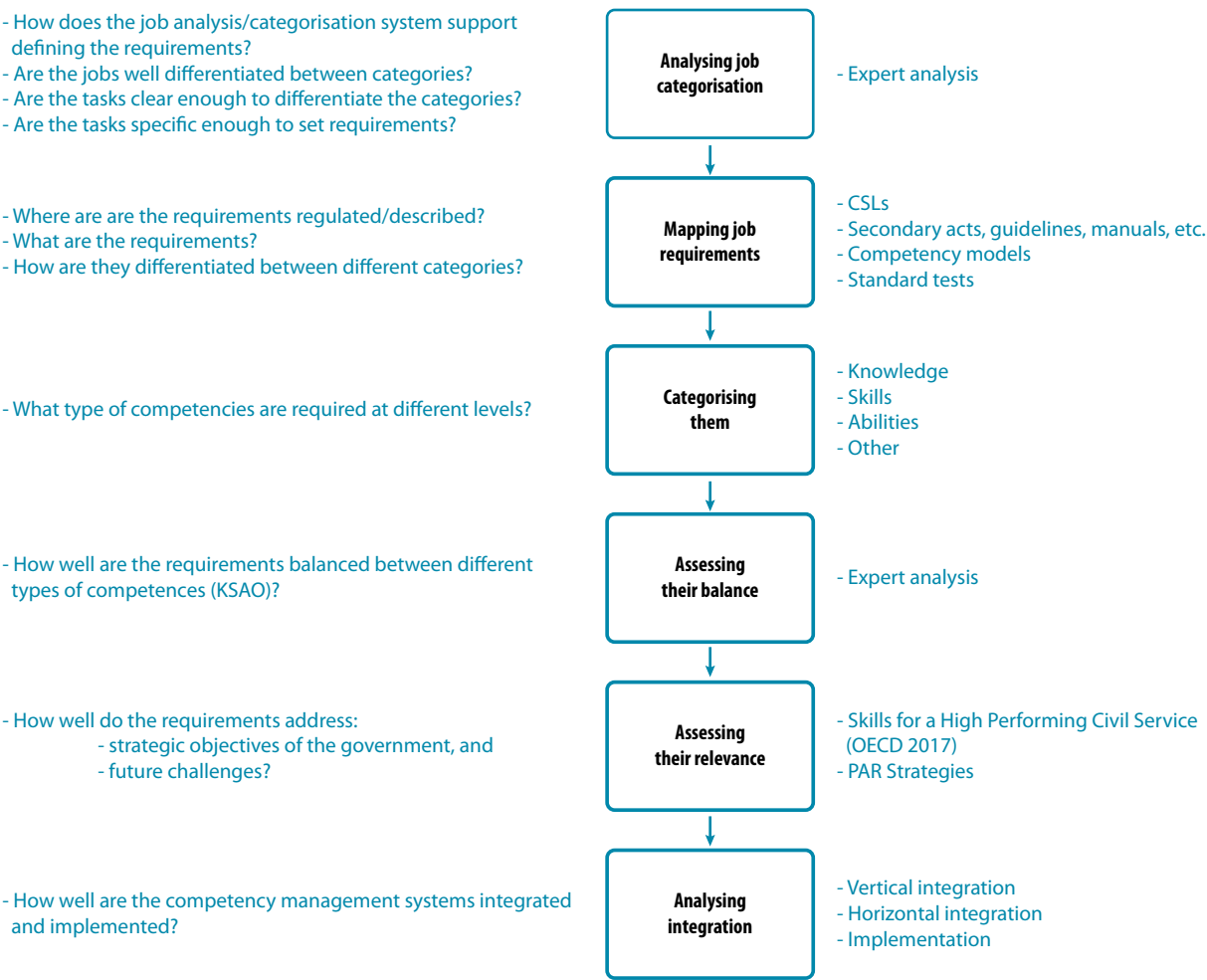


Figure 7: Analytical model of the study

To provide more practical insights into the application of competency models, this analysis is complemented by ‘good examples’ from Ireland, Lithuania and Slovenia as three different EU countries that have introduced competency frameworks in their civil services.

2.1. How are job requirements defined?

In this first section of our analysis we take a close look at how jobs are defined at central level in the ReSPA member administrations and whether these definitions provide sufficient clarity and detail for setting meaningful and balanced professional requirements. We then assess these job requirements according to the KSAO model and the OECD's definition of the skills needed to tackle future challenges. This is important because the delineation of professional requirements plays a crucial role in determining the limits of their integration with different HRM procedures.

Job categorisation

Elaborating job requirements and more complex competency frameworks inevitably depends to a great extent on how jobs are defined and categorised. Prior to analysing job requirements, therefore, it is important to understand the general logic and underlying principles of job classification. Since the focus of this study is on job requirements, however, we briefly analyse job categorisation here only at a general level.

In **Albania**, job descriptions and classifications are regulated by a government decree¹² that defines the classification procedure and sets the reference job descriptions both for each category of position (general or "special" administration) and for each class of positions (hierarchy). However, institutions have the discretion to specify further requirements for each position when drafting job descriptions.

Jobs in the civil service in Albania are categorised into four main classes:

- I Top management corps (TMC)
- II Mid-level management
- III Lower-level management
- IV Executive (specialist) level

Each category is further defined into several sub-categories. An interesting feature of the Albanian approach is that seven of these 11 sub-categories are defined for *managerial* jobs (classes I-III). Classification is based on reference job descriptions for each category of positions defined in the job classification decree. The standard job descriptions are rather detailed and include definitions of key tasks and the level of problem-solving complexity these tasks entail and their effects, the types of decision-making involved, the freedom of the officeholder to act, as well as the management environment (operational focus and reporting). Annex 3 of the job classification decree regulates "special groups" of civil servants who do not belong to the "general administration" such as accountants, lawyers, and HR personnel. (See Figure 8 for an example of a standard job description at specialist level in Albania.)

Class IV / 1: Specialist level A		
Includes specialists who perform tasks that require deep professional knowledge in the field; the work is performed within the general instructions regarding the objectives and deadlines for the completion of tasks; tasks / projects are carried out in accordance with the policies of the institution, administrative standards and technical procedures, as well as taking into account professional practices; fulfilling tasks requires analytical skills and independent planning; starting from the tasks of the job position, specialists of this level identify opportunities for further improvement of procedures and techniques; discuss the results of the work with the superior and refer to him only in cases of unusual problems / issues. The supervisor controls the work only in terms of the result and usually does not interfere with its content.		
Problem solving (complexity & consequences)	Decision making (type & freedom of action)	Managerial environment (management relationship & focus of activity)
Usually standardized and somewhat complex, the problems encountered require solutions within the policies, principles and objectives set for the respective function; the solutions provided affect the work of colleagues and the relevant organizational unit.	Is frequent and continuous, but within a set of administrative standards and / or technical procedures; certain tasks / projects require analysis and planning; decision making is also about identifying alternatives to improve procedures and techniques.	The work of the specialist of this level affects the results of the whole sector and the supervision is performed by the head of the sector.

Figure 8: Example of the standard job description at the Specialist A level in Albania

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH), civil service jobs are described according to laws and regulations on the development of internal organisations and the classification of jobs. In **Republika Srpska**, a Law on the Republic's Administration is also involved in classification.¹³ In all BiH entities, job classifications are quite similar and less detailed than in the other administrations covered in this study, with the top civil service consisting of two or three separate job categories while at the lower level there are four or five categories. The titles of these categories overlap to a large extent (see Figure 9). Whereas managerial positions are easily distinguishable from each other by their titles, the situation is less clear in the case of expert positions, since only in the **BiH Institutions** are expert-level tasks described, albeit in brief and general terms. For instance, expert advisor jobs are defined as follows: "Performs the most complex tasks that involve identifying problems and finding solutions without the use of patterns." This level of detail provides only limited input when defining job requirements at different levels centrally. It also means that jobs need to be described almost exhaustively at institutional level, which can cause problems when applying job categories uniformly across institutions.

13 OG RS, 118/08

12 Decree n. 142 of 12.03.2014 "On job description and job classification in public administration institutions"

BiH Institutions ¹⁴	FBIH ¹⁵	BiH RS ¹⁶
<div><div>- Secretary / secretary on special assignment</div><div>- Assistant minister / assistant director / chief inspector</div><div>- Head of unit</div><div>- Expert advisor</div><div>- Higher expert associate</div><div>- Expert associate</div></div>	<div><div>- Head of institution (apart from the ministries)</div><div>- Secretary of institution</div><div>- Assistant minister / assistant director / chief inspector</div><div>- Head of unit</div><div>- Expert advisor</div><div>- Higher expert associate</div><div>- Expert associate</div></div>	<div><div>- Assistant minister / Head of institution (apart from the ministries)</div><div>- Secretary of ministry / assistant head of institution (apart from the ministry) / chief inspector / Secretary of the CS Agency</div><div>- Inspector / Head of internal audit unit</div><div>- Head of unit</div><div>- Higher expert associate</div><div>- Expert associate I</div><div>- Expert associate II</div></div>

Figure 9: Job categorisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The civil service of **Montenegro** has no standardised job descriptions. The Law on Civil Servants and State Employees (LCSSE) defines five categories of civil service staff,¹⁷ while the three lower categories (expert managers, experts, and executive staff) are further divided into ten levels, with a still higher number of titles within all these levels and categories. However, the law only describes tasks performed at the job category level and in a highly generalised manner. For instance, the most detailed task description is given for the expert staff category as follows:

Expert staff shall perform the tasks referring to: drafting strategic documents and programmes, analysing the situation for the purpose of fostering economic, social, cultural, ecological and overall social development; drafting of laws and other regulations; administrative supervision; drafting analytical and informative and other materials with the proposal to harmonize the system with internationally recognized standards; administrative procedure, decision-making in the administrative procedure and performing other administrative activities; taking administrative measures and administrative actions, providing explanations, issuing professional guidance and instructions for the implementation of laws and other regulations, and drafting special work methodologies and procedures.

14 Decision on classification of work posts and criteria for job descriptions in the BiH institutions (OG BiH, 30/13 and 67/15)

15 Decree on core function jobs in the institutions of civil service, requirements to perform them and to enjoy specific labour-relation rights (OG FBIH, 35/04 and 03/06)

16 Decree on categories of jobs (OG RS, 18/09 and 131/10)

17 The head of the administration authority, senior management staff, expert management staff, expert staff, and operational staff.

Tasks are not specified in any further detail, despite the expert staff group having four sub-levels and 12 titles within these levels, starting from ‘Independent advisor I’, ‘Inspector I’ and ‘Authorised official I’, and ending with ‘Associate III’. The different requirements set for education and experience¹⁸ indicate that these jobs have very different levels of responsibility and complexity. For this reason the general task description given for the expert staff category is not very helpful either for classifying jobs at different levels or for setting requirements. The categories are differentiated only in terms of general eligibility requirements based on years of experience and levels of education. Although jobs should be additionally categorised in the systematisation acts by different job groups (core business, administrative and auxiliary) and tasks within these groups (e.g., strategic analytical, normative, supervision, etc.), administrative and essential activity tasks are currently only further elaborated in the case of expert staff, and again only in a very generalised way.¹⁹ It remains unclear why such specification is provided solely for expert staff and not for all the other categories. This causes two major issues. First, the differentiation of jobs into four topical categories in core business²⁰ and three in administrative affairs²¹ might be at a level of generalisation too great for establishing meaningful job descriptions and requirements. Second, the tasks are not differentiated across hierarchical levels. In sum, the job analysis model in use in Montenegro is not a very practicable way of defining job requirements and competencies.

In **North Macedonia** a decree on the descriptions of categories and levels of jobs of administrative officers²² stipulates the various categories and tasks of each category and thus provides the basis for determining job descriptions in the systematisation acts of institutions, albeit without replacing the institutional level job descriptions. The only reliable source of information concerning job descriptions and job analyses, therefore, is to be found in the systematisation acts of individual institutions. The decree further defines four sub-categories of each job category (A1–A5, B1–B4, C1–C4, D1–D4) depending on the level of responsibility, goals, type and complexity of the work and job tasks in the workplace, required professional qualifications, work experience in the profession, general and specific job competencies, and other criteria relevant to the job. Jobs are categorised in general terms through general types of tasks.

Category C
<div><div>(1) The professional administrative officer with their work aims to efficiently, effectively, and qualitatively perform work tasks that contribute to the realization of the work program of the institution and tasks within the scope of the organizational unit in which they are employed.</div><div>(2) The main tasks and responsibilities for the professional administrative officer from level C are as follows:<div><div>- Performs administrative tasks within the competence of the organizational unit;</div><div>- Monitors and implements regulations in the field in which they operate, including the international agreements to which the Republic of North Macedonia has acceded or ratified;</div><div>- Participates in the evaluation of administrative staff in their own institution and of administrative staff in other institutions; and</div><div>- Performs other activities determined by the act for systematization of the jobs of the institution.</div></div></div></div>

18 LCSSE Article 28: Independent advisor I, Inspector I and Authorized official I – VII1 level of qualifications and at least three years of work experience; Associate III –V level of qualifications and at least one year of work experience.

19 E.g., “The expert staff at level I perform the most complex tasks requiring a significant degree of expertise and autonomy; expert staff at level III perform tasks of the lowest level of complexity to provide help and support for employees with more senior titles.”

20 1) strategic-analytical; 2) normative-legal; 3) supervision; and 4) execution of laws and other regulations.

21 1) IT and other administrative tasks; 2) material-financial and accounting activities; and 3) office activities.

22 Official Gazette of RM, no. 72 from 07.05.2014.

C1	C2	C3	C4
- Independently performs the most complex professional-administrative, normative-legal, executive, statistical, administrative-supervisory, IT, personnel, material, financial, promotional-informational and other matters of administrative nature; - Prepares materials and documents , including proposals for draft laws and bylaws and other regulations and acts, expert analysis of issues relevant to the implementation of legislation in the field it covers, expert analysis, information and other materials for working bodies, proposals for the work plan of the organizational unit and a report on the progress in the implementation of its work; and - Provides expert assistance , advice and mentors administrative staff from lower levels.	- Performs professional-administrative, normative-legal, executive, statistical, administrative-supervisory, informational, personnel, material, financial, promotional-informative and other matters of an administrative nature; - Participates in the preparation of materials and documents, including proposals for draft laws and bylaws and other regulations and acts, expert analysis of issues relevant to the implementation of legislation in the field it covers, expert analysis, information and other materials for working bodies, proposals for the work plan of the organisational unit and a report on the progress in the implementation of its work; and - Provides expert assistance, advice and mentors administrative staff from lower levels.	- Implements routine professional-administrative, normative-legal, executive, statistical, administrative-supervisory, information, personnel, material, financial, promotional information and other matters of an administrative nature, in accordance with the general instructions of the immediate superior administrative officer and under supervision; and - Collects information and data and assists in the preparation of materials and documents , including expert analysis of issues relevant to the application of the legislation in the area it covers, expert analysis, information and other materials for working bodies, proposals for the work plan of the organisational unit and a report on the progress in the implementation of its work.	- Implements the simplest routine professional-administrative, normative-legal, executive, statistical, administrative-supervisory, IT, staff, material, financial, promotional-informational and other matters of an administrative nature under the supervision and control of the directly superior managing administrative officer and administrative officers in the organisational higher-level unit; and - Collects information and data for the preparation of materials and documents, including expert analysis of issues relevant to the application of the legislation in the field it covers, expert analysis, information and other materials for working bodies, proposals for the work plan of the organisational unit and report on the progress in the implementation of its work.

Figure 10: Example of central level job descriptions in North Macedonia

In **Serbia**, jobs at expert and mid-managerial level (or *executive* level, as usually translated from Serbian)²³ are classified by applying job evaluation criteria defined in the decree on the classification of job positions²⁴ based on job ranks established in the Law on Civil Servants.²⁵ These ranks are those of senior advisor, independent advisor, advisor, junior advisor, associate, junior associate, clerk and junior clerk. The law provides a general description of the executive job positions at different levels, while the decree on classification defines them further. The jobs are evaluated and categorised

23 ‘Executive’ positions in this sense in Serbia comprise all positions that are not senior managerial positions, including the managerial positions of the organisational units in a state body (Art. 35 of the Law on Civil Servants).

24 Decree on Criteria for Classification of Civil Servants’ Positions (Official Gazette of RS, No. 117/2005, 108/2008, 109/2009, 95/2010, 117/2012, 84/2014, 132/2014, 28/2015, 102/2015, 113/2015, 16/2018, 2/2019, 4/2019, 26/2019, 42/2019 and 56/2021)

25 Law on Civil Servants (Official Gazette of RS, No. 79/2005, 81/2005 - corrigendum, 83/2005 - corrigendum, 64/2007, 67/2007 - corrigendum, 116/2008, 104/2009, 99/2014, 94/2017, 95/2018 and 157/2020)

according to levels of complexity, independence, responsibility, business communication and qualifications (education and years of experience). The decree on job classification draws a clear distinction between sub-categories based on these criteria. Since the jobs in the Senior Civil Service²⁶ category are defined via concrete job titles, there are no criteria needed for the categorisation of these positions. However, the decree on classification divides the top level into five categories based on the status of the given institution and/or position (see Figure 11).

Rank	Complexity	Independence	Accountability	Communication	Qualifications
SENIOR ADVISOR	The most complex jobs, in which creatively applying new methods in work significantly influences the policy setting or achieves results in an area within the scope of the body.	Independence in work and in deciding on the most complex professional issues is limited only by the general guidelines of managers regarding the policy of the body.	Accountability for tasks and decisions that significantly affect policymaking or implementation, which may include accountability for management.	Contacts inside and outside the body, by which information is effectively transmitted that serves to achieve the goals of the body.	A master’s degree and at least seven years of professional working experience.

Figure 11: Example of a central level job description in Serbia

Wrap up

A common feature of job categorisation in the civil services of the Western Balkans is that central legal acts set down the basic structure of the job classification and in most cases also define only general criteria for distinguishing between job categories. More specific and concrete details are expected to be specified in the institutional systematisation acts according to the minimum criteria set in the legislation. Jobs are currently described in the most general (or minimalistic) way in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Montenegro**, where no centrally set job descriptions or criteria currently exist at specialist level apart from for the **BiH Institutions**, which makes it difficult to define job requirements and competencies at non-managerial level. In **FBiH** and **Republika Srpska**, general task descriptions are defined only for managerial jobs, whereas in **North Macedonia** the job categorisation is quite complex, consisting of 17 different sub-categories. Although **Albania** has established a detailed set of 11 sub-categories, seven of these relate to managerial jobs, indicating that the amount of detail is lower at specialist level and that differentiation between job levels is thus more difficult at specialist level. By way of comparison, in **Serbia** the expert level is divided into eight sub-categories.

In those administrations where standard job descriptions or evaluation criteria have been set, their level of generalisation is still rather high. None of the administrations apart from **Serbia** use job catalogues in which jobs are defined by job families in different professional areas. Although **Montenegro** has set job content-related categories, these are not defined very clearly and therefore offer little value in setting professional requirements. The general nature of standard job descriptions also defines the possible level of detail of job requirements or competencies, as explained in the next section.

26 The formal title is *Appointed Positions in the Government and Other State Authorities* (Art 34, Law on Civil Servants)

	Number of categories	Number of sub-categories	Level of detail in the task descriptions
Albania	4	4 + 7 (managerial categories)	High level of detail. Standard job descriptions at sub-category level are grouped by general task lists, problem-solving, decision-making, and managerial environment.
BiH Institutions	6	3 + 3 (managerial categories)	Low level of detail. Standard job descriptions are defined in a highly generalised manner.
Federation of BiH	6	3 + 3 (managerial categories)	Low level of detail. Standard job descriptions do not exist at expert level.
Republika Srpska	7	4 + 3 (managerial categories)	Low level of detail. Standard job descriptions do not exist at expert level
Montenegro	5	7 + 5 (managerial categories)	Low level of detail. Standard job descriptions are missing, and key tasks are described only at category level.
North Macedonia	4	8 + 9 (managerial categories)	High level of detail. Standard job descriptions are defined at sub-category level.
Serbia	2	8 + 5 (SCS categories)	High level of detail. Standard jobs are described in terms of complexity, independence, responsibility, business communication and qualifications.

Figure 12: The level of detail in job categorisation in the civil services of the Western Balkans

In classifying jobs the aim is not to include the maximum possible level of detail, since too many details would render the system rigid and inert. Civil services are a complex set of institutions with very different business logics and tasks, meaning the jobs performed in these institutions are similarly diverse and complex, hence job classification cannot be too detailed or strict. The overarching aim is to achieve the optimum balance. For the purpose of this study assessment, the salient question is whether the ways in which jobs are categorised and described at central level provide sufficient input for defining clear job requirements and competency frameworks. From the preceding analysis here it can be concluded that this is currently not the case in most Western Balkan administrations.

General job requirements

To attain a better understanding of KSAOs or competency frameworks in use, it is important to have a general overview of eligibility criteria and job requirements in a wider sense. Here our analysis is based on the general job requirements applied across the civil services of the administrations surveyed, since these set a framework for establishing more detailed requirements at institutional level. The central level requirements thus not only set the minimum requirements but also indicate the priority skills and competencies required in the civil service.

Albania

In **Albania**, central regulations provide a framework for setting requirements for each job position in the civil service. The decree on classification specifies the requirements in terms of education, knowledge and skills. The education criteria are based on formal academic degrees and can be seen as eligibility criteria, while knowledge and skills are defined in a rather general way (see Figure 13). These are thus the minimum requirements set at central level that can be further specified at institutional level. However, this further specification is often not carried out in practice, hence requirements typically remain general even at institutional level.

	Class I.1 Top-Management	Class II / 1 Middle management	Class III / 1 Lower-level management	Class IV / 1 Specialist level
Education	Master of Science	Master of Science	Master of Science	Professional Masters
Knowledge and skills	Extensive knowledge related to the area of responsibility of the institution, i.e., of the management of the budget system and civil service; knowledge of administrative law and very good leadership skills, policy formulation, strategic management, analytical skills, communication, negotiation; judgment and initiative are regularly required to deal with complex problems.	Extensive knowledge of politics, legislation and procedures according to the activity covered by the directorate; very good knowledge of administrative procedures; very good professional knowledge; ability to set goals, set priorities and meet deadlines; ability to plan, review and direct the work of subordinate staff; very good communication and presentation skills; analytical skills and flexibility in accepting new methods and procedures.	Very good knowledge of specialties within a certain professional field and of policies and programs related to the field of specialty. Ability to provide technical guidance, to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the activity of subordinates and the use of resources; ability to exchange technical ideas and opinions and to argue relevant proposals; very good organization, communication and presentation skills.	Extensive knowledge of the field, of research methods, which help in the preparation of basic or analytical reports; ability to integrate information with institutional policies, ability to identify and clarify issues, to provide alternative opinions based on professional experience; ability to evaluate policy options and to anticipate the consequences of their adoption.

Figure 13: Examples of job requirements in Albania set for a sample of sub-categories²⁷

When analysing the professional characteristics assessed in the selection process in Albania, the topics published in job vacancy notices mostly consist of legislation or strategies. For specific positions (e.g., HR, IT, and auditing), other documents are also included. However, legislation still

27 Only the highest sub-category of each class (category) is presented in this figure.

comprises some 80–90% of the topics tested for these posts.²⁸ Although it is possible to assess other competences during job interviews, in practice this has proven challenging, despite continuous efforts by the Department of Public Administration of Albania (DoPA) to instruct and train members of the evaluation commissions in preparing interview questions.

The DoPA has developed a separate competency framework for the Top Management Corps (TMC) based on seven competencies:²⁹

1. Leadership and management ability
2. Communication, interpersonal relations and group work ability
3. Strategic leadership, vision and creative thinking
4. Extensive knowledge of inter-sectorial competences (this competency is mostly related to knowledge and is thus recommended to be assessed via written tests)
5. Knowledge of social and economic phenomena (this competency is mostly related to knowledge and is thus recommended to be assessed via written tests)
6. Professional integrity and trustworthiness
7. Knowledge of European legal systems (this competency is mostly related to knowledge and is thus recommended to be assessed via written tests)

Analysing job requirements with reference to the KSAO model shows that the general requirements in Albania are quite diverse, balancing formal public administration and legal knowledge with other skills and abilities such as leadership, policy co-ordination, strategic management, analytical skills, communication, negotiation, judgement, initiative-taking, and the solving of complex models. The competency model developed for the Top Management Corps would balance the formal requirements even further with its wider set of managerial competencies. However, further analysis is needed to assess the extent to which these skills and abilities are used in selection or development processes. Some vacancy notices analysed for the purpose of this study indicate that the recruitment process is still mostly based on formal knowledge.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, general eligibility requirements are set in primary legislation (usually civil service laws and laws on administration). Similar to most other Western Balkans administrations, job-related requirements are described in the individual job descriptions under the term ‘specific requirements’ contained in the institution-specific secondary legislation act called the Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Systematisation. The requirements are listed in the job descriptions and usually focus on formal education (level of education and education background), prescribed years of experience, required certificates (e.g., bar exam), language skills and computer skills.³⁰

28 This is a rough estimation based on different vacancy notices consulted on the DoPA website.

29 DoPA Instruction No. 6/2014 “On the recruitment procedure for the TMC”.

30 Institutional level: Decision on classification of work posts and criteria for job descriptions in the BiH institutions (OG BiH, 30/13 and 67/15); FBiH: Decree on core function jobs in the institutions of civil service, requirements to perform them and to enjoy specific labour-relation rights (OG FBiH, 35/04 and 03/06); Republika Srpska: Decree on categories of jobs (OG RS, 18/09 and 131/10).

	Job category	Education	Work Experience	Special certificates	KSAOs
BiH Institutions	Higher expert associate	University degree	2 years of relevant work experience	Professional administrative exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Foreign language skills (if applicable)- Computer skills- Communication skills- 1 additional competency (depending on the character of the job)
FBiH	Higher expert associate	University degree	2 years of relevant work experience	Professional administrative exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Foreign language skills (where applicable)- Computer skills
Republika Srpska	Higher expert associate	University degree	3 years of relevant work experience	Professional administrative exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Foreign language skills (where applicable)- Computer skills

Figure 14: Example of job requirements at different administrative levels in BiH

General eligibility requirements in Bosnia and Herzegovina are similar across different administrative levels (see Figure 14). In addition to education and work experience, there are specific requirements set for foreign language and computer skills. These general job requirements are thus rather formal and need to be further specified at organisational level. The only exception is the case of the **BiH Institutions**, where a competency framework has been introduced across the civil service for all job categories. This contains five basic competencies for all civil service posts:

- 1) professional development and integrity
- 2) initiative, change, problem-solving
- 3) teamwork
- 4) communication
- 5) personal effectiveness and result orientation

Each basic competency contains a list of additional sub-competencies. In addition, the framework contains an additional four competencies that apply in the case of managerial job positions:

- 1) leadership skills
- 2) planning and organising
- 3) staff development
- 4) strategic direction (only for top managers)

Again, each of these four competencies is supplemented by several sub-competencies, as shown in Figure 15.

C.4	COMMUNICATION The ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing with managers, colleagues, clients and citizens, conveying information clearly, accurately and in a timely manner to relevant individual and groups.
C.4.1	Tactfulness Has patience and uses good judgment in communication, keeping polite behaviour in all interactions.
C.4.2	Clear conveying of ideas, facts and instructions Conveys ideas, facts and instructions, - orally or in writing - with clarity, using language the audience will best understand.
C.4.3	Active listening Listens, understands and considers ideas of others.
C.4.4	Encouraging feedback from others Encourages information feedback from others and offers it to other parties.
C.4.5	Adaptive communication style Changes the communication approach and style to meet the preferences and needs of the audience.
C.4.6	Effective participation at meetings Conducts and/or participates in meetings and group discussions efficiently and with structure.

Figure 15: Example of the Communication competency at the level of BiH institutions³¹

The actual set of competencies depends on each job position. In non-managerial positions only the *Communication competency* is compulsory, while an additional competency is decided at institutional level. Of the five general competencies, therefore, only two are applied. The list of tested competencies is expanded for managerial jobs: in addition to *Communication*, the competencies of *Leadership* and *Planning and organising* are compulsory and must be accompanied by one additional competency set at institutional level.

Montenegro

Job requirements in Montenegro are described both in the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees³² and in the Decree on the criteria for internal organization and systematisation of work in state administration bodies.³³ Requirements are further defined in the rulebooks on the internal organization and systematisation of state authorities. The conditions required for eligibility for specific civil service positions are differentiated based on the levels and titles within each category. The decree stipulates that educational requirements must be aligned with the job description for each job position and that the specific titles within the categories for performing specific tasks are to be defined based on the level of independence required for the execution of tasks and the level of complexity of these tasks. Since Montenegro does not have standardised job descriptions, the provisions of the decree on the systematisation of work in the state administration, which relates tasks to specific civil service titles based on the job descriptions, remain vague.

To attain a more complete picture of the professional requirements set for civil servants in Montenegro, the selection procedure also needs to be taken into account. According to the decree on recruitment,³⁴ *communication skills and personal performance* and *motivation* should be tested in the course of interviews. The recruitment decree thus introduces additional general professional requirements not mentioned under the general eligibility requirements. The criteria for the

31 Steve Williams (2015) *Manual for the use of competency framework in recruitment and selection for the Civil Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo.

32 Law on Civil Servants and State Employees, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No. 002/18 from January 10, 2018, 034/19 from June 21, 2019, 008/21 from January 26, 2021

33 Government of Montenegro, *Decree on the on criteria for internal organization and systematization of work in state administration bodies*, January 31, 2019

34 Decree on the criteria and manner of the assessment of knowledge, abilities, competencies and skills for work in state authorities, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No. 050/18 of July 20, 2018

assessment of the oral interview can be viewed as partly behavioural, though there is no explicit framework in place.³⁵

An explicit competency framework that further defines job requirements has only been established in Montenegro for the senior civil service level (heads of state authorities and the senior managerial staff of ministries). Competency-based interviews and testing are stipulated in the LCSSE and the recruitment decree and further elaborated in the manual for competencies.³⁶ The competencies defined in these documents are:

- Leadership
- A results-oriented approach
- Co-operation
- Communication
- Innovativeness

However, the LCSSE and the recruitment decree define these competencies merely as titles without providing any further details on their content. The Manual of Competencies sheds more light by providing positive and negative indicators for each of these competencies, as well as specifying the questions which can be posed during the semi-structured interview (see Figure 16).

Communication	
Positive indicators	Negative indicators
Communicates clearly and effectively, orally and in writing	Non-communicative
Speaks accurately and convincingly both in front of audiences and in the media	No adjustment of communication to the modes of communication of target groups
Communicates with others with respect while maintaining dignity even in critical situations	Does not check that information is understandable and clear
Elaborates messages according to objectives and target groups	Inability to listen actively
Always behaves in accordance with the context of the situation and their current role	Inflexibility in communication
Ensures that employees and other stakeholders are always informed in a timely manner	Unwillingness to improve communication skills
Applies different means of communication to ensure the achievement of set goals	Does not establish mechanisms for good internal communications
Constantly improves communication skills	Does not provide communication training for team members and does not allow them to perform in public
Insists on a high quality of internal communication	
Enables team members to master their communication skills and perform in public	

Figure 16: Example of the competency framework in Montenegro (definition of the communication-related competency)

35 The decree defines *communication skills and personal performance* as follows: “encompassing clarity and precision in the communication, active listening skills, respect and appreciation of interlocutors, self-confidence and culture of communication; persuasiveness and confidence in expressing and presenting attitudes and information, ability to cope in certain situations, harmonizing verbal and nonverbal communication.” The decree defines *motivation* as “focus on achieving goals, striving to achieve, showing persistence and consistency in achieving the desired goals”.

36 Human Resource Management Authority, *Manual for competencies of the heads of state authorities and senior managerial staff*, Podgorica, 2019.

Montenegro thus provides an interesting case of rather loosely defined job requirements at general civil service level combined with an explicit competency framework at senior civil service level. Even at senior level, however, the competency framework is quite minimalistic and leaves considerable room for interpretation in its application.

Analysing these requirements in Montenegro according to the KSAO model, it can be observed that they are not well-balanced since they focus mostly on general and legal knowledge of the administration and certain other skills such as IT and foreign language skills. During interviews for these posts, some behavioural qualities such as communication and motivation are also assessed but are not further defined, making it difficult to assess what type of behaviour is expected at different levels. The only exception is in Montenegro’s competency framework for top civil service management, where abilities and behavioural aspects play a more important role.

North Macedonia

North Macedonia is one of three administrations in the Western Balkans that apply an explicit competency framework throughout the entire civil service. The country’s Law on Administrative Servants (LAS)³⁷ defines professional requirements via four categories:

1. Professional qualifications
2. Work experience
3. General job competencies
4. Special job competencies for all levels

The *job competencies* that apply in North Macedonia comprise sets of knowledge, skills and abilities needed by the employee to perform their work and job tasks and can be general or ‘special’ (Article 5). These are further defined in the Rulebook on the Framework of General Job Competencies for Administrative Servants³⁸ (hereafter the ‘rulebook on general job competencies’). The framework groups general competencies in an integrated manner to enable improvement of the selection and employment procedures, promotion, performance appraisal and the professional development of administrative servants. The framework contains nine general job competencies:

- problem-solving and deciding on matters within the scope of the job
- learning and development
- communication
- achieving results
- working with others / teamwork
- strategic awareness
- orientation towards the parties / stakeholders
- management
- financial management

These general competencies are not defined for Category A since these positions are filled with civil servants from Category B and hence the same competencies apply. Category B includes all nine general competencies at advanced level, while Category C requires eight general competencies at intermediate level and Category D requires six general competencies at basic level. The general job competencies are not differentiated between sub-categories, which results in applying the

37 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 27/14, 199/14, 48/15, 154/15, 5/16, 142/16 and 11/18 and Official Gazette of the Republic of Northern Macedonia No. 275/2019, 14/20 and 215/21

38 Official Gazette of RM, no. 142 from 26.09.2014

same level requirements for rather different jobs in terms of complexity and responsibility. Each competency in the framework is described by name, definition, levels (basic, intermediate and advanced), with indicators for each level. The type and level of general job competence prescribed for the job depends on the category to which the job belongs (see Figure 17).

Competency	Category B	Category C	Category D
Communication: the ability of the administrative servant to present himself / herself, his/her organizational unit and the institution in a positive and professional way as well as to communicate with stakeholders in an appropriate manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be able to represent the institution in public; speaks clearly and concisely- Be available and capable of listening to different opinions. To check the understanding of interlocutors, to summarise and draw clear conclusions.- Be able to promote the vision, mission and role of the institution, its policies, plans and priorities inside and outside the institution.- Be able to prepare written reports through which they will influence and convince the public- Be able to choose the appropriate mode of communication, written or oral, depending on the target group.- Be able to negotiate a solution that is of common interest to the institution and stakeholders.- Be able to influence the ideas and opinions of people through arguments that are aimed at achieving the strategic priorities and goals of the institution; be able to plan, organize and conduct meetings with a clear purpose, agenda and conclusions.- Be able to manage information, establish regular and timely communication with employees and provide employees with adequate access to necessary information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be able to adjust communication in a way understandable to interlocutors.- Be capable and available to listen to different opinions.- Be able to listen carefully and to check if they have clearly understood all received directions.- Be able to choose the appropriate mode of communication (written or oral) depending on the target group.- Be able to establish proper communication and seek guidance in order to perform their job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be able to listen carefully and clearly and accurately understand all received directions and instructions.- Be able to establish proper communication and seek guidance in order to do their job.- Be able to express themselves clearly and precisely.

Figure 17: Example from the competency framework of North Macedonia

In addition to general and job-specific competencies, other requirements are also checked in the recruitment process in North Macedonia. The testing of these competencies is conducted through written exams and an interview. The written exams for an administrative officer consist of two parts: a professional part and a part for checking foreign language skills. In the **professional part**, candidates answer questions in the form of multi-choice computer testing, which checks the candidate’s knowledge in the following areas:

- the constitutional order of the Republic of North Macedonia
- the system of local self-government
- the system of administrative law, administrative procedure and administrative dispute
- position and other general issues for public sector employees
- the employment rights of administrative employees
- the Code for Administrative Servants
- foreign **language skills** (one of the three most commonly used languages of the European Union, i.e., English, French or German) are checked through online testing

General competencies are checked during the **interview** through situational questions, whereas job-specific competencies are checked through professional questions or practical tasks. Although the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of North Macedonia (MISA) has prepared a manual to help the selection committees in conducting interviews,³⁹ interviews are not necessarily always based on this manual in practice, making it difficult to assess the actual application of the competency model.⁴⁰

Formally, job requirements in North Macedonia are relatively balanced from a KSAO perspective insofar as requirements for computer skills, administrative knowledge and language are complemented with general competencies that include behavioural aspects as well as knowledge and skills related to management and public finance. Assessing the actual application of these requirements, however, reveals the situation to be more complex. The requirements predominately focus on knowledge, especially formal education, and much less so on skills and abilities. In categories B and C, the type of education as well as achieved successes are the main factor in selecting candidates. Formal and non-formal education account for 33 points, while competencies account for 12 points (6 for general competencies and 6 for special competencies). Even though the general competencies are legally required, they are not always tested in the recruitment process. Moreover, since job-specific competencies are not usually defined, checking them is often impossible. This results in a rather unbalanced composition of professional requirements, with a bias towards formal characteristics.

Serbia

As one of the administrations in the region with an explicit competency framework for the entire civil service, Serbia has a comprehensive system for defining job requirements. The most basic qualification requirements are set for the level of education and years of experience, with a master's degree and seven years of work experience required at senior advisor level, and with a high-school diploma and six months experience required at clerical level. These eligibility criteria are complemented with a competency framework that comprises four groups (see Figure 18).

BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Information management- Managing tasks and achieving results - Orientation to learning and change- Building and maintaining professional relations- Conscience, commitment and integrity- Human resource management- Strategic governance
GENERAL FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Organisation and work of state authorities- Digital literacy- Business communication
SPECIAL FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES	General and methodological knowledge and skills In a certain field of work (14) a civil servant should apply in his work in order to perform his work effectively. 1) inspection work, 2) normative work, 3) study- analytical work, 4) financial and material affairs, 5) audit affairs, 6) IT affairs, 7) human resources management, 8) international cooperation and European integration, 9) administrative and legal affairs, 10) management of EU funds and international development assistance, 11) public procurement, 12) management, 13) relations with public and 14) administrative affairs.
SPECIAL FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR THE WORKPLACE	Set of necessary specific and methodological knowledge and skills within a certain job that a civil servant should apply in his work in order to perform the job effectively <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Professional environment, regulations and acts from the competencies of the authority- Relevant knowledge and skills for a certain workplace (incl. relevant certificates, licences etc.)- Foreign language

Figure 18: Civil service competency framework in Serbia

39 Centre for Change Management, Skopje 2016. The publication is part of the project: “Support for Public Administration Reform”.
40 ReSPA (2020). Making merit recruitment work: Lessons from and for the western Balkans.

Serbia’s competency framework covers a wide array of different attributes, including basic understanding of the public administration and its legal-institutional framework as well as ‘softer’ behavioural criteria such as conscientiousness and commitment. The framework provides a complex web of different characteristics that need to be tested during the selection of candidates in the recruitment process (see Figure 18). Not all these competencies apply to all candidates, however; rather they depend on the level and area of responsibility of a job position. In the case of special functional competencies, for example, three to six competencies may be tested, whereas in the case of behavioural competencies, five to seven competencies can be tested depending on job requirements (e.g., HRM and strategic governance competencies are tested only for managerial positions).

Compared to the other administrations in the region, the Serbian competency model is the most comprehensive in terms of the different attributes covered. It is therefore also the most demanding to implement.

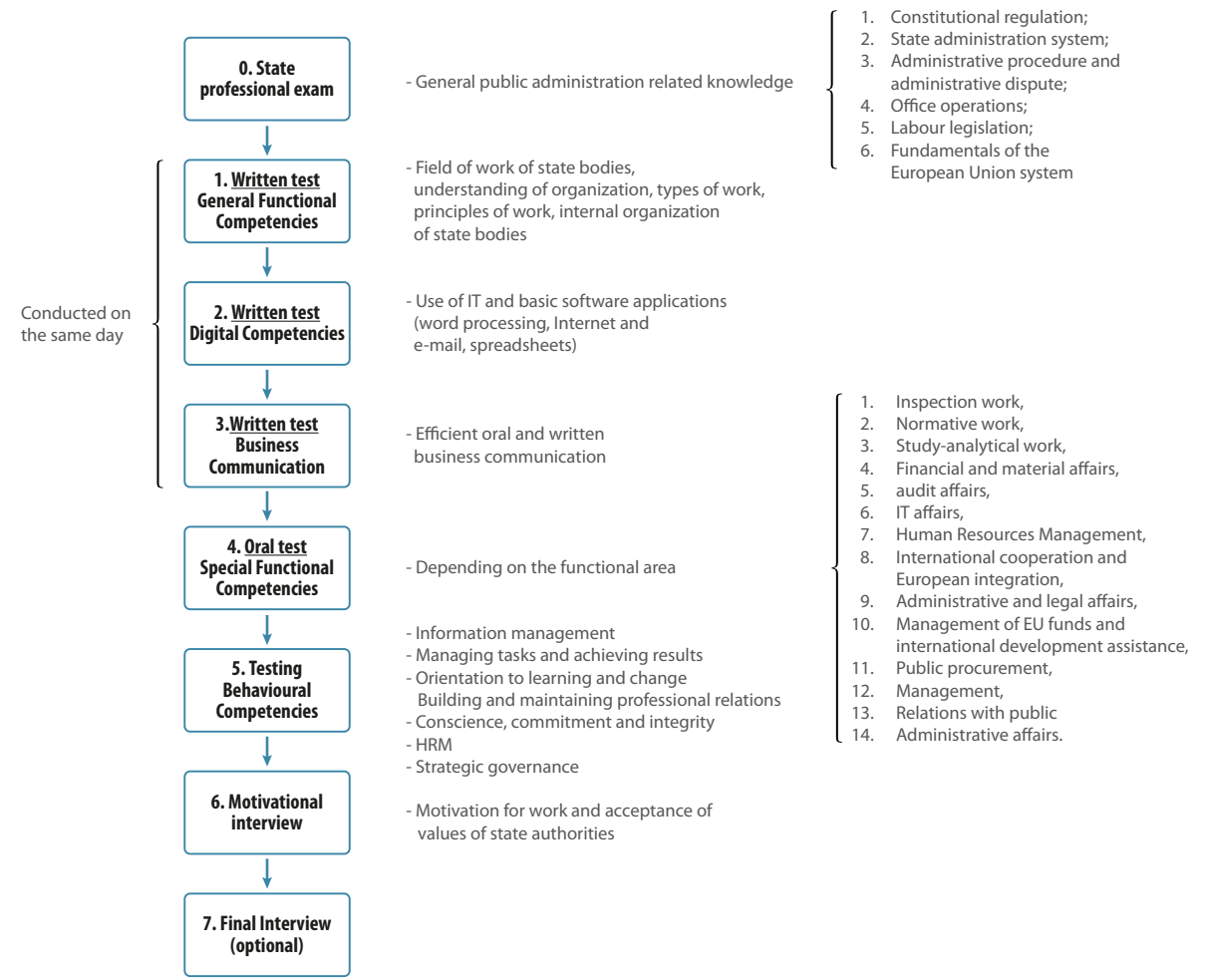


Figure 19: Application of the competency framework in selecting civil servants in Serbia

Serbia’s competency framework includes all the different components of the KSAO model that are tested in the different phases of the selection process. Analysing the selection process in more detail (see Figure 19), however, it is evident that most of its stages focus on formal knowledge and skills, while more behavioural aspects come into play at stage 5. This is understandable insofar as measuring

behavioural competencies is more difficult and resource-intensive than measuring formal skills and knowledge. In addition, the weight of the behavioural competencies in the selection process is almost 50%, which is relatively high. However, the assessment is biased towards assessing legal knowledge, which is not only tested in stages 0–1 but also to a large extent also in stage 4. There is also evidence that the formal knowledge assessment tools used in Serbia are not effective in sifting out many candidates, e.g., the 2019 figures showed that 96% of candidates passed the general functional competencies test.⁴¹ Furthermore, the requirements for computer and business skills are rather formal and basic, rendering them less effective in practice for predicting future performance.

Serbia's competency framework is not adjusted to the needs of top managerial positions. For example, because the same framework is applied across the entire civil service, senior civil service candidates also need to prove their basic computer skills, business communication, thorough knowledge of the regulations in the area, etc. This causes a number of different types of problems. Firstly, several competencies applied at all levels of the civil service are not relevant at the top level and have little predictive value in terms of future performance. Secondly, the process is wasteful in that a considerable amount of time and other resources of the HRMS and Higher Civil Service Council (which includes high level professionals with very tight time schedules) are spent on assessing competencies that have little predictive value. Thirdly, the need to prove basic skills (e.g., use of computer and business communication) could be demeaning for highly experienced candidates who have other options than working in the civil service.

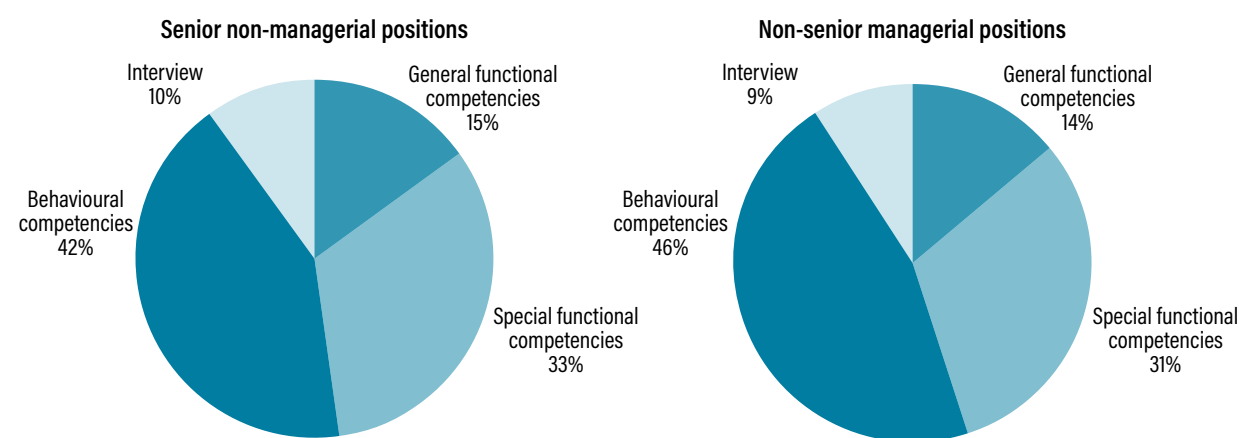


Figure 20: Weights of various aspects of competitions for civil service positions⁴²

Another issue is the complexity of Serbia's competency framework, which includes some overlapping of competencies between different categories. For example, HRM is included under both the behavioural and special functional competencies and serves as an indicator for a special functional competence related to managerial activities. This might create confusion in the application of the framework.

Wrap-up

The general professional requirements set centrally for civil servants vary considerably across administrations in the Western Balkans. Thus, **Montenegro**, **FBiH** and **Republika Srpska** have

opted for a minimalistic approach whereas **Serbia**, **North Macedonia** and **BiH Institutions** have developed comprehensive competency frameworks for the entire civil service. Although **Albania** does not yet have a competency framework for the general civil service below top management level, professional requirements are defined in some detail. This shows that behavioural competencies are not the only way of enriching professional requirements and that other options are available. **Montenegro** and **Albania** have introduced competency frameworks for top civil servants in accordance with a common international practice of starting from this more homogeneous group. However, **Albania** is already implementing behavioural competencies also at the lower levels of its civil service, and **Montenegro** is planning to do the same. At the same time, the competency frameworks differ considerably in their levels of detail. **Serbia** has the most complex system, with four sets of different types of competencies, while **Montenegro** is the most minimalist, having to date listed only the titles of senior civil service-level competencies and some examples of positive and negative behaviours.

General professional requirements are quite well balanced between formal knowledge and other skills and attitudes in **Albania**, **North Macedonia** and **Serbia**. On examining the application of these attributes in practice, however, it is clear that formal knowledge has a stronger presence. This is partly due to the way the recruitment processes are designed (i.e., the weight given to different attributes), but also due to the capacities of the people using the competency frameworks, i.e., HR staff and selection committee members. One of the arguments for opting for more formal requirements is that it is easier to defend decisions based on these criteria in court because they are seen as more objective. As emphasised in the introductory chapter of this study, however, what is easy to measure does not necessarily have a high predictive value in terms of future performance. Further efforts are therefore needed to introduce other criteria with higher predictive value and to support the personnel applying these criteria in practice.

Future orientation of job requirements

Our analysis so far has focused primarily on the criteria applied to recruit and develop civil servants who meet the *current* requirements of civil service positions. However, it is also important to take account of the changing external environment of public administrations. This environment in the Western Balkans and beyond has been especially turbulent in recent years due to various crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic, migration, and the security situation in Europe, especially in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Governmental responses to these crises have indicated the direction in which public administrations are likely to evolve in the near future. For example, the pandemic has raised the digital agenda to the top of the priority list. This situation is compounded by climate change and its increasingly strong impacts on public governance systems worldwide. For administrations to be ready to tackle these challenges, it would be logical to include relevant KSAOs in civil service job requirements and competency frameworks. To explore any traces of such KSAOs, this study applied two models related to future skills in the public sector as suggested by the OECD's paper on Skills for a High Performing Civil Service and the core skills identified by the OECD's Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI). In the former model, the following four skills⁴³ are identified as the most critical for facing future challenges (see the introductory chapter):⁴⁴

⁴³ In this paper, OECD uses the term 'skill' in a broad sense not dissimilar to the KSAO approach applied here.

⁴⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/skills-for-a-high-performing-civil-service-9789264280724-en.htm>

- Policy advisory skills
- Engagement skills
- Commissioning skills
- Network management skills

The added value of this model is that it takes traditional civil service skills a step further and combines them with future challenges. Although these skills were identified in 2017, three years before the Covid-19 breakout, many of these skills for a high-performing civil service already became acutely needed in 2020. Here we are not necessarily talking solely about skills needed in the future, therefore, but also skills that are critical in the present. This model treats several areas hitherto considered 'narrow' specialist skills in most civil services as 'general' skills now required from most expert and higher-level civil servants. For instance, while behavioural economics, data science, co-creation and commissioning have usually been perceived as skills required only in a limited number of specific positions, the message from the OECD is that it would be very difficult for administrations to face future challenges unless civil servants possess most of these skills.

In **Albania**, future-related skills are mostly disregarded within the existing job requirements framework, and the decree on classification makes only a few references to analytical skills. In the highest category (Class I), analytical skills are listed only as a title, meaning it is not possible to deduct which specific skills are denoted. More specific skills are defined only for the highest specialist sub-category (Class IV.1), e.g., *"research methods, which help in the preparation of basic or analytical reports; the ability to integrate information with institutional policies; the ability to identify and clarify issues, to provide alternative opinions based on professional experience; and the ability to evaluate policy options and to anticipate the consequences of their selection."* Analytical skills are not expected at lower managerial or specialist levels, however, and though communication skills are required in all managerial positions (classes I-III), like analytical skills they are listed without further specification. Interestingly, communication is not seen as a necessary general skill at specialist level.

Job requirements in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** are mostly based on formal knowledge and skills. In addition to legal knowledge of public administration, general job requirements also cover foreign language skills. Only in the **BiH Institutions** does the competency framework define general requirements in further detail, though even these competency descriptions are not well aligned with what is expected under the future skills specified by the OECD since the framework is based on generic competencies and therefore the level of detail is too high. The closest match with policy advisory skills is the requirement for 'analytical thinking' under the *Personal effectiveness and result orientation* competency. However, this competence is applied only at managerial level. The *Teamwork* competency is covered only cursorily in the areas relevant to *engagement* skills (e.g., the requirement that candidates have the "ability to cooperate with other teams: builds and maintains constructive and productive relations with other teams and their members"). The *Personal effectiveness* competency has also a sub-ability related to *building and maintaining client and citizen satisfaction*, which is unique in the region despite having long been on the public administration reform agenda. However, the competencies and related abilities are not defined in further detail and therefore remain quite generic and do not provide a sufficient basis for prioritising future skills as suggested by the OECD.

Because standard job requirements are quite minimalistic in **Montenegro** at the general civil service level, there are even fewer explicit references to future skills in the country's administration. The communication skills checked during the interview stage of the selection process are the only reference to such future-oriented skills. The situation is somewhat better at senior civil servant level,

for which a separate competency framework has been established. The positive description of the *Co-operation* competency is described in the manual as follows:

Ready to cooperate with associates and partners, respects and accepts different opinions, builds and develops teams, delegates responsibilities and recognizes individual contribution of team members, shares and receives information, builds and develops cooperation networks with interested partners, parties and experts, represents the institution and its interests, strives to cooperate with partners, accepts the opinions of team members and seeks to successfully resolve conflict.

This co-operation competency thus partially covers the network management skills in the OECD model. There is also a separate competency set for the SCS level on *Communication*. Although this is rather generic, focusing on values such as clarity, efficiency, accuracy, and dignity, some competencies in this set include notions regarding the need for proactiveness and for keeping stakeholders informed.

The general job competencies defined for administrative servants in **North Macedonia** cover some of the future skills listed in the first OECD model. For example, some policy advisory skills are included under the *Strategic awareness* competency, though in a generalist fashion (e.g., the determination of strategic priorities, the definition of action plans, priorities, indicators, key actors, monitoring the implementation of plans, understanding the impact within a broader social and institutional context, etc.). To some extent, the OECD's 'engagement skills' are reflected under North Macedonia's *Client/Stakeholder Orientation* competency, including co-operation with partners and stakeholders and setting and building standards for client services. Even though no references are made to more proactive engagement tools such as co-creation, together these are the only references to user-orientation values in the region apart from in the BiH Institutions. Networking skills are reflected within both the *Client/Stakeholder Orientation* and *Communication* competencies. These networking skills include some additional requirements such as understanding different points of view, negotiation skills, and aiming to identify shared interests, thereby to a large extent matching the example set by OECD. The competency framework also includes a separate competency on *Financial management* that covers some of the areas under 'commissioning skills', though the main focus is on budget planning, implementation and monitoring.

Serbia has the most complex and comprehensive competency framework, including special functional competencies that can be considered as a 'job catalogue'. This framework also reflects future skills, albeit in a traditional way. The behavioural competency of *Strategic management* required of managerial positions refers to the definition and implementation of the strategic goals of the administrative body, i.e., reacting to changes in the external environment through strategic visioning, thinking and acting. Another behavioural competency on *Information Management* includes skills like organisation of information, databases, analysing and connecting data, and recognising logical relationships. In addition, the special functional competency of *Study-analytical work* includes specific analytical skills such as analysis methods and techniques for conducting situation analyses, ex-ante and ex-post analyses, costing, and the preparation and monitoring of public policies. Another special functional competency on *Professional and operational affairs* includes skills like observation, the collection and recording of data, data processing, and report drafting. These are specialist competencies required only in specific jobs, however, and not generally required of most civil servants.

Engagement and networking skills are covered in a very generic format under various behavioural competencies, including *Building and maintaining professional relationships* (respecting and

appreciating others, engaging with and being open to other ideas, working effectively in a team, and building relationships. No explicit references are made to commissioning skills apart from the special functional competency on *Public procurement activities*, and these are required only for job positions directly related to procurement and financial affairs.

In addition to the skills of the high-performing civil service, the OECD's Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI) lists six core skills for meeting the public policy challenges of the 21st century:⁴⁵

- **Iteration:** incrementally and experimentally developing policies, products and services
- **Data literacy:** ensuring decisions are data-driven and that data is not an afterthought
- **User centricity:** public services should be focused on solving and servicing user needs
- **Curiosity:** seeking out and trying new ideas or ways of working
- **Storytelling:** explaining changes in a way that builds support
- **Insurgency:** challenging the status quo and working with non-typical partners

Some of these skills, including data literacy and user-centricity, overlap to some extent with the previous OECD model. Overall, innovation skills are rather poorly covered in civil service job requirements and competency models in the Western Balkans. Only in the senior civil service competency framework in **Montenegro** is innovativeness listed as an explicit competency area, though again in a generic fashion. The positive indicators for this competency comprise openness to new ideas, methods and technological systems, alternative ways of solving problems and connecting different ideas, the use of new technologies, etc. **North Macedonia** is unique in applying customer/stakeholder orientation in its framework as a separate competency area. In **BiH Institutions**, a similar ability is mentioned, though only in a more general way.

Wrap-up

This study sought evidence of efforts by civil services in the Western Balkans to include the future skills needed by civil servants in their recruitment processes, applying the OECD's definitions of these skills. Although we found some traces of such efforts, evidence is rather scarce, and implementation appears to be haphazard. While this is understandable in administrations where competency frameworks are lacking and therefore requirements are defined in a highly generalised way, we found that the same problem also applies in administrations with complex competency frameworks such as Serbia and North Macedonia. One explanation for this is that these administrations have followed a generic approach in defining competencies without understanding the need to specify skills in as much detail as in the OECD model. Another seemingly plausible explanation might be that we have covered only the general requirements applied for the entire civil service at different levels while future skills can be found in job descriptions at lower level. As observed in the previous chapter, however, job descriptions are not typically defined in any greater detail at institutional level even when this is explicitly stated in regulations. Job descriptions thus rely on the general descriptions provided in central regulations.

Ensuring appropriate job requirements are in place for the civil service is not merely a matter of following or complying with international practices. Criteria for recruitment not only directly influence which types of competencies and skills are attracted to the civil service but also form a basis for promoting and professionally developing civil servants. If future skills are not included as

general requirements, therefore, it will be much more difficult to ensure that civil servants with these skills are eventually hired, promoted or rewarded in public institutions.

A simple example that goes beyond the models suggested by the OECD is the requirement for digital skills. Digitalisation has become a key priority in most countries worldwide, including all administrations in the Western Balkans. However, there are almost no references to digital skills in these countries' civil service job requirements or competency frameworks apart from basic computer skills. Without including these skills, it is difficult to see how this government priority can affect decisions made in different HRM areas such as recruitment, development, performance appraisal and career mobility. At the same time, it is ever more evident that most specialist and higher-level civil servants would not manage without skills in basic data analysis, process management, proactive engagement and networking. Making these expectations more explicit in general job requirements or competency frameworks would help to ensure their integration in HRM policies and practices. Including them in the general professional requirements adopted by governments would also send a clear signal to managers and civil servants that these are skills that will be increasingly valued in years to come. This would also be useful knowledge that could help inform people in making career decisions.

2.2. Three dimensions of the application of job requirements

To achieve genuine improvement in civil service recruitment, it is not sufficient merely to generate a list of requirements or competencies and enforce their adoption through legislation. Such legislation is only the starting point for the practical application of these criteria. To gain a better understanding of the real meaning and effects of these requirements as they unfold in practice, therefore, it is useful to study competency frameworks from three different dimensions. The **vertical dimension** shows how well requirements are integrated with different government priorities and strategies. As explained in the previous chapter, the expectations of civil servants' skills and competencies need to reflect not only the policy issues that governments are currently trying to solve but also anticipated key challenges in the future. For this reason, we reviewed public administration reform (PAR) strategies in the administrations of the Western Balkans to ascertain whether job requirements and competencies reflect the priority issues of these governments. Such government priorities are set out in a plethora of policy documents. However, our aim in this study was not to analyse all of these documents but rather to focus on PAR strategies as the most obvious place to find evidence of requirements for key skills in civil service recruitment.

When it comes to HRM policies, the primary object of job requirements is usually for recruitment and selection purposes. However, the value of skills and competency frameworks is much higher if they are **horizontally integrated** with other HRM processes. For the sake of simplification, we analysed only a sample of key HRM processes: workforce planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, and training and development. This is because if horizontal integration is found to be weak in these key processes then it can reasonably be assumed that it is also weak in others.

In addition to these two dimensions, a third dimension is also sometimes added to the assessment, i.e., the extent of current **implementation** of these frameworks. When competency frameworks first became popular some two decades ago, their practical use often remained limited because they

were not properly implemented. To attain a better understanding of the real effectiveness of job requirements and competency frameworks, therefore, the extent to which they have been put into practice also needs to be assessed.

Vertical integration

In **Albania** the government's 2015–2020 PAR Strategy, which has since been extended to the end of 2022, makes no clear-cut reference to competencies in the civil service.⁴⁶ The four main priorities of the Strategy as set out in 2015 were to achieve improvements in the following areas: a) policymaking and the quality of legislation; b) the organisation and functioning of public administration; c) HRM in the civil service; and d) administrative procedures and oversight. From this perspective it appears that the job requirements framework in Albania is quite well aligned with these priorities insofar as the requirements follow rather traditional public administration values. However, the 'vision' chapter of this strategy does refer to the government's four-year action plan and the following objectives in the area of public administration: sustainability and depoliticization of the administration; strict implementation of civil service legislation and transparent competitions and career advancement; the boosting of online services for their modernization and use in combatting corruption; enhancement of the quality of services through the use of information technology; and increased accountability of public officials when performing their duties. Despite the digitalisation of services being mentioned in two out of these five priority areas of the government, digital skills are not reflected in the general job requirements set for civil servants. The competency framework for the TMC likewise makes no explicit reference to objectives related to digitalisation.

The 2018–2022⁴⁷ PAR strategy of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** envisages the introduction of competencies as one of its priorities. Regarding civil service and HRM reforms, this strategy emphasises that completing the scope of modern HRM functions is one of the four priorities, and the introduction of competency-based selection is one of the most prominent goals within this segment. In terms of the integration of general job requirements and competency frameworks, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is quite similar to Albania. The establishment of customer-oriented and transparent public administration is another of the four priority areas of the strategy, while the number of electronic services and the establishment of customer-satisfaction-monitoring mechanisms are listed among the key performance indicators of the strategy. Apart from one sub-ability in the competency framework in the **BiH Institutions**, i.e., building and maintaining client and citizen satisfaction, however, there are no other traces of job requirements related to this priority. This also applies to other more general priority areas such as policy co-ordination and accountability. However, at least one of the strategic priorities related to improving managerial capacities has been targeted through the introduction of a competency framework at managerial level.

Competencies are not directly covered by key strategic documents for PAR in **Montenegro**. However, the country's 2022–2026⁴⁸ PAR strategy envisages changing the criteria in internal organisation acts with the aim of improving job descriptions and required competencies by mid-2023. The strategy also foresees improving the digital skills of public administration employees, including training provision in certain areas such as the management of ICT projects, leadership, etc. The priority goals of the strategy are to develop a citizen-centric organisation and a well-functioning professional, transparent and open public administration with high-quality services for the business community

⁴⁶ https://www.dap.gov.al/images/DokumentaStrategjik/PAR_Strategy_2015-2020_English.pdf

⁴⁷ <https://parco.gov.ba/en/rju/o-rju-2/strateski-okviri-za-rju/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/0aaa040b-0413-46b6-a8c7-5b2c10cdc9dc>

and citizens and improved planning of policies for and with citizens. As there are no standard job descriptions at the central level aside from the competency framework for top managers, alignment can only be analysed in the case of the top management competency framework. Since the competencies listed in the framework and positive descriptions are very generic, it is difficult to identify direct links between the framework and the PAR strategy. Obviously, competencies like leadership, co-operation, communication and innovativeness could all contribute to these strategic objectives, though they could just as easily contribute to quite a different set of objectives.

North Macedonia's 2018–2022 PAR strategy defines four general objectives: effective, efficient and inclusive policies; professional and competent departmental administration; responsible, accountable and transparent operation of institutions; and fast, simple and easily accessible service provision. Some competency areas, including delivering results, strategic awareness, and client/stakeholder orientation, directly support several of the strategic objectives. However, objectives related to digital government are not explicitly reflected either in job-specific or general competencies. The expiry of this strategy in 2022 will be an opportunity for a new strategy to address the future-oriented and innovation skills of civil servants that are currently not well reflected in the competency framework.

Serbia's new PAR Strategy for 2021–2030⁴⁹ sets out the following vision for public administration:

- Administration tailored to citizens and business – efficient, accountable, transparent public administration that delivers quality and easily accessible services to citizens and businesses alike.
- Administration tailored to civil servants – depoliticised, professional and effective public administration.
- Administration that champions the changes and reforms needed for full EU membership – public administration operations are based on European values and contribute to the sustainable development goals, rule of law, social cohesion and wellbeing of the society as a whole.

This vision further specifies the overall objective of further improvement in public administration operations and the effective formulation of public policies in line with the European Principles of Public Administration, including the aims of delivering high quality services to citizens and businesses and increasing the level of professionalism in the public administration, both of which are anticipated to contribute significantly to greater economic stability and a higher standard of living. Although the behavioural competencies are quite generic, they include areas that directly address some of these objectives. One of the most explicit examples of this are the separate competencies set for managers regarding HRM and strategic management. Given that the competency framework includes a separate list of special functional competencies consisting of 15 different areas (see Figure 19), we can conclude that there is a relatively good level of integration of these competencies with the objectives of the PAR Strategy in Serbia. Like other administrations in the region, however, competencies related to digitalisation are not explicitly included in the framework.

Horizontal integration

Horizontal integration here refers to how job requirements or competency frameworks are aligned with different HRM processes. Our assessment of this dimension is based on the four key processes that depend on professional requirements and competencies: workforce planning, recruitment and

⁴⁹ <http://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/PAR-Strategy-in-the-Republic-of-Serbia-for-the-period-2021%E2%88%922030.pdf>

selection, performance appraisal, and training and development. Although other HRM processes such as career development, remuneration and staff mobility can also be influenced by these competencies, we confined our study to these four areas for the sake of simplification, assuming that if horizontal integration is weak in these areas then it is probably also weak in other areas.

Workforce planning

The HRM process in which job requirements and competencies can most obviously be used is **workforce planning**. Ideally, workforce plans should reveal not only job positions but also related skills and/or competencies that will be required over the coming years to achieve the strategic priorities of the government. Such details would help the central co-ordination bodies, HR units, training institutions and other civil service entities to identify and address any existing gaps in skills.⁵⁰

Because of the career-based civil service system in **Albania** and the modes of recruitment applied, i.e., pool recruitment, job requirements play a significant role in determining the groups of positions that form the basis of recruitment procedures. Civil service institutions are required to plan their needs for new staff in advance and must submit these needs to the DoPA, which drafts the Annual National Recruitment Plan for the Albanian civil service. Job positions are grouped in the Plan in accordance with specific requirements so that the DoPA can create a recruitment calendar for the year. This procedure relates to entry-level recruitment, while for promotions and other career advancement procedures the institutions have more responsibilities during the recruitment process. However, the recruitment plan is mostly generated based on expected vacancies and less so on the basis of anticipated changes in capacity and the skills needed by institutions. The regulation on workforce planning⁵¹ foresees the possibility of changing the profile of job positions, though this is rarely if ever applied in practice.

Workforce planning in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is purely a headcount exercise, with no visible linkages to skills or competencies in any administrative levels, including even in the BiH Institutions where a competency model exists.

In **Montenegro**, workforce plans do not include any reference to required competencies but only to general categories and titles as these are prescribed by the civil service law. Because there are no standard job descriptions in place, workforce plans in Montenegro are even less informative with regard to skills gaps than in other administrations of the region. At the same time, as explained in the chapter on job categorisation, all job positions in the civil service also need to be categorised in terms of tasks (e.g., strategic analytical, normative, supervision etc.) in systematisation acts. These can be treated as 'job families' and would provide some useful additional information if used in workforce plans.

The annual workforce plans used in **North Macedonia** contain information on the job positions filled in the current year, planned retirements, and other staff movements in the coming year, as well as a plan for new employments that are distributed according to community affiliations. However, this plan does not explicitly cover required competencies. The fact that competencies are established only at a very general level, i.e., for the entire category but not for its sub-categories, makes it difficult to use the competency framework in workforce planning. In sum, the competency framework in North Macedonia is not well integrated with the workforce planning system.

⁵⁰ For an example of how a competency framework can be integrated with workforce planning, see the Irish case presented in the Annex 1.

⁵¹ Decision No. 108, of 26.2.2014 On the Annual Civil Service Admission Plan.

In **Serbia**, although a competency framework has been in place since 2019, the normative framework for workforce planning in state bodies has not changed significantly. The process lacks a systematic approach to the analysis of the organisational structures of bodies and current job descriptions. No link is established between planned and existing jobs or between required staff and their knowledge and skills. At the same time, special functional competencies are described via skills in specific professional areas (e.g., HRM, IT, analytical work, etc.). These functional competencies would provide useful input for better integrating the two HRM tools. Accordingly, the Serbian government has decided to include competencies in its planning procedure and a new methodology is being prepared. The identification of necessary competencies will be part of the new Annual Staffing Plan for 2024.

All the Western Balkan administrations have workforce plans in place. Insofar as these plans are based on job positions that in turn are linked to job requirements or competencies it can be concluded that integration between them at least formally exists. Basing workforce plans on job positions would not be a problem if jobs were categorised by professional areas (e.g., job families). Even in Serbia and Montenegro where categorisation by professional areas does exist, however, such categorisation is not used in workforce plans. In most cases, jobs are described through very general sets of tasks and thus workforce plans based on job positions do not offer much insight into gaps in skills or competencies. Rather these plans provide only an estimation of what level of job positions might be required in different institutions and their structural units. Workforce plans in the Western Balkan administrations at present can thus best be understood as recruitment plans which have a high value in budget and recruitment planning processes but do not help in forecasting required skills and competencies.

Recruitment and selection

Merit-based recruitment and selection cannot be implemented without reference to pre-defined job requirements or competences, hence typically these HRM processes are naturally integrated. The main question here is the strength of such integration. Similar to the case of workforce planning, the nature of job requirements or competencies defines the level of possible integration.

In **Albania**, the written test used in recruitment focuses mostly on knowledge, although in the case of managers there is also a possibility to assess competencies using subject/topic-based questions. The interview further offers an opportunity to test the requirements set out in job descriptions. The DoPA has elaborated several instructions for evaluation commissions on conducting interviews (formulating questions, assessing competencies, etc.). This applies also to the TMC tests based on a specific competency framework. Notwithstanding the DoPA's efforts, however, it is very difficult to conduct competency-based selection because there is no competency framework for the civil service below TMC level. Another problem is the capacities of the members of the evaluation commission, since these are civil servants only temporarily appointed and thus they do not have sufficient time to practise and improve their relevant skills.

At all levels in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** the selection procedure starts with a state exam that checks the candidates' formal legal knowledge about the public administration. Regarding the subsequent stages of recruitment, practices differ in each administration. In **FBiH** there is a professional exam consisting of written and oral parts in which job-specific knowledge and skills are tested, whereas in **Republika Srpska** there is only a job-specific interview. In the **BiH Institutions**, the public exam is followed by a written test in the form of an essay, followed by a competency-based interview in which

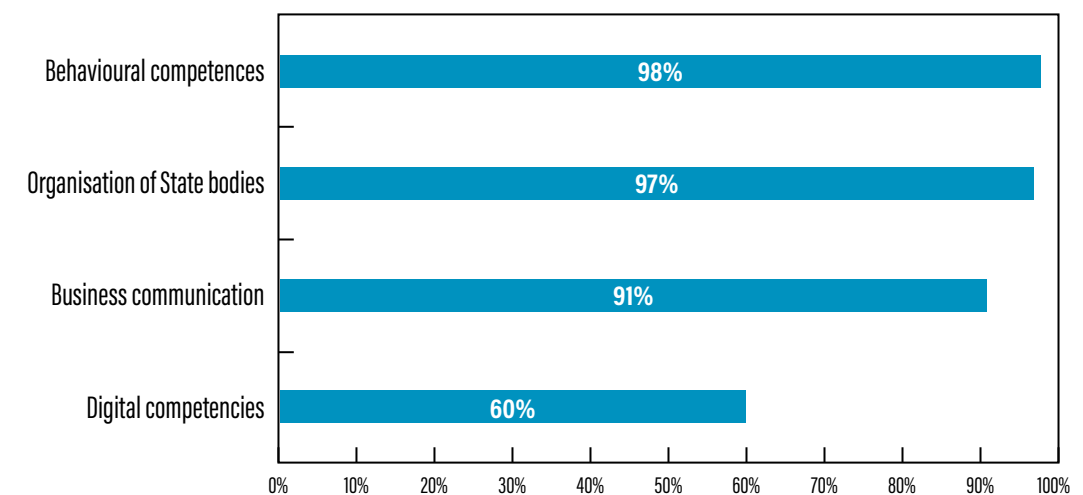
only behavioural competencies are tested. Due to the limited time available for individual interviews, the rulebook on public competition specifies that for non-managerial posts the competencies tested must include 'communication' plus an additional competency from the framework which a particular institution finds most relevant for the given job position. In the case of managerial civil service jobs, the list of tested competencies is expanded: in addition to 'communication', 'leadership' and 'planning and organising' skills are also tested, as well as an additional competency which an institution deems most relevant for a particular job. Limited capacities within an administration can thus hinder the full implementation of a competency framework.

Due to the lack of standard job descriptions and detailed requirements in **Montenegro**, horizontal integration cannot be very strong. The lack of well-developed job descriptions or specifications of job requirements harmonised for similar jobs across public bodies may also lead to disparities and inadequacies in approaches to the assessment of similar positions across public bodies, especially given both the ad hoc set up of selection committees with insufficient capacities for selection and the ad hoc preparation of tests for the practical part without any attention to standardisation. Below the SCS level, it is the recruitment system and related regulations that actually define the professional requirements to a large extent. The testing for all civil service categories includes both a written examination and an oral interview. Written tests rely on theoretical questions related to the functioning of the government whereas the practical part of the written test should involve tasks related to specific jobs. In addition, communication skills, motivation, and job-specific knowledge and experience are checked during the interview. In the case of top managers, integration is stronger because selection is based on a list of competencies that are further defined in a manual drafted by the HRMA. In practice, however, analysis of sample test reports shows that the competency framework is not followed even in the case of senior civil servants.

In **North Macedonia**, general and specific job competencies are legally required to be included in vacancy announcements and must be tested in the selection process. Although both general and job-specific competencies must be tested in interviews, however, in practice this is not always done but depends rather on the employing institution and the members of its selection committees. The selection process is often based only on special competencies related to language and computer skills, with the former skills tested and the latter proved by a certificate. In addition, the members of selection commissions are not always experienced enough to assess competencies, especially through structured interviews.⁵² These shortcomings frequently lead to non-compliance with the intentions of the relevant legislation and the principle of merit-based employment. Although the recruitment system may be formally integrated with the competency framework, therefore, it is not often applied in practice and its potential is not fully exploited.

In **Serbia**, amendments made to the Law on Civil Servants (applied from 2019) stipulate that the employment of candidates in state bodies should be based on the selection process in accordance with job descriptions as well as the competencies provided for in systematisation acts. A regulation has been adopted⁵³ in line with this requirement and applies to all state administration bodies. This regulation has standardised the selection procedure, assigning a major role to the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) in the selection process. Due to this central role of the HRMS, including in assessing general functional and behavioural competencies, the competency framework is strongly integrated with the recruitment process. The recruitment procedure covers all different competency

categories (see Figures 18 and 19). The HRMS has developed a database of psychometric tests and exercises for testing behavioural competencies. However, the complexity of the competency framework results in rather complicated recruitment procedures, as has been flagged up by SIGMA in its latest monitoring assessment report.⁵⁴ Although SIGMA acknowledges HRMS's capacities in assessing these different competencies, there are two main issues with the recruitment procedure. First, assessment of all the different competencies has made the recruitment procedure lengthy (148 days in the sampled institutions on average). Second, despite this lengthy procedure, the practical value of the tests remains low in sifting out candidates with the best potential.



Source: Based on data provided by the HRMS.

Figure 21: Percentages of candidates that passed the assessment of behavioural and general functional competencies in 2020⁵⁵

As Figure 21 shows, the pass/fail rate of current testing is above 90 percent in three out of four competencies, and in two cases it is close to 100 percent. This shows that a lot of time is spent on measuring competencies that in practice only confirm that candidates possess the relevant competencies but which do not help to distinguish who has a better or poorer fit. Another issue raised by SIGMA is the capacity of selection committees at institutional level for assessing specific functional competencies. Because the level of standardisation of selection methods is low, it may result in an uneven application of the competency framework by the selection committees.

At a formal level, the recruitment processes in the Western Balkans are fully integrated. Because skill requirements are very general in some cases, however, they provide only limited practical input for the recruitment process unless the job descriptions are better defined at institutional level, which is not usually the case. There are also major problems with the application of the process because selection committees do not have the required skills. The civil service institutions have horizontal functions performed by all public bodies, and job descriptions and general and specific job requirements should thus be similar in these cases, with some flexibility allowed at institutional level. This would provide an adequate basis for a higher level of standardisation of assessment methods for these jobs.

⁵² Centre for Change Management (2020). Analysis of the Rulebook for the systematisation of jobs in public sector institutions: Is the type of education the only criteria for employment in the public sector?

⁵³ Regulation on Internal and Open Recruitment for Filling Job Positions in State Bodies (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 2/2019)

⁵⁴ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Serbia.pdf>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Performance appraisal

Job performance appraisal in **Albania** is based on the competencies or requirements defined in job descriptions. At the end of the assessment period, the direct superior evaluates not only the achievement of objectives as agreed with the civil servant but also the competencies/requirements listed in the appraisal form. However, the SIGMA 2021 monitoring assessment shows that the system is not effective in practice since almost all civil servants are assessed as higher than average (95%). Moreover, performance appraisals, promotions and training are not interlinked to ensure effective management of human resources.⁵⁶ The practical application of procedures thus needs to be improved to ensure better integration between the appraisal and competency management systems.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, in addition to the delivery of results, softer attributes related to abilities and motivation are assessed, including independence, attitude to work and colleagues, and adaptability to changes. Nevertheless, it cannot be concluded that these are integrated with competencies. Even in the **BiH Institutions** where a competency framework exists, the performance appraisal system and related criteria were developed some time ago and have not been subsequently adjusted. In **FBiH** and **Republika Srpska**, where competency frameworks have not yet been introduced and the only general professional requirements are based on formal knowledge and skills, integration with the performance appraisal cannot exist. However, it is positive that the soft and behavioural attributes complement performance-related components in the appraisal process, since this affords a more comprehensive understanding of how results have been achieved. Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that reality might be very different from the intention of the legislation. For instance, the SIGMA 2021 assessment report concluded that the distribution of performance results is strongly skewed towards the higher grades, which makes the system unusable for distinguishing between good and bad performers or for identifying development needs.⁵⁷

In **Montenegro**, the competency framework for senior civil service is mirrored in performance appraisal criteria based on the achievement of results, the development and motivation of employees, the quality of work, the degree of realisation of tasks and the quality of achievement, expertise, and the ability to organize work, etc.⁵⁸ Competencies are more explicitly mentioned also under the assessment criteria labelled as 'other abilities and skills': leadership, co-operation, communication and innovation. The indicators from the manuals are not fully mirrored in the decree on performance appraisal, however, with results-oriented competencies given much more weight than leadership, cooperation, communication and innovation. There is no reference to the manual on competencies in defining these performance appraisal criteria, hence the extent to which the competency framework is integrated with the performance appraisal criteria remains unclear. Since no comprehensive professional requirements are set centrally for lower-level civil servants, integration cannot be strong. However, one of the skills tested during the selection, i.e., communication, is also evaluated during the performance appraisals. The performance appraisal criteria also include additional skills (e.g., innovation, creativity, and teamwork) that are not checked during the selection process. This is further evidence of the weak integration of job requirements/competencies with the performance appraisal system. Another issue in Montenegro, similar to most other Western Balkans civil services, is that performance appraisal systems are not always fully applied in practice.⁵⁹

56 <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Albania.pdf>

57 <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-May-2022.pdf>

58 Government of Montenegro, *Decree on performance appraisal of civil servants and state employees*, February 21, 2019

59 SIGMA's 2021 Monitoring Assessment report shows that only 34% of all employed civil servants were assessed in 2020, possibly because of the COVID-19 crisis. Another issue is the disproportionately high use of the highest-ranking category (72.7% in 2018 and 73.4% in 2019): <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Montenegro.pdf>

The model for evaluating administrative employees in **North Macedonia** is a modification of the '360° model' and was introduced as a replacement for one-dimensional evaluation in which only the immediate superior manager had the function of an evaluator.⁶⁰ The current evaluation procedure consists of determining work goals and objectives, determining an individual plan for professional development, and a procedure for assessing the performance of administrative staff. All administrative staff except Category A staff are evaluated once a year. Although there is a legal regulation that competencies be tested and taken into consideration when performing performance appraisals, in practice the application of such testing depends on the particular institution. There is some evidence that appraisals are often conducted *pro-forma* on account of the overly complicated procedure.⁶¹ Moreover, the link between appraisal results and the related development activities is weak due to issues with the training system (see the next section).

In **Serbia**, the goal of evaluating the work performance of civil servants is to ensure the achievement of all the organisational goals of the state body and to ensure standards of work behaviour and expected values in work are in accordance with the competencies, motivation, learning and development of civil servants. The appraisal results are used in training needs analysis and planning, promotion and assignment decisions, salary adjustments, and dismissals. The appraisal is based on measures that include the behavioural competencies of civil servants and the results of the work of the organizational unit. Assessing functional competencies helps to determine the needs for professional development of civil servants, as well as monitoring the effects of professional development programmes attended by civil servants in the period subject to performance evaluation.⁶² Regardless of the outcome of the evaluation, the person who prepares the performance report must fill in a Development of Competence report to specify ways to improve knowledge, skills and behaviours. There is a statutory obligation for civil servants in managerial positions to attend all general and special training programmes aimed at enhancing their ability to conduct the performance appraisal of civil servants properly. The institutional HR units need to prepare an annual analysis of performance appraisal ratings, while the HRMS compiles a consolidated annual report on performance appraisal in state administration bodies. For this reason it can be concluded that the competency framework is at least formally well-integrated with the performance appraisal procedure in Serbia. The SIGMA 2021 monitoring assessment report shows that although the rate of conducting performance appraisals in this administration is quite high (88%), the distribution of assessment results is skewed towards the highest rating category. The reasons cited for this by the HRMS include the formalistic approach taken to appraisal, the reluctance of some managers to set performance objectives, the fact that objectives are not linked with relevant planning, the use of unclear or unmeasurable criteria to conduct assessment, and divergent interpretations of the meaning of each rating category.⁶³ This significantly hinders and limits the genuine integration of the performance appraisal system with competencies.

On a formal level, performance appraisal is to some extent integrated with professional requirements and/or competencies in most administrations in the Western Balkans. In addition to the achievement

60 The Rulebook on the manner of conducting the semi-annual interview, form and content of the report on semi-annual interview, closer criteria for the manner of assessment of the administrative officer, the nearest criteria for the manner of assessment of administrative employee in institutions with less than 20 administrative officials, the form and content of the forms for evaluation, form and content of the ranking report list of annual evaluations and contents of reports and the manner of evaluation of administrative officers in other circumstances". (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 27/14, 199/14, 48/15, 154/15, 5/16, 142/16 and 11/18)

61 Regulatory Impact Assessment Report on the LAS, MISA, 2021

62 *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 2/2019 and 69/2019

63 <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Serbia.pdf>

of results, interviews also include a component that is related to assessing training and development needs, which also entails assessing the skills and competencies required for achieving the work objectives. In some administrations, such as Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, the link between performance appraisal and job competencies has been made explicit. In North Macedonia, competencies are even assessed via 360-degree feedback. However, practical effectiveness and extent of this integration depends on the application of the performance appraisal system. In its 2021 summary of assessments, SIGMA concluded that the implementation of appraisal systems in North Macedonia remains formalistic, since appraisals are either not conducted or are conducted only formally. This significantly reduces the value of using appraisals for improving the skills or competencies of civil servants.⁶⁴

Training and development

Training and appraisal procedures are usually closely related, with appraisal results serving as an input for training and development plans both at institutional and central level. This entails a well-functioning performance appraisal system that also covers the assessment of professional skills and competencies and their recording and analysis by HR units and central training institutions. In addition, training programmes can also be designed solely on the basis of general job requirements and competencies, since these requirements should indicate the key professional areas.

Planning for training in **Albania** is directly linked with performance appraisals that rely on job requirements and competencies (as explained in the previous section). Based on the appraisal results, the institution drafts a capacity-building plan that is transferred to the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA). ASPA then drafts a training plan that should take into account the capacity gaps identified through performance appraisals. Training and development activities in Albania are thus well integrated with job requirements.

Training needs analysis in all three administrative structures in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** rely on inputs which the civil service agencies obtain from individual institutions. As the requirements in the **BiH** and **Republika Srpska** are rather basic, even where integration exists it would not be able to provide significant support for the training system. Although the performance appraisal regulations in BiH stipulate that managers must specify the training needs for each individual employee, it is difficult to determine how well the data from performance appraisal forms are aggregated and systematised and whether they are included in annual training plans. Competencies are not formally prescribed as a source for identifying training needs in any of the administrative structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even in the **Institutions** where a competency framework exists. However, the senior civil service training programme does at least include some of the competency areas set for managerial positions (e.g., leadership, strategic planning and reporting),⁶⁵ though it is not possible to tell whether this is intentional since these are generic managerial training areas.

In **Montenegro** it is not possible to integrate training plans and programmes with competencies at general civil service level since no explicit competency framework or standard job descriptions exist. The training and professional development of civil servants is based on programmes adopted by the HRMA in line with a decree regulating such activities.⁶⁶ However, this decree does not include any

⁶⁴ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Summaries-Monitoring-Reports-2021-Public-Service-and-HRM.pdf>

⁶⁵ Instruction on training for senior civil servants in BiH institutions, *Official Gazette of BiH*, 26/21.

⁶⁶ Decree on professional training and development of civil servants and state employees, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, No. 079/18, 07.12.2018.

reference to competencies. The latest SIGMA Monitoring Assessment reported on a new training needs assessment (TNA) methodology implemented by the HRMA in the first half of 2021, finding a mixed picture. Whereas the TNA for senior civil service positions was found to be relatively specific and suggested several types of training depending on the level of managerial experience and the development needs identified, the TNA was not applied properly to other civil service positions and did not manage to identify knowledge and skills gaps to be filled through training.⁶⁷ A revision of the guidelines for TNA is planned as part of the new PAR Strategy, which foresees the development of a special training and mentorship module for leadership competencies. This strategy also includes the establishment of a working group with the aim of improving organisational culture and “motivating managerial styles in public administration” to enhance and modernise leadership in line with the needs of the 21st century. At present, however, the training system is formally not strongly integrated with job requirements or competencies at general civil service level. Greater integration is evident in the case of professional development for senior civil servants, and the training envisaged in the new strategy also focuses more heavily on this group.

In **North Macedonia**, the professional training of administrative staff is regulated by a legal framework that centralises the delivery of such training. The country’s Annual Programme for General Training of Administrative Servants is not based on any analysis of the training needs of the employees, though the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) prepares a catalogue of generic trainings based on the nine competencies of the general job competencies framework. Regular training has not been organised in the past two years, however; and while this can be attributed in part to the Covid-19 pandemic and a lack of sufficient resources, it also reflects a wider long-term problem. Indeed, the latest SIGMA monitoring assessment identified a lack of staff and resources in MISA for conducting horizontal training courses as a major issue.⁶⁸ MISA itself also recognises problems with the centralised delivery model of general and specialised trainings and the lack of motivation among administrative staff for delivering training.⁶⁹ At present, therefore, the integration of training and development with the competency framework in North Macedonia is only formal.

In **Serbia**, the Civil Service Law makes explicit reference to professional competencies in its articles regulating professional development. According to Article 97a of this law, any improvements needed in the competencies of civil servants are to be determined by the person responsible for personnel management in the state body in cooperation with their immediate manager in the process of monitoring and evaluating work performance. In this way a link is established between performance appraisal results and training needs and the planning of development and professional training. Article 97d requires Serbia’s National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to make reference to the competencies to which their training programmes contribute. Although competency analysis is not part of the existing formal methodology for determining training needs, there is a separate chapter within this report that analyses functional competencies. Nevertheless, the training plans could still be better integrated with the results of performance appraisals that assess competencies, since in practice this part is mostly omitted and has thus not yet become a regular practice of administrative bodies. In sum, although competencies are fully integrated with the training system, there is room for improvement through the integration of performance appraisal results.

In most of the administrations in the Western Balkans, professional requirements and competencies are at least formally integrated with training and development, though application varies quite

⁶⁷ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Montenegro.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf>

⁶⁹ MISA (2021). Regulatory Impact Assessment Report on the LAS.

considerably. The strongest formal and practical integration is found in **Albania** and **Serbia**, while in **Montenegro** integration is better at senior civil service level even without having a strong legal mandate. Conversely, in **North Macedonia** formal provisions for integration exist but lack of resources renders such integration difficult in practice. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, integration with existing competency frameworks is weak even at the **BiH Institutions** level.

Implementation

The previous section on horizontal integration has already highlighted several issues related to the implementation of professional requirements or competency frameworks in the Western Balkans. Here we summarise the overall situation regarding the level of such implementation and how it is supported by the central co-ordination bodies of the civil services in these administrations.

In **Albania** the legal framework sets only minimum requirements for each class of civil service positions at central level. These criteria are usually formulated in quite general terms so that they leave enough flexibility at institutional level. The institutions thus have the possibility of adjusting the requirements for each position in their organograms, including the necessary education level, work experience and other requirements/competencies specific to each position. During the recruitment procedure, and especially during career promotion procedures in which the institutions are more involved, there is the possibility of elaborating very specific tests based on the job description and specific requirements. Although there is no substantial impediment to basing this test on competencies if the members of the evaluation commission decide to do so, in practice the institutions are not very creative and rely mostly on support and examples provided by the DoPA. Discussions with different HR managers and DoPA staff indicate that recruitment procedures can be further improved to involve the checking of competencies and other types of professional requirements. Tests are currently mostly knowledge-based and centred on legislation. The DoPA is continuously looking for ways to improve testing and other aspects. For example, it published a detailed manual in 2021 covering various HR aspects but with a primary focus on recruitment procedures.⁷⁰

The institutions in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** are free to develop their own rulebooks on internal organisation and systematisation, with a section of such rulebooks reserved for job descriptions and job requirements. In principle, individual institutions at all levels are supposed to adhere to the legally prescribed requirements regarding the level of education and years of work experience needed. And while the head of an institution can strengthen these requirements if a proper rationale for doing so is provided, there is no legal way to decrease requirements. When it comes to competencies, individual institutions at the level of **BiH Institutions** have the possibility of tailoring competency requirements, albeit only within the scope defined by the Rulebook on Public Competition. The Civil Service Agency (CSA) of the **BiH Institutions** provides continuous training courses for managers in individual institutions and offers a guide on competency-based selection on the Agency's website.⁷¹ The civil service agencies in **FBiH** and **Republika Srpska** are also working towards the establishment of competency-based selection.

In **Montenegro** the HRMA conducts testing procedures centrally, though hiring institutions also have a role in preparing the practical test and in appointing one member of the selection committee. The HRMA also provides training, maintains an HRM information system, and assists in other HRM

functions such as performance appraisal. Nonetheless, it is the individual authorities that have the primary role in defining the practical tasks within the testing procedures. These authorities also have a role in proposing the internal organization act that should define the educational requirements in more detail in terms of educational field (humanities, law, natural sciences, etc.) and knowledge of foreign languages, IT skills, etc. The public institutions cannot set higher or lower key requirements, although they have flexibility to propose educational profiles and special skills required for specific job positions. These requirements must be approved by the government when acts on internal organisation and systematisation are adopted. Before such acts reach the government, they are first reviewed by the Ministry of Finance and HRMA. The systematisation acts are usually almost identical, however, and the institutions do not use the opportunity to tailor job requirements and descriptions to their specific needs. At senior civil service level, the manual for competencies suggests a list of issues that should be explored in the interviews. These refer mainly to the testing of general knowledge, including general questions about personality traits and more specific questions that may address certain skills such as problem-solving. Nonetheless, the reviewed documents for this study indicate that although the competency framework was introduced in 2018 it is still only sporadically and inadequately applied even in the case of the senior civil service. Competency-based testing is even less developed for lower civil service levels, since there is still no explicit competency framework in place for these positions.

In **North Macedonia**, general competencies must be tested in the interview stage of recruitment. The relevant legislation also allows written tests to be conducted during the interview, though there is no evidence of this happening in practice. Although job requirements are to a large extent centrally determined by legislation, each institution is obliged to define job-specific competencies for every position in their systematisation acts. Since these job-specific competencies are rarely described in job descriptions and vacancy notices, they are not applied across the entire public administration. There are also no central regulations or guidelines to support the institutions in this respect. On the one hand, this provides a strong sense of autonomy at institutional level; on the other hand, it can result in very uneven and inconsistent application of job-specific competencies. However, the MISA needs to approve all the systematisation acts and thus has the option of interfering retrospectively. General job competencies are at least formally implemented and used in some HRM processes, i.e., in recruitment, assessment, and training and development, though their full potential remains unharnessed. Since job-specific competencies are often not defined at institutional level, contrary to the legal requirements, this part of the system is not fully implemented.

In **Serbia**, the HRMS in co-operation with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government have provided support to the institutions to strengthen their capacity for implementing the competency framework. To ensure consistent application, all accompanying documents and forms necessary for the work of personnel units and selection panels have been prepared. In co-operation with NAPA, the HRMS representatives have prepared and delivered training for employees in HR units and managers. Over 600 civil servants were trained to properly determine competencies and to work in selection panels in 2019. Video clips and three accompanying manuals have been prepared, and a database of tests of general functional competencies has been created and uploaded to the distance-learning platform administered by the HRMS. In addition, the capacities of the HRMS and HR units for the application of new instruments and methods for testing behavioural competencies have been strengthened through the training of over 40 civil servants as observers in the assessment centre. HRMS has also updated the database of psychometric tests and the database of exercises for testing behavioural competencies. Furthermore, individual consultations and professional assistance have been organised and provided for members of the selection panel.

⁷⁰ <https://www.dap.gov.al/legjislacioni/udhezime-manuale/446-manual-praktik-mpi-zbatimin-e-legjislacionit-te-sherbimit-civil-dhe-menaxhimit-te-burimeve-njerezore>

⁷¹ <https://www.ads.gov.ba/bs-Latn-BA/competency-framework>

The central civil service co-ordination bodies in Serbia have made strenuous efforts to support the implementation of the competency framework. Some of these bodies, including the HRMS and NAPA, are even directly involved in its implementation. Due to the complexity of the Serbian competency framework, however, major efforts to improve implementation are still needed at institutional level.

Wrap-up

Our analysis of the three dimensions of the integration of competency frameworks in the civil services of the Western Balkans confirms that a significant amount of work has been undertaken to establish professional requirements and competency frameworks in the region but that there is still ample room for further development and integration. From our analysis of PAR strategies, we find that the vertical integration of the current frameworks is rather weak, raising questions as to their practical value for supporting governments in delivering priorities. Similar to the situation vis-à-vis future skills, it seems the requirements are developed in isolation from what is happening in the external environment of the civil services. The situation is better in terms of horizontal integration, as it is difficult to escape the interlinkages between professional requirements and various HRM processes. However, integration is sometimes ensured only at a formal level. Surprisingly, we find almost no attempts have been made to integrate job requirements or competency frameworks with the workforce planning process, which should be directly related to bridging skills gaps. In other areas, integration is better, though sometimes there is not enough evidence as to whether integration goes beyond formalities. In terms of recruitment, practice shows that the selection process is still to a large extent based on formal knowledge instead of attributes with a higher predictive value. Our analysis indicates that this shortcoming is primarily due to a lack of sufficient skills among those responsible for implementation. The performance appraisal system seems to be mostly integrated to the extent that it follows the intention of regulations, though it is not necessarily integrated in practice due to general problems with applying the appraisal system. In terms of training and development, meanwhile, the level of integration varies considerably across the region. In some cases, there is a lack of formal integration even though processes are aligned in practice, while in other administrations the formal requirements are not applied due to a lack of resources. When it comes to the third dimension, i.e. implementation, a common feature throughout the region is the reluctance of institutions to adjust professional requirements to their organisational needs. This reluctance can again be attributed primarily to a lack of skills and resources.

3

EU PRACTICES

This study also analysed good practices in the civil services of certain EU member states to gain a better understanding of what it takes to introduce a full-scale competency framework in a complex civil service system. The idea behind this analysis was not to identify a perfect model that should be followed by the Western Balkans administrations. Rather than a blueprint for conducting similar reforms, these cases should be regarded as useful background knowledge for designing effective competency frameworks. As our study has shown, competency frameworks are highly dependent on contextual factors, meaning that any examples should be studied with reference to local conditions and background factors to ascertain which aspects of the experience could usefully be applied in other administrations.

Our selection of the cases of Ireland, Lithuania, and Slovenia was based on certain key similarities with administrations in the Western Balkans. First, these three EU member states have introduced comprehensive behavioural competency frameworks at all levels of their civil service, as is the aim of the civil services in the Western Balkans. Second, similar to the Western Balkan administrations the civil services of these EU countries have rather highly centralised systems of civil service HRM. Third, the sizes of these EU countries and of their civil services are similar to the administrations analysed in this study. In addition, Lithuania and Slovenia are relatively 'recent' EU members that have undertaken the transformation of their civil services over the last three decades, similar to the Western Balkans administrations. Ireland has a longer history of a civil service system based on democratic values, thus adding a different perspective. Our comparative analysis finds several important similarities but also substantial variations in these countries' experiences. (See Annexes 1–3 for a more thorough overview of the three cases.)

Ireland, Lithuania and Slovenia have all chosen to adopt an extensive behavioural competency model covering their entire civil service administrations. As OECD research has shown (see Chapter 1 of this study), adopting such a comprehensive approach is by no means a universal international practice, since competency frameworks are often introduced only for certain categories of civil servants. Another common feature is that all three countries have based their competency models on a **bottom-up approach** by trying to define the behaviours that help to differentiate good

performance from poor. This approach entails close collaboration with different stakeholders at different levels and in different areas to understand what is valued in the work of civil servants in order to ensure the competency framework is based on appropriate expectations. By contrast, administrations in the Western Balkans have mostly introduced competency frameworks via a top-down approach, with the co-ordination bodies of the central civil service taking the main role in defining required competencies. Although the process of adopting competency frameworks in the region has involved some consultations with various stakeholders, including with managers, HR professionals and external experts, none of the Western Balkan administrations have applied the systematic methods applied by Ireland, Slovenia and Lithuania.

In Ireland, methodologies such as ‘critical incident interviews’ and ‘repertory grid interviews’ were used to elicit descriptive interpretations of behaviour from a vast array of interviewees. In Slovenia, competency frameworks were ‘co-created’ with civil service employees through participation in interviews, consultations, workshops, focus groups and surveys. This co-creation process was complemented by the establishment of two inter-ministerial working groups, with the larger group comprising representatives of state administration bodies and the narrower group engaging HR specialists, managers, and some heads of personnel offices. In Lithuania, surveys were conducted among civil servants, complemented by discussions with politicians, scientists, and practitioners. In both Ireland and Lithuania, private sector representatives were also involved in mapping desirable behaviours to include in competency frameworks for their civil services. The Irish case in particular demonstrates that engaging with unions and a wide range of serving staff/managers can help to build up greater trust and belief in the competency model. Gaining such confidence is critical, since any doubts about the validity of the model when applied to recruitment and promotion may lead to a plethora of complaints, appeals and legal challenges. In Ireland, the inclusion of more stakeholders in the process of developing its competency framework and the use of familiar language/terminology in the framework led to a high level of acceptance from the outset.

In all three EU member states, the processes of introducing competency frameworks were conducted over a long period and required substantial investments in time and other resources not only from central civil service bodies but from public administrations in general. In Lithuania, the process started already in 2009 and the framework was eventually ‘legalised’ only in 2020. The long duration of this process was due both to the heavy workload entailed as well as the need to wait for the right political moment to get the system approved by the government, further highlighting the importance of political context in managing such changes. In Slovenia the process has been swifter, though it still took three years from the start to finish of the project. Even these protracted processes cannot ensure that any framework is perfect and complete. As is evident from the case of Ireland, where competency-based HRM has been in use for 25 years already, competency frameworks require constant development and need to be regularly reviewed and adjusted to changes in the external environment. Even in Lithuania, where the model is relatively new, there are already changes planned to the model to introduce competencies needed to support digitalisation and ensure agility on the part of the government.

The content of competency frameworks in the civil services of the Western Balkans is more general and generic compared to the EU cases presented in this study. This is understandable given that full-scale competency frameworks applied across civil services cannot be too specific without causing unnecessary rigidities. However, the Lithuanian framework does make more explicit references to specific competencies required in the public sector. Lithuania and Slovenia have both also included competencies related to future challenges that are mostly ignored in the models adopted in the Western Balkans. The main difference between the competency frameworks of the Western Balkan

civil services and the Lithuanian and Slovenian model is that in these EU states the rather generic core (or general) competencies are supplemented by job families (or clusters) and related competencies, enabling the inclusion of specific requirements for different job areas. In Lithuania, the previous job evaluation and classification system was reviewed and subsequently overhauled as a key step in establishing the competency framework, since this previous system was overly complex as the basis for a general competency framework, with 25,000 different job descriptions in use. In Ireland, meanwhile, the job family approach is not applied because the civil service is career-based, with civil servants hired as generalists. In the Western Balkans, only Serbia has introduced additional categorisation of jobs in accordance with the ‘job family’ concept. Since only Albania among the administrations analysed in this study has a career-based civil service, we conclude that the job family approach might add substantial value to the competency frameworks of all the other civil services in the Western Balkans.

In all three of the EU countries studied, competency frameworks are tightly integrated with different HRM processes. The strongest linkage is usually with the selection system, though performance appraisal and training systems also rely heavily on competencies. In Ireland the workforce planning process is also linked with competencies. These EU cases thus provide useful examples of how to improve horizontal integration, which is a major ongoing problem in the Western Balkans. In terms of vertical integration, both in Slovenia and Lithuania the key strategic documents were analysed to define the required competencies. (See Chapter 1, where the Slovenian example is presented as a good practice.)

It should be reiterated that these EU cases were chosen not as prescriptive ‘blueprints’ but as salient examples of how competencies can be managed in a civil service. All three cases show that the same issues can be solved via very different means depending on local needs and constraints. There are many more examples available in the EU civil services, including strongly contrasting cases. For this reason, any initiative to adopt good practices from a particular state should include thorough consideration of each example to ascertain whether the same practice would be relevant and appropriate in a different local context.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With this study we have aimed at attaining a better understanding of the professional requirements set for civil servants in the Western Balkans civil services and of how they might support different HRM processes. The study thus set out to test various hypotheses, including that professional requirements in these administrations are mostly knowledge-based, ignoring other KSAO components, that more complex approaches to competencies are not in a wider use, and that job requirements are not adjusted to future needs. Another hypothesis was that the application of more complex approaches is rendered difficult in these states due to an overly generalised categorisation of jobs that does not allow for establishing sufficiently specific competency profiles. According to this hypothesis, even in administrations with well-designed selection, assessment and professional development systems in place, the effectiveness of these systems can only be limited because professional requirements do not establish a sufficiently strong basis for effective implementation.

Our analysis of the **job evaluation and classification** systems in the administrations of the Western Balkans confirms that these countries have opted for generic and general job descriptions at central level. Indeed, only **Serbia** has further developed and extended its competency framework to include functional areas along with the job family concept. This is also formally the case in **Montenegro**, albeit in a more minimalist way, while in **Montenegro** and in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (except at the level of BiH **Institutions**), standard job descriptions are not set centrally at the specialist level. It can be argued that a minimalist approach to standard job descriptions leaves more flexibility for adjusting and aligning them more closely with organisational needs. However, in most cases they are not further adjusted at institutional level. While this is understandable insofar as general job requirements cannot be made too detailed at central level in view of the complexity of the civil service system, a higher level of standardisation would help governments and central civil service bodies to communicate priority areas and related skills to the institutions applying these standards. Such standardisation would also help central bodies to manage and analyse the data related to job descriptions more effectively. Moreover, considering the limited capacities and skills of the institutional HR units reviewed for this study, further central guidance would help to raise the quality of job evaluation, which in turn would also establish a stronger basis for setting professional requirements at organisational level. A good example to follow in the region is Serbia, which has

applied a job family-based approach in describing competencies, thereby providing a sounder basis for establishing more meaningful job requirements and integrating them with different HRM processes. In sum, our study confirms the hypothesis that current job requirements are not sufficiently informative for setting professional requirements in most of the administrations in the region, hence our first recommendation:

Recommendation 1 (medium term): *Countries in the Western Balkans should review their systems of job evaluation, analysis and categorisation to identify whether their standard job descriptions provide sufficient input for setting professional requirements or for building competency frameworks. They should also consider adopting a 'job family'-based approach that would allow for greater differentiation between tasks from a professional perspective.*

The level of generalisation of standard job descriptions in the administrations of the Western Balkan states is reflected in the **professional requirements** set for civil servants, which are also rather general in most of the cases studied. In all these administrations, a competency framework is used for at least some categories of civil servants. **Serbia** has established the most complex framework, relying on four different sets of competencies. **North Macedonia** and **BiH institutions** have a general competency framework set for the entire civil service, though in a lighter and much less detailed format than Serbia. Although **Albania** and **Montenegro** have only established competency frameworks for the senior civil service, both are planning to extend their frameworks to the general civil service. **FBiH** and **Republika Srpska** also plan to introduce overall behavioural competency frameworks, while **North Macedonia** is planning to introduce a separate competency framework for top managers. As such, the hypothesis that the civil services of these states rely mostly on simple models of knowledge-based professional requirements does not hold. Behavioural competency-based models have in fact been widely embraced in the region, even if they are still at an early stage of implementation, and several plans are already in the pipeline for extending their use even further.

Nevertheless, professional requirements and/or competencies are set centrally and are rather generic in most cases except Serbia.⁷² For reasons that remain unclear, behavioural competencies are seen as the only alternative to current arrangements in the region. At central level it seems the only options considered so far are between the two extremes of requirements based on formalistic education, knowledge and work experience versus a behavioural competency-based system. However, other options are also legitimate. And while behavioural competencies can certainly help further professionalise HRM practices if properly and meticulously applied, this is much easier said than done. As demonstrated in the EU cases of Ireland, Lithuania and Slovenia, the application of behavioural competency frameworks is a lengthy and resource-intensive exercise that not only requires significant efforts on the part of central civil service co-ordinators but also fully professional HR units at institutional level, together with professional managers who understand, accept and know how to implement the framework.

Proper implementation also requires the establishment of professional selection committees equipped with the necessary tools and skills to apply the framework uniformly in the recruitment process. Even if behavioural models are properly introduced, moreover, this does not necessarily ensure the inclusion of all attributes needed for evaluating the civil service KSAOs. General requirements regarding knowledge and skills are in most cases rather formal and general since it is assumed that they will be adapted to specific institutional needs by the respective HR units of these institutions, which in practice is often not the case. If these general and formal professional

⁷² However, there are other issues related to the differentiation of requirements at different hierarchical levels in the Serbian competency framework, as described in Chapter 2.

requirements are complemented only with rather general and generic behavioural competencies, any anticipated benefits are less likely to transpire. An alternative example here is **Albania**, which has described the knowledge and skills required for each sub-category in a more explicit format, showing that 'lighter' options are not only available but potentially more effective. Although, the Irish model (see Annex 1) is similar to the Western Balkans approach in describing only general eligibility criteria and behavioural competencies, it should be borne in mind that the Irish civil service is a career-based system in which civil servants are hired as generalists with the expectation that they will be working in different areas throughout their careers. Only Albania has a similarly career-based civil service among the administrations analysed in this study. Position-based civil service systems, by contrast, entail much greater attention to specialist skills. We thus offer the following two recommendations:

Recommendation 2 (short-term): *Before introducing new competency frameworks, the administrations of the Western Balkans should analyse what types of critical KSAOs are missing in the civil service and whether or not behavioural competency frameworks are the best approach for addressing these gaps.*

Recommendation 3 (short-term): *Administrations in the Western Balkans should conduct critical analyses to ascertain whether their central civil service bodies and HR units have the necessary capacities and resources for effectively implementing behavioural competency frameworks. Where this is not the case, they should consider opting for administratively lighter and less complex yet still meaningful options for describing KSAOs at central level.*

Our analysis of the **future-orientation** and **vertical integration** of professional requirements and competency frameworks in Western Balkan administrations confirms that the KSAOs used in the region at central level are rather isolated from the external environment of these administrations. Because professional requirements or competencies are defined in a rather general way at central level, it could be argued that future skills are implicitly included in these generic descriptions. Adopting a more explicit approach would help to promote these competencies in a more systematic and conscious way. For instance, if a government's priority is to improve the digitalisation of public services or the use of data in policymaking and implementation then one would expect to see signs of this in the job descriptions of civil servants tasked with delivering those priorities. This in turn would help to translate job descriptions into KSAOs needed for performing priority tasks. This was not the case in any of the administrations we studied, however, despite digitalisation being a key priority in all of these states. (Note: regarding vertical integration, we studied only these states' PAR strategies in order to limit our study to the most salient reference points.) At the same time, the design of competency frameworks also needs to take account of other key strategies affecting the public administration. The current generic and general professional requirements or competencies clearly do not address skills gaps, hence our following recommendation:

Recommendation 4 (short-term): *Administrations in the Western Balkans should conduct a review of KSAO needs based on their governments' different priority areas in combination with the findings of international studies on future skills. Based on such reviews, they should draft viable plans for addressing any identified gaps in skills.*

Our analysis of the **horizontal integration** of professional requirements in the civil services of the Western Balkans found evidence of such integration in most cases regarding the four HRM areas studied, at least at a formal level, inasmuch as all the administrations in the region have established merit-based recruitment and development systems that rely on professional requirements. However, there are two sets of problems. First, as described above, these professional requirements are sometimes not meaningful enough to have a positive effect on different HRM processes. Requirements that are too general or mostly based on knowledge not only severely constrain the effectiveness of

the recruitment process but provide limited practical inputs for conducting performance appraisals and developing training plans. Second, even if formal integration exists (i.e., if the requirements are linked with HRM processes in legislation), this does not ensure genuine horizontal integration in practice. In other words, even in countries where competency frameworks or meaningful professional requirements exist, the selection process may still be based mostly on knowledge, ignoring other attributes. Similarly, even when legislation requires training programmes to be based on competencies, there may not be sufficient resources available for effective implementation, as is the case in **North Macedonia**.

Workforce planning was the only area in which we found that neither formal nor practical integration exists. Such planning is regarded merely as a headcount and/or recruitment planning exercise and does not include KSAO components in any of the administrations we studied. However, using workforce planning for addressing skills gaps would entail much more elaborate and standardised job evaluation and classification systems, together with well-developed job descriptions. As mentioned above, only **Serbia** has made major efforts to introduce a job families-based classification system, though even Serbia does not apply job families in workforce planning. The horizontal integration of KSAOs needs to be strengthened considerably in all the administrations, therefore, though this will entail revising the job evaluation system and professional requirements (see the earlier recommendations).

Recommendation 5 (medium-term): *After revising professional requirements, administrations in the Western Balkans should analyse the main impediments to the integration of these requirements with HRM processes. Based on this analysis, the legal framework should be adjusted wherever necessary. Guidance and support should be provided for stakeholders on implementing the system to ensure genuine and not merely formal integration.*

Recommendation 6 (medium-term): *Special attention should be paid to the workforce planning process and how to integrate this process with the planning of necessary skills in the civil service.*

Aside from the systemic problems described above, insufficient capacities at institutional level are the main impediment to the effective **implementation** of professional requirements or competency frameworks in the civil services of the Western Balkans. Although quite elaborate systems with manuals and guidelines have been introduced at central level in some of these administrations, their effectiveness remains limited, often because HR units do not have sufficient resources and/or skills to implement these systems. However, implementation problems apply beyond HR units, since professional requirements and competency frameworks are also used by managers and selection committees. As suggested under Recommendation 3, the approach to be chosen needs to be aligned with the capacities of its users. To manage the risks related to the implementation of such complex competency frameworks, it is recommended to do so gradually by starting from the most critical processes (e.g., selection) and subsequently extending the integration to other areas based on this experience.

Recommendation 7 (medium-term): *Administrations should engage and consult representatives of HR units, managers and selection committees in the design of professional requirements or competency frameworks to ensure a better understanding of their current and anticipated needs, resources and constraints.*

Recommendation 8 (short-term): *Proactive support should be provided for users of professional requirements or competency frameworks for implementing the system through different tools (guidelines, templates, video tutorials, training courses, helplines, etc.).*

Recommendation 9: Job requirements or competency frameworks should be standardised to ensure they can be easily integrated with the Human Resources Management Information System. This would reduce the administrative burden of managing the framework and would enable central civil service co-ordination bodies to analyse data more effectively.

Our analysis confirms that the careful design of professional requirements or competency frameworks is of critical importance in determining the effectiveness of different HRM processes, further acknowledging that such design is inherently challenging and that there are a plethora of different options available. From this we conclude that every administration needs to find its own way best suited to its specific context. Although some models and international practices may seem sensible and attractive, this does not mean they will yield the same results if applied in other administrations. And while behavioural competency frameworks are an important and useful addition for various different HRM purposes, each administration needs to analyse whether behavioural attributes are the most critical issues in the current state of the country's civil service and whether the administration has the necessary capacities for applying this model. There are several alternatives to behavioural competency frameworks addressing KSAOs, and any approach adopted must first and foremost address local needs. In reaching this conclusion, our aim is not to advocate for any specific models but rather to raise awareness of the issues involved and to provide a general roadmap for analysing these issues. For this purpose, our study is accompanied by a simple self-assessment framework in Annex 4 that can be used independently by administrations in making decisions in this area.

Literature

- Boyatzis, R. (1982). *The Competent Manager*. New York: Wiley.
- Centre for Change Management, Skopje (2016). The publication is part of the project Support for Public Administration Reform
- CIPD (2021). *Competence and Competency Frameworks* (factsheet). <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/performance/competency-factsheet>
- Gartner Glossary: *Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other Characteristics (KSAOs)*, <https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/glossary/knowledge-skills-abilities-and-other-characteristics-ksaos->
- Gertha-Taylor, H. (2008). Identifying Collaborative Competencies. *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 28 (2): 103–119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X08315434>
- Hood, C., & Lodge, M. (2004). Competency, bureaucracy, and public management reform: A comparative analysis. *Governance*, 17(3): 313–333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0952-1895.2004.00248.x>
- Horton, S., Farmham, D., & Hondeghem, A. (eds). (2002). *Competency Management in the Public Sector: European Variations on a Theme*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Montenegrin Human Resource Management Authority (2019). *Manual for Competencies of the Heads of State Authorities and Senior Managerial Staff*. Podgorica: HRMA.
- Kruyen, P.-M., & Van Genugten, M. (2020). Opening up the black box of civil servants' competencies. *Public Management Review*, 22(1): 118–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1638442>
- McClelland, D. (1973). Testing for Competence Rather than Intelligence. *American Psychologist* 28 (1): 1–14. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/h0034092>
- Meyer-Sahling, J.-H., Mikkelsen K. S., Ahmetovic, D., Ivanova, M., Qeriqi, H., Radevic, R., Shundi, A., & Vlajkovic, V. (2015). *Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and Recommendations*. Danilovgrad, Montenegro: ReSPA Publications.

Meyer-Sahling, J.-H.; Mikkelsen K.S.; Schuster, C., Bartula-Musikic, R., Ahmetovic, D., Ivanova, M., Qeriqi, H., Radevic, R., Shundi, A., & Vljakovic, V. (2019). *Merit Recruitment in the Western Balkans: An Evaluation of Change between 2015 and 2018*. Danilovgrad: ReSPA Publications.

OECD (2010). *Managing competencies in Government: State of the Art Practices and Issues at Stake for the Future*. Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate Network on Public Employment and Management. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/gov/pem/paper-managing-competencies-in-government-state-of-the-art-practices-and-issues.pdf>

OECD (2017a). *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*. OECD Public Governance Reviews. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en>.

OECD (2017b). *Core Skills for Public Sector Innovation*. Observatory for Public Sector Innovation. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD/SIGMA (2019). *Methodological Framework of the Principles of Public Administration*. <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Methodological-Framework-for-the-Principles-of-Public-Administration-May-2019.pdf>

OECD/SIGMA (2021a) *The Principles of Public Administration Monitoring Report, Montenegro*. <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Montenegro.pdf>

OECD/SIGMA (2021b). *The Principles of Public Administration Monitoring Report, North Macedonia*. <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf>

OECD/SIGMA (2021c). *The Principles of Public Administration Monitoring Report, Serbia*. <https://sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Serbia.pdf>

ReSPA (2020). *Towards Effective Performance Appraisal in the Western Balkans: How to develop performance?* <https://www.respaweb.eu/download/doc/Towards+Effective+Performance+Appraisal+in+the+W.B.s.pdf/7b629959a17409fff11bdf2ad049345c.pdf>

Schmidt, F. L., & Hunter, J. E. (1998). The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), 262–274. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.124.2.262>

Williams, S. (2015) *Manual for the use of competency framework in recruitment and selection for the Civil Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo.

Annex 1:

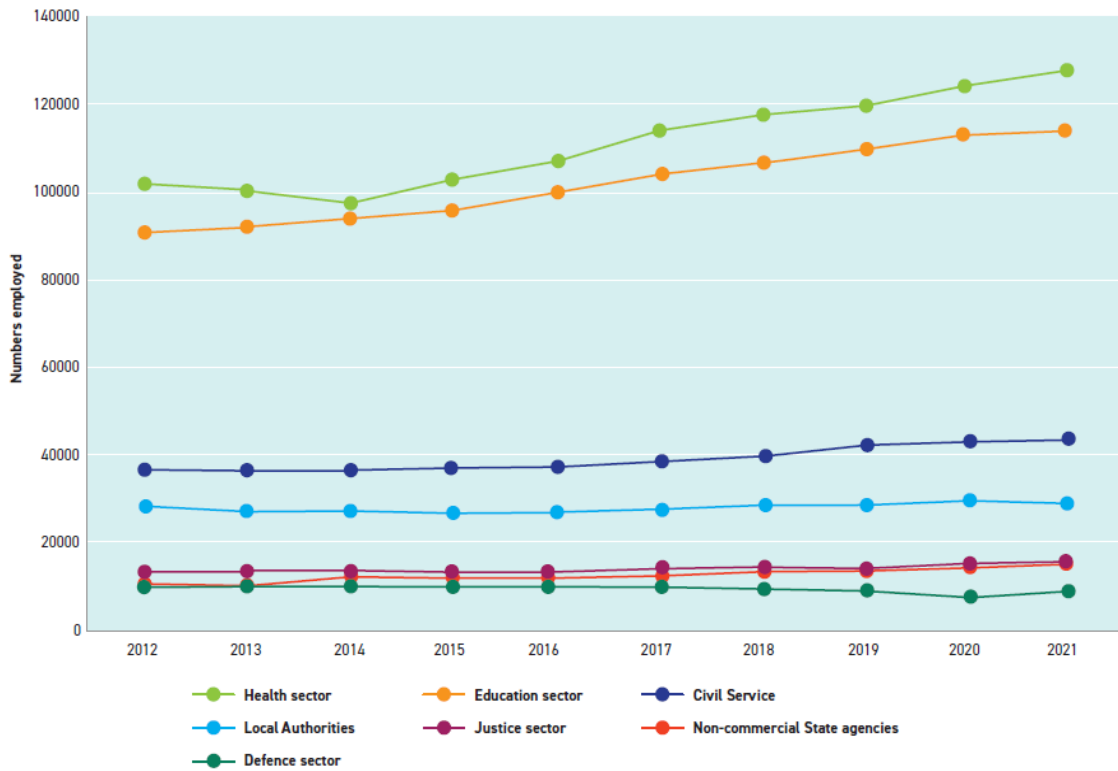
EU practices: The Case of Ireland

Drafted by Pádraig Love

1. Background

The Irish public service comprises the civil service, the healthcare sector, the education sector, the local government sector, the justice sector, the defence sector, and non-commercial state agencies, together employing a total of approximately 356,000 personnel.

IRISH PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Source: Public Sector Trends 2021 – Institute of Public Administration, Dublin

As can be seen from the chart above, approximately 40,000 staff are employed in the Irish civil service. The civil service in Ireland is largely a career-based system, though it has gone some way towards embracing aspects of the position-based approach, with open entry to all levels of the

grade structure. Civil servants are usually hired at the beginning of their career, work as generalists, and typically remain in public service throughout their working lives. Promotion is linked to the grades structure rather than to specific positions. The civil service has a common pay and grading system. This means that all government ministries, departments and offices have the same approach to grading, while pay levels in respect of each grade are determined centrally.

With the exception of the top-role of Secretary General/Accounting Officer (its interaction with Minister and Parliament), the Irish Civil Service grading structure is not set out in law. When the state was established, the civil service that had served the British administration in Ireland was essentially preserved, and the current grading structure is still broadly the same UK model that evolved from the establishment of three broad “classes” of civil servant: the “Administrative Class” (Senior Management), the “Executive Class”, and the “Clerical Class”. The grades within each class have evolved over time. Insofar as the duties and responsibilities were initially documented in Ireland, it would have been in the Ministry for Public Service Circulars, which would not generally have legal effect. The only binding element was the requirement for eligibility to compete, which would have been legally compellable under the old Civil Service Commission legislation and associated Regulations. However, this legislation has since been repealed. The roles and duties have evolved over the years and have been documented to some degree in Information Booklets. The model now is largely principles-based, with a fair degree of latitude for amending key elements in response to market trends. The primary concern of the Ministry of Public Expenditure and Reform is to ensure that grade consistency and/or pay expectations are not disrupted in any way.

The civil service general grading structure, which applies across all ministries from the top down, is as follows:

- Secretary General
- Assistant Secretary General
- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Higher Executive Officer/Administrative Officer/Third Secretary
- Executive Officer/Staff Officer
- Clerical Officer

Development of the Irish competency framework

Prior to the establishment of the Public Appointment Service (PAS) in 2004, the body responsible for recruitment into the Irish civil service was the Civil Service Commission (CSC), an organisation established under British rule in the late 19th century.

The development of competencies for use in recruitment to the Irish civil service began in the mid-1990s and was led by the CSC. At that time there were three primary recruitment grades to gain entry to the general civil service: clerical officer, executive officer and administrative officer/third secretary (graduate entry level).

Competencies were developed according to a grades-based model, initially focusing on recruitment grades and spreading to other grades for which appointment was through promotion. This work was undertaken over a six-year period and was largely complete by 2003. The adoption of a methodical

grade-based approach was initially driven by the need to prove the effectiveness of this relatively novel competency-based approach and gain acceptance for its adoption from managers, staff and unions, many of whom would have been sceptical about diverging from old established criteria such as knowledge-based tests, length of service, and the “gut-feeling” of experienced assessors. In the last few years of the 20th century, work proceeded with the following grades:

- Assistant Principal, Administrative Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer in the civil service
- Third Secretary in the Diplomatic Service
- IT grades in the civil service

The CSC later went on to address more specialised positions such as trainee auditors in the office of the comptroller and auditor general, statisticians in the central statistics office, chief executive officers in the health service, county and city managers (now chief executives) in local administration, the police service (*Garda Síochána*), and prison officers.

The final civil service grades addressed were Staff Officer, Clerical Officer and Principal Officer. The top-level civil service also moved onto a competency-based approach.

Methodology

As mentioned above, the process of developing a competency framework for recruitment/promotion was led by the CSC⁷³ and the task was approached on a grade-by-grade basis. Occupational psychologists from CSC and the PAS played a critical role, and administrative staff were trained in the methodology to assist in the process.

The methodology adopted was the same for each grade and included a full job analysis approach. Any existing documentation was taken into account in a broad way, particularly around eligibility criteria, but would not have been hugely instrumental. To ensure buy-in from unions for the competency model and the proposed recruitment and promotion process it was decided to facilitate the representation of the relevant union on the steering group for each project, in addition to representatives on this group from the management of key ministries and the private sector, as well as customer involvement in the process.

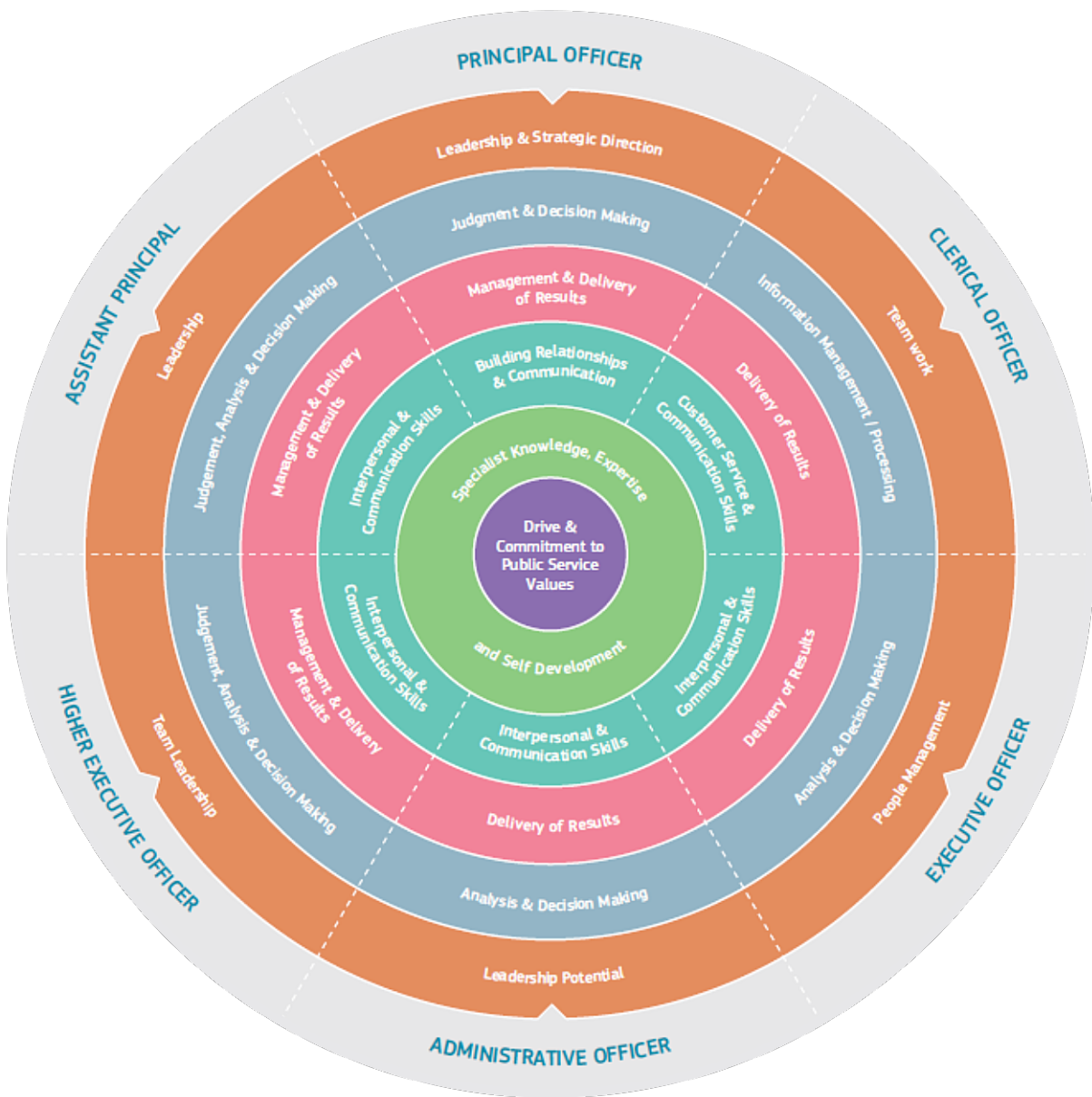
The job analysis approach facilitated the bottom-up development of a competency framework based on firm evidence that provided a reliable foundation with sound job descriptions and person specifications. This secured the buy-in and support of staff. Data for this process was gathered through critical incident interviews, repertory grid interviews and visionary Interviews.

This structured approach ensured the engagement of significant numbers of staff in the targeted grade across a representative sample of ministries, along with their immediate supervisors. In addition, relevant top management were also engaged in the data-gathering process. This engagement enhanced the validity and acceptance of the final report for each grade completed. Additional numbers of staff were engaged through questionnaires and focus groups in the later stages of each project. Each competency model was readily accepted, having gone through the consultative process outlined above, and was then rolled out by CSC/PAS for recruitment and promotion competitions.

73 From the 2004 Public Appointments Service (PAS).

It should be noted here that a separate competency model for use in performance management was developed in parallel by the Ministry for the Public Service in these early stages. For various reasons, external consultants were engaged to develop this model, which did not have the same foundation or possess the same validity as the recruitment framework.

Once all the individual grade-based competency models had been completed and bedded in, PAS in conjunction with the Ministry for the Public Expenditure and Reform set about harmonising the disparate models into a single coherent framework that would apply across the whole range of HR functions, including recruitment, promotion, performance management, and workforce planning, as illustrated below:



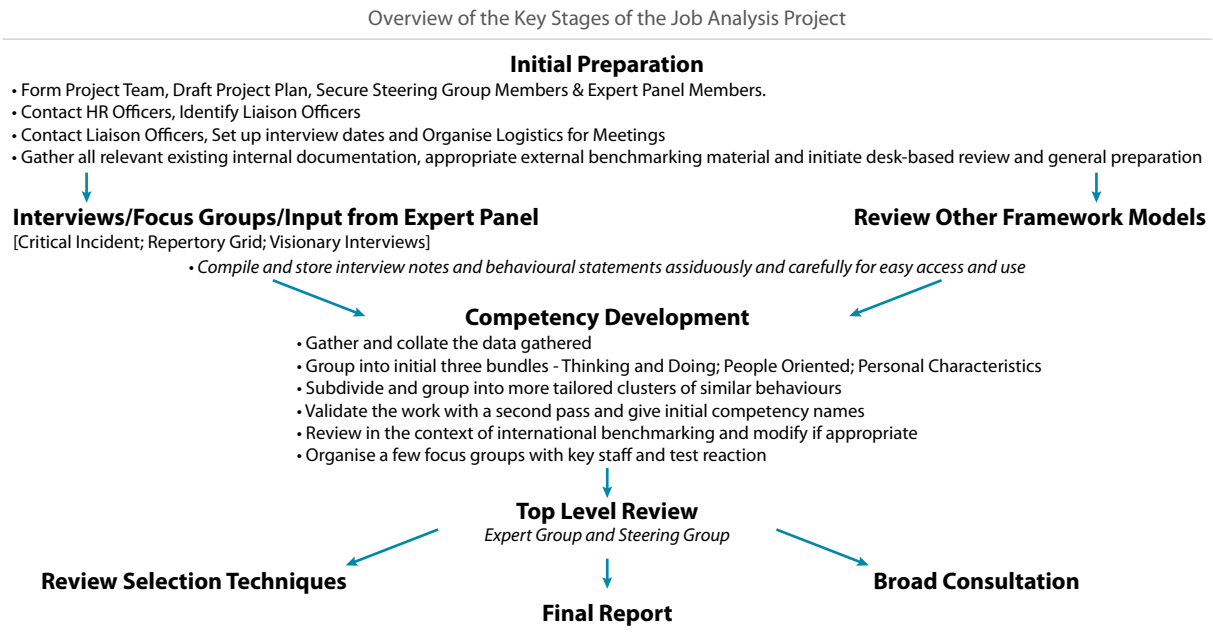
2. Definition of job requirements for civil servants

General

The setting of requirements for entry into the civil service is legally a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (previously the Minister for Finance and/or Minister for the Public Service). The previous relevant legislation dating from 1956 was updated under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act of 2004, which stipulates in Part Seven, 58.—(1) (a): “The Minister is responsible for all matters relating to recruitment in the Civil Service, including—(i) eligibility criteria, staff numbers, grading, pay and all other working conditions of civil servants or any class of them.”

In practice, matters relating to recruitment are generally agreed in consultation between the Minister’s Department and the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Where appropriate, there may also be consultation with relevant unions, and, in the case of a specialist job peculiar to a particular department, with the HR unit in that ministry. For open competitions, these eligibility requirements are set out in the PAS Information Booklet published in connection with the competition. Prior to 2004, these would have been more formally stated in regulations published by the CSC. For any competitions confined to internal applicants, the requirements are set out in a Circular Notice published by the Ministry for Public Expenditure and Reform.

There is a high degree of centralised control in the Irish civil service, particularly around grading, staff numbers, salaries, and general terms and conditions. General HR policy for the entire civil service is defined and disseminated from the HR Policy and Management Directorate within the Ministry of Public Expenditure and Reform. This Directorate is managed by a Director of HR and the functions of the Division include the development of HR policies for the civil service, including workforce planning, policies on recruitment, promotion, mobility and secondment, as well as performance management, including policy on induction, probation, and underperformance. To allow greater autonomy for local management, some latitude is allowed in terms of numbers and distribution of grade levels within the staff establishment as long as they remain within the voted staff envelope. Local managers also bear responsibility for staff discipline and have the power to hire and fire staff within certain parameters, though they have no right to negotiate on pay levels or create any new grade levels.



Prior to the establishment of the PAS under the 2004 legislation, the recruitment process could only be undertaken by the CSC. Now the individual ministries/departments and offices are able to secure a licence to carry out their own recruitment, with certain centralised controls to avoid inefficiency and waste through multiple ministries competing with each other in the market for the same grades. In practice, the PAS still carries out the vast bulk of recruitment activity.

Typical Requirements

Ireland’s civil service shares a common grading structure across all ministries, departments and offices. These grades have been in place for many decades and did not change in the course of the job analysis processes. The integrity of this grading structure is maintained by the Ministry for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Ministry ensures also that any more specialised posts are equated with one of the core General Service grades, which helps to maintain parity around terms and conditions of appointments. For this reason, consistency is also maintained around any academic requirements for entry at each level. As a general rule, care is taken to avoid over-stipulating eligibility requirements, since this can unduly narrow the potential field of candidates and adversely affect the diversity mix. Unless the job is a specialist or professional one, specific knowledge requirements are not set for eligibility purposes. Once officers have been appointed, induction and other training helps to provide any general knowledge essential to carry out their role. As part of performance appraisal, the extent to which employees are effectively functioning is evaluated and any lack of necessary knowledge identified is addressed in this process.

General Skills and Abilities are integral elements in the definition of competencies, while the Competency Framework itself contains a heading for Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self-Development. Experience is important, particularly for managerial grades, and the need for specific areas and levels of experience are typically set out, though minimum periods are generally not specified. What is important in the interview stage is evidence of learning and development derived from experience as opposed to the mere possession of experience. In the course of the selection process, the focus is primarily on the evaluation of a candidate’s evidence that they possess the necessary competencies. Where experience is a factor, especially in more senior posts, the interview will generally probe for verification of learning, often set in a competency-based context.

The following table sets out the broad entry requirements for the General Service Grades

ELIGIBILITY	Academic Requirements	Relevant & Appropriate Experience	Competency Set
Secretary General	None Specified but 3rd level desirable	Yes (Min period not stipulated)	Yes
Assistant Secretary	None Specified but 3rd level desirable	Yes (Min period not stipulated)	Yes
Principal	None Specified but 3rd level desirable	Yes (Min period not stipulated)	Yes
Assistant Principal	None Specified but 3rd level desirable	Yes (Min period not stipulated)	Yes
Administrative Officer	1st or 2nd Class Hons Primary Degree	No	Yes
Third Secretary	1st or 2nd Class Hons Primary Degree	No	Yes
Higher Executive Officer	None Specified but 3rd level desirable	Yes (Min period not stipulated)	Yes
Executive Officer	Ordinary Level Degree or Hons Qualifications at 2nd Level	No	Yes
Clerical Officer	Good general education	No	Yes

In terms of the relative scoring of/credit for the areas cited above, the evaluation focuses on evidence of personal development and ability to apply learning through experience and/or academic qualifications in practice rather than the mere possession of certificates. In evaluating competencies, all are given equal weighting, and each is generally assessed over two different events.

As can be seen from the illustration of the competency framework above, comparable competencies across grades are delineated by the colour of the rings. The titles of each competency, while similar, vary across grades and distinguish the different levels of responsibility. This can be seen in greater depth in Annex 2, where the desired behavioural indicators are listed.

3. Integration of competency (or job requirements) frameworks

Vertical integration

As part of the Job Analysis process, all key strategic documents⁷⁴ were reviewed in the context of developing the sets of competencies. In each exercise, further strategic insights were obtained through visionary Interviews with key members of top management. In addition, the Steering Group included top managers to whom the Expert Group was thus in a position to offer insights from the private and academic sectors. At the time, there would have been a lot of focus on skill sets in strategic thinking (which are evidenced in the framework) and also in the ICT sector, and particularly around the move to online service provision. In the intervening years, the competency framework has been reviewed at regular intervals in the form of a mini-job analysis to ensure that the requirements are still relevant and effective. This generally leads to small adjustments to the framework.

Horizontal integration

There has been a concerted effort in Ireland to integrate the competency/job requirements frameworks with the different areas of HRM, with varying degrees of success. These HRM areas have included:

- Recruitment & Selection
- Workforce Planning (including Succession Planning)
- Performance Management and Development (Including career development, promotion and, to a limited degree, remuneration)

Competencies are probably most firmly embedded within the recruitment/promotion processes across Ireland’s civil service and have worked effectively now for 25 years. There is substantial buy-in to the approach from all sides, with evidence of exceptionally high levels of trust in the system.

The second-best established area in terms of competencies is the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), introduced in the Irish Civil Service in 2000 to create a clear understanding of what is expected of staff and managers, with performance evaluated regarding the achievement of goals and the demonstration of competencies. The main characteristics of the PMDS are as follows:

- The PMDS is objectives-driven, with clear linkage between individual and organisation goals.
- It applies a grades-based competency framework.

74 ‘Delivering Better Government: A Programme of Change for the Irish Civil Service’ was the primary document at this time, as part of the Strategic Management Initiative.

- It is a common system for all civil service departments.
- Cycle duration: the PMDS involves a three-stage process of goal-setting, a mid-year review and an end-of-year review.

A key element of the PMDS is fostering career progression by means of learning and development, which is regarded as a critical enabler of performance improvement and building organisational capacity. The PMDS process involves the identification of learning and development needs, which are then reported to HR sections within departments to follow up on.

Workforce planning was launched across the Irish civil service in November 2011. A planning framework was developed by the Civil Service HR Directorate (Workforce Planning Unit) in the Ministry for Public Expenditure and Reform, now supported by the establishment of a Workforce Planning Network. Responsibility for the completion, quality and implementation of workforce planning lies with each ministry/office. Workforce plans are an integral part of the process for the setting of binding multi-annual pay-ceilings, and since 2015 ministries have been given greater autonomy to manage their own staffing profiles, with discretion over setting some staffing levels. Workforce planning follows the general approach of examining the knowledge, skills and competencies required to achieve business goals in the current and future environment. New trends and factors that need to be considered are identified, and workforce planning remains closely linked to the medium-term business planning of the organisation.

The following text and table Extract from *Our Public Service 2020 - Strategic Workforce Planning Guide*, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Our Public Service 2020 | Strategic Workforce Planning Guide

How do you estimate your workforce requirements?

There are many methods for this, probably the best way to start is to meet with your business managers to discuss the roles in their areas. A useful guide is provided by the SWFP Unit in Civil Service Human Resources Division.

Role of interest:		
Types of potential changes that will impact on the role	Anticipate changes impacting on this role	Resulting scenario plans for simulation
Business growth/contraction		
Competency/Skill changes		
Flexible working / remote working		
Geographic considerations		
Technology changes		
Business process changes		
Environment changes		
Social changes		

An important factor in incorporating competencies in the Irish civil service has been the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMS) as the source of data for workforce planning. The data provided through the HRMS support local HR units in developing and monitoring plans, which are monitored system-wide by the Ministry for Public Expenditure and Reform.

In sum, although there has been some success with the job analysis approach, it still needs more work.

Implementation

As outlined above, the most consistent and effective application of competencies in the Irish civil service has been in the area of recruitment and selection. This is most likely because the levels of training and the frequency of application of competency frameworks are both higher given the nature of the work. In other areas, the application tends to arise a few times per year, meaning that familiarity and understanding of the competency concept are lower in these areas. The Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) licences, monitors and audits recruitment processes and has generally found the use of competencies to be satisfactory.

In terms of challenges in developing and implementing a competency framework, these arise in different forms at different stages. Over 25 years of using a competency-based model and tackling these challenges in the Irish civil service, the following key lessons have been learned:

- In the development stage, the job analysis process is resource-intensive and requires high standards and tight management to achieve a successful outcome. It is important that competencies are well defined with concrete and credible behavioural indicators that facilitate assessment.
- Work needs to be done to secure buy-in from staff, unions, and sometimes even senior managers. Maximising engagement from each cohort in the job-analysis process can serve to establish a strong foundation on which to build trust.
- Effective training of assessors is important. At a basic level, there can be a lack of understanding even amongst HR professionals as to what constitutes a competency. It is important to move assessors away from employing their “gut-feelings” and to focus instead on gathering and assessing hard evidence based on behavioural indicators.
- Developing suitable competency-based assessment tools can be a challenge, but the benefits derived from the quality and reliability of the assessment process make this effort worthwhile.
- Due to the structured style of interviewing, candidates can more easily anticipate the nature of questioning, which enables them to practice and rehearse answers that may or may not be truthful. Using highly trained and experienced assessors can help overcome this challenge.

What has also been learned over these years is how effective the competency-based model has been in terms of effective selection. This is consistently evidenced by the low level of appeals/complaints and legal challenges made regarding selection, in spite of ready access for candidates to avenues of challenge this process. This has been augmented by consistently high satisfaction ratings amongst recruiting ministries. Many lessons have also been learned around the choice, development and deployment of various competency-based assessment tools, though these would require another paper to elaborate. What is critical here is the importance of approaching each selection process in a focused and scientific manner, challenging assumptions and taking the time to get things correct from the outset, since any process built on a poor foundation is bound to fail.

Looking to the future, the civil service in Ireland will continue to review the competency framework on a routine basis to ensure its continued effectiveness. It will also keep a watching brief and an open mind in terms of new developments in the sector in order to remain at the cutting edge of recruitment processes.

Annex 2:

The EU practices: the Case of Lithuania

Drafted by Lina Daujotaitė-Prūsaitienė

Background

Before joining the European Union in 2004, Lithuania was required to reform and professionalise its civil service. Since then the country has developed and followed up civil service reform initiatives embedded in a comprehensive programme of public administration reform, aiming to converge with the experience of EU institutional, administrative and political processes. In March 2020, a government resolution introduced an obligatory competency framework for civil servants of state and municipal institutions and agencies. This resolution was based mainly on the basis of a catalogue of job descriptions and a competency framework prepared through an EU-funded project implemented by the Civil Service Department (CSD) under the Ministry of the Interior from 2009 to 2015. As part of this project, public procurement was carried out and contracts were signed with external service providers.

The main aim of the project was to improve the civil service system by modernizing the human resources management function in public administration institutions. In order to achieve this goal, the preparation of job descriptions for civil servants was improved and the competencies necessary for positions were determined. In course of the implementation of this project, the CSD analysed the civil service competency models applied in different countries (the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, and The Netherlands), and their principles of systematisation of positions.

Change process

A **survey of representatives of the public administration sector and the private sector** was conducted with the aim of identifying the needs and attitudes of civil servants in relation to the competency framework and the possibilities of systematising job descriptions for civil servants and analysing all existing job descriptions of civil servants. After a series of long and wide-ranging **discussions with politicians, scientists and practitioners**, a suitable model for the catalogue of job descriptions was selected. The development of the model of competencies was followed by the provision of **training courses** for more than 700 civil servants from all state and municipal institutions. Despite the enormous amount of preparatory work undertaken, there was a lack of political will to legitimise the competency framework until 2020. To support the implementation of the framework, the CSD organised 23 methodological consultations with the institutions in a three-month period. **Consultations were held with the Information Technology and Communications Department** of the Ministry of the Interior which is responsible for the IT tool of structured job descriptions. More than 930 participants from 450 state and municipal institutions and agencies participated in different consultations. These consultations were held online because the preparation period coincided with

the Covid-19 pandemic. This entailed challenges but also brought some advantages, including the facilitation of remote online consultations enabling the participation of a higher number of civil servants responsible for human resources.

The most important steps in implementing the competency model across the entire civil service in Lithuania were as follows:

1. Planning
2. IT system development and integration
3. Publicity (dissemination of information: press, radio, Internet):
 - CSD presentations to representatives of institutions, identifying key people;
 - Presentations by personnel specialists in institutions for the heads of regional institutions.
4. Communication, training, involvement of heads of institutions (both managers and staff):
 - Development of training plans;
 - Training material: slides, original and engaging video, IT tools training video. Having coherent representative material and a single e-mail is important. Explaining not just what is being done but also *why*;
 - Presentations to senior executives;
 - Training for everyone from managers to professionals.
5. Piloting the project in institutions and eliciting feedback
6. Entry into force of the law: adoption of domestic legislation
7. Commencing implementation in institutions
8. Providing ongoing and timely assistance with the methodology

Job profiles and competency framework

A key component of the project was the preparation of a **job profiles catalogue** to systematise and standardise the job descriptions of civil servants to improve the civil service system and modernise its HRM practices. The main tasks involved in creating the catalogue were as follows:

- updating the principles of systematisation and grouping of positions
- preparing structured job descriptions
- preparing sample job descriptions
- drafting methodological recommendations (a manual) for the use of the catalogue

The following results were expected of the job profiles catalogue:

- Easier preparation of job descriptions.
- Better job descriptions for civil servants: standardized, uniform, reduced duplication of functions, integration with competencies, etc.
- Greater and better use of job descriptions in the daily activities of institutions and bodies and in personnel management.
- More informative job statistics.
- More efficient use of state resources.

An important underlying aim in cataloguing job profiles was to avoid becoming lost in details and overcomplicating the job description catalogue and competency model, since classification only

makes sense if it helps to simplify the complexity and diversity of positions. The more complex the descriptions are, the lower is their practical value.

The catalogue structure is as follows:

- Catalogue structure and scope:
 - o Principles of compiling the catalogue of job descriptions of civil servants, information on the structure of the catalogue and the components of general job descriptions.
- General job descriptions:
 - o The catalogue contains more than 100 general job descriptions: general job descriptions for managers, general job descriptions for general and special areas of activity, and general job descriptions for other special areas of activity.
- Recommendations for applying the catalogue in practice:
 - o Information on the structure and preparation of specific job descriptions, the updating of current job descriptions, and the preparation of non-standard job descriptions.

In order to ensure convenient use of the catalogue, the **job descriptions are systematised** according to two criteria:

- a) job hierarchies:
 - o managers (the functions performed by managers in the same group of jobs in the catalogue do not depend on the area of activities but are the same for all managers of the same group of jobs);
 - o specialists (the functions performed by specialists within the same group of jobs of the catalogue in each area of activities are different).
- b) areas of activity:
 - o special
 - o general

The requirements and competencies required for civil servants are set out in the Law on Civil Service and the Methodology for Job Descriptions approved by a Government Resolution. The Law on Civil Service sets the following general requirements for candidates:

- Candidates must hold citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Candidates must have a command of the Lithuanian language;
- Candidates must not be less than 18 and not more than 65 years of age. The requirement of being not more than 65 years of age applies to civil servants in positions of political (personal) confidence and acting civil servants;
- Candidates must hold a university or college degree.

The eligibility requirements for civil servants depend on hierarchical level, the area of activity and functions, education, and work experience (managerial, professional, or general). Persons recruited to the civil service must also meet special requirements set out in legal acts or in a job description.

The job description sets out special requirements on education and/or qualifications; work experience; knowledge of a foreign language; and other special requirements (additional languages, driving licences, certificates of competencies; special computer programs skills, cyber security,

authorisation to work or access to classified information; specialisation and functions) defined in the job description. All these requirements are standardised. The structure of a job description is as follows:

- **job characteristics** – including the title, level and subordination of the position;
- **area of activity** – indicating the main activity of the post and any additional activities assigned to the post;
- **specialisation** – indicating the specialisation of the specific job, the specific job area, sector, and segment;
- **position functions**
- **special requirements**
- **competencies** – competency requirements for particular job positions are specified based on the methodology for applying the competency model for civil servants.

Job profiles are grouped according to **areas of activity**. There are 18 areas of activities in the catalogue, grouped into specific areas of activities and general areas of activities, as illustrated in the table below.

Specific areas of activities (6)	General areas of activities (12)
administrative regulation implementation of decisions monitoring and analysis supervision and control provision of administrative services administration of public services other specific areas of activities	operational planning financial management information technology management personnel management public procurement law (except administrative regulation) document management property management public relations international relations internal audit corruption prevention

Developing the job profiles catalogue based on areas of activities was a complex task, especially as there were some 25,000 different job descriptions in the Lithuanian civil service. This abundance of titles resulted from random individual factors and departmental interests, differing levels of willingness to reconcile the new catalogue with old existing job descriptions, as well as strict requirements for the functionality of the new catalogue. The benefits of introducing the catalogue included:

- Easier preparation of job descriptions.
- A more objective and simple way to evaluate which positions are needed.
- A simpler way to determine special requirements for each position.
- More effective HRM in institutions, avoiding the duplication of functions and more objectively determining the required number of positions and their level.
- More transparent selection and more objective assessment of civil servants' performance, more precisely defined training needs, and more consistent training plans.

- The catalogue eliminates the unsystematic nature of positions (duplication of functions, etc.), which limits the career prospects of civil servants and does not reflect objective reality.
- Creates an opportunity for purposeful staff formation to ensure this is in accordance with the core values and core functions of the civil service.

In the Lithuanian civil service, the job profiles catalogue is supported by a **skills and abilities (competency) system** that is part of each job profile of civil servants, comprising the following sets of competencies:

- **General** competencies – skills and abilities necessary in any area of activity and therefore compulsory for all civil servants, who have to comply with the values and ethical principles of civil service;
- **Managerial** competencies – skills and abilities necessary to manage the activities of an institution/agency (division) and therefore compulsory for the institution/agency and division manager and deputy managers;
- **Specific and professional** competencies – skills and abilities that are necessary to perform professional activity functions.

General competencies:

- creation of value for society (understands the purpose of public service and contributes to the creation of value for society through their activities and proposals);
- organization (plans activities and time, sets priorities, acts immediately);
- reliability and responsibility (fulfils obligations, takes responsibility for activities and results and their improvement);
- analysis and justification (ability to perform situation analysis - to break complex situations down into essential components, to determine the interrelationships of parts, to extract essential information, to prepare reasonable decisions);
- communication (ability to communicate with individuals and in a group, choosing various means of communication, ensuring the effective transmission and understanding of information).

Management and leadership competencies:

- strategic approach (aligns goals with state priorities, assesses the wider context, anticipates future opportunities and is able to take advantage of these opportunities);
- activity management (sets activity priorities, organises and coordinates activities, ensuring the implementation of objectives);
- leadership (sets an example to others, conveys the vision, mission and goals of the institution and inspires people to achieve them, provides necessary emotional support, engages in decision-making and creates a positive work environment).

Specific competencies:

- foresight (provides models for the implementation of practical proposals based on analysis of relevant needs at national, regional and/or municipal level, and is able to ensure the continuity of relevant programmes, projects and other activities);
- information management (ability to collect, systematise, manage and store reliable information);

- orientation towards clients (communicates with clients respectfully, clarifies their needs and finds solutions that meet these needs, improves the quality of the service);
- creation of a business communication network (creates, maintains and develops a business communication network, effectively solves problems using this network, and develops long-term partnership strategies);
- negotiation management (ability to prepare for negotiations, to manage the negotiation process in order to reach agreements that benefit all parties, and to apply different negotiation strategies and tactics);
- intercultural communication (understands cultural differences and is able to function and communicate effectively in different cultural and linguistic environments);
- conflict management (ability to resolve conflicts by calming emotions, identifying the causes of conflict, and finding solutions);
- management of the control and supervision process (ability to manage the control and supervision process in order to ensure the activities of the controlled and supervised entities comply with the provisions of the applicable legal acts and requirements);
- influence (ability to influence the opinions and attitudes of others and to gain their approval for proposed ideas through legal and ethical means).

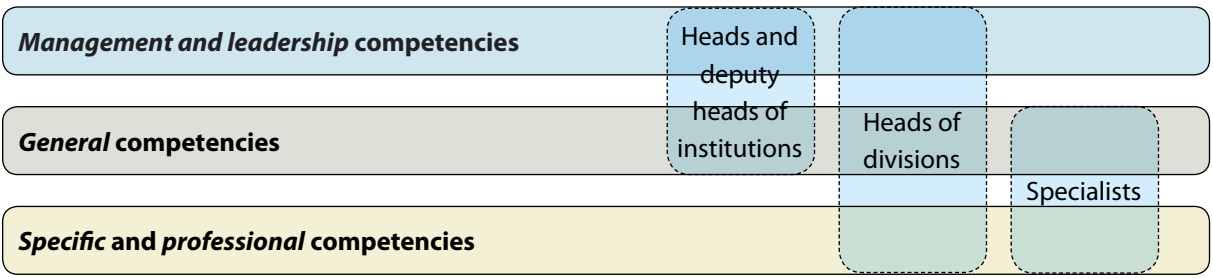
Professional competencies:

- The professional competencies of the general areas of activity include the necessary skills to perform the functions established for the position of a civil servant, ensuring the independent functioning of each institution.
- The professional competencies of special areas of activity include the necessary abilities to perform the functions established for the position of a civil servant, ensuring the implementation of the tasks established by legal acts for the institution.
- These competencies are described only in cases where specific competencies are not sufficient. Specific and professional competencies are determined by the institution and may not exceed three competencies in total.

Each competency is described via six indicators. In the description of a skill and ability, the levels are defined that characterise the particular behaviour of a civil servant seeking to perform their activity successfully and achieve the intended results. Every competency is evaluated at four levels (0 = the lowest; 3 = the highest). Competence is assessed by adding up the scores of all indicators.

Required levels of competencies are indicated for each group of positions. These levels of competencies are determined by the job hierarchy and area and the characteristics of an activity:

- the higher the manager's position in the hierarchy, the higher the required levels of general and managerial competencies;
- the higher the specialist's position, the higher the necessary levels of general competencies;
- the higher the civil servant's position in the hierarchy, the higher are the required levels of specific competencies. Specific competencies must be related to the area of activity of a civil servant and indicated according to needs. Specific competencies can be selected from the list according to position, area of activity, and functions;
- the same necessary levels of competencies are set for jobs with the same position in the hierarchy, though assigned to different areas of activities.



Benefits of a competency framework

The required performance standards for civil servants have become much clearer since the introduction of the competency framework. The framework has helped to harmonise attitudes and strengthen the promotion of values in everyday work. It has provided greater clarity, objectivity and consistency in the HRM decisions in the civil service. The model provides an opportunity to shape staff in a way that is consistent with the core values and core functions of the civil service. In addition, the framework

- provides an opportunity to link civil servants’ competencies with motivation;
- allows for consistent requirements to be met by all civil servants;
- serves as an integral instrument for HRM procedures and is used for the selection process as well as for performance appraisal, training, and career management;
- provides clearer performance criteria for both managers and subordinates;
- enables the targeted training of civil servants and career planning.

In addition, it should be noted that the competency model not only ensures the improvement of HRM practices but also contributes to strengthening public confidence in the civil service and the reputation of the civil service, since competencies have a direct impact on the quality of work and performance of civil servants. The key benefits of the introduction of the job profiles catalogue and competency framework in the civil service consist in a transition from personnel administration to professional HRM and the development of a more efficient and high-quality civil service.

Horizontal integration of the competency framework

Harnessing the full potential of the competency framework depends on its integration with different HRM processes. In the Lithuanian civil service, such horizontal integration is ensured in the following HRM areas:

- *Recruitment and selection.* In a centralized selection process, general competencies (for all candidates) and managerial and leadership competencies (for candidates for the position of Heads and Deputies of Institutions and Units) become integral selection criteria and are tested through specially designed tests, practical assignments and interviews. It is not necessary or feasible to assess all competencies and all their indicators during the competition. Only those competencies most significantly related to the success of the activity are evaluated.
- *Performance appraisals* determine the current level of competencies and compliance with the set requirements. This is used as a starting point for improving the competencies of a civil servant and to plan training and career options.

- *Training and development.* Each institution annually identifies the competencies to be improved as an objective for training or self-development. Changes in competencies after training are identified through an annual performance appraisal that not only assesses competencies but also reviews the competency development goals set at the beginning of the year and determines whether they have been achieved.
- *Career planning.* Competencies are also related to career planning when a new position is subject to different competencies or competency-level requirements.

Results and future plans

Every year CSD monitors the process of describing and evaluating the positions of civil servants and submits proposals for the improvement of the regulation of this process. According to VATIS⁷⁵ data, in 2021 there were 29,797 job descriptions, of which 4.5 percent were not changed in accordance with the requirements of the Methodology. On the whole it was determined that:

- The majority of positions are assigned to the level of senior specialists (61.9%).
- In the majority of job descriptions (38%), a special field of activity is established for the position as the main field of activity.
- The predominant areas of general activity in job descriptions are law, document management and operational management, and the predominant areas of special activity are supervision and control, the provision of administrative services, and the implementation of decisions.
- The most common field of study, as the first choice in the special requirements for job description in education, belongs to the group of social sciences, as well as a number of positions that require education in the fields of law, business and public management and engineering.
- Compulsory knowledge of a foreign language is set at 25.8 % of job descriptions. English is the dominant language.
- More than half of the surveyed institutions (61%) rated the standardisation of job descriptions as good and very good, while and only 7% gave ‘unsatisfactory’ as their evaluation.
- Summarising the questions raised during consultations by telephone and e-mail file of Frequently Asked Questions is published on the website of CSD, containing 67 questions and answers on this topic.

After monitoring the initial implementation, the CSD submitted proposals to the Ministry of the Interior for the improvement of legislation to clearly define the areas of activity and their contents in the methodology, to align the provisions of the methodology on areas of activity with the provisions of the Law on Public Administration, to clarify the concept and definition of specialisation as well as the proposals to the Department of Informatics and Communications under the Ministry of the Interior regarding the IT tool. The CSD continues to provide methodological consultations to institutions on the preparation of job descriptions and publishes information on its website about any problems identified in job description preparation and more frequent mistakes made by institutions.

The Ministry of the Interior is currently implementing an EU-funded project to review and update the job profiles catalogue and competency framework. New styles of leadership, learning agility and digital leadership competencies are increasingly needed in the modern civil service.

Annex 3:

The EU practices: the Case of Slovenia

Drafted by Tatjana Verli-Gorenšek

Background

The professional qualifications required for work in the Slovenian state administration are prescribed in the Public Employees Act. This Act stipulates that professional qualifications comprise professional knowledge and personal abilities to perform work. Conditions for jobs and positions are regulated by the Decree on the Internal Organisation, Job Classification, Posts and Titles in Public Administration and Judicial Bodies. The general conditions governed by regulations in the field of labour law apply to individual ancillary posts, and the level and field of education or professional qualification and work experience are also determined as conditions. Depending on the content of the given tasks, active knowledge of an official language, functional and special knowledge, special abilities and other skills may also be determined as conditions. The general conditions, managed by regulations in the field of labour law, as well as the appointed title and field of education, must be determined for the individual post of an official. Depending on the content of the tasks, functional and special knowledge, special abilities, and other factors are also determined as conditions for an individual post of an official.

The criteria for determining the conditions of a post are as follows:

- the complexity and types of tasks of the post
- responsibilities and special authorisations
- the psychophysical exertions involved
- environmental impacts

In addition to these conditions, the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics that are considered among the criteria for the selection of a civil servant may also be stated for an individual job or position. Determining the necessary competencies of employees for jobs is important, since these enable an employee to perform work successfully and efficiently according to the requirements of the job. Achieving good results at work is not only a matter of formal education and professional skills but also a matter of applying knowledge in completely new situations, working well with others, working successfully under time pressures, and being willing to make an extra effort to prepare quality solutions.

In accordance with the Public Employees Act, the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) is responsible for assisting and advising bodies in HRM and providing support to the heads of bodies in managing people.

The strategic management of HR was one of the priorities set in Slovenia's programme and strategic documents. Such management is recognized as essential in efforts to ensure a more efficient

and effective state administration. The European Commission and foreign experts (OECD)⁷⁶ also reminded Slovenia of the need for more efficient action. On 29 April 2015, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Public Administration Development Strategy for 2015–2020, with its core objectives focused on improving the quality, efficiency, transparency, and responsibility of public administration.

Institutional framework

The first activities of establishing the competency framework started in 2016, when we examined domestic and foreign professional literature regarding the definition of the competency model and its use in personnel processes, existing competency models in foreign state administrations, and accessible competency models of major Slovenian and foreign companies.

As part of Operation-Efficient Human Resource Management (hereinafter: Operation), an **inter-ministerial working group** for the operation was established and presentations of the project to state administration bodies and other stakeholders took place.

A **project group** was established at the MPA to be responsible for the coordination of project activities with the project partners and participating employees. The group also assessed the content of emerging solutions and provided documents that enabled real-time and transparent internal communication about the project. From the very beginning, the methodology of the project envisaged the intensive involvement and participation of a wide range of state administration employees.

Various methodological approaches were used in creating the competency model. Employees **co-created a common competency model through participation in interviews**, consultations, workshops, focus groups, and/or surveys. As we wanted the model to be simple and useful and to express the values of administration and behaviours necessary for the successful and efficient work of civil servants, all activities were carried out in cooperation with the MPA and representatives of state administration bodies (human resources, heads of internal organizational units, and a wider and narrow inter-ministerial working group for project implementation). The **wider inter-ministerial working group** consisted of representatives of state administration bodies, while the **narrow inter-ministerial working group** comprised HR specialists, managers, and some heads of personnel offices.

Competency model

The project was divided into two phases. In the first phase, from February to October 2018, **core and leadership competencies** were created, while in the second phase, from June 2018 to April 2019, **job-specific competencies** were developed. The project was completed at the end of June 2019. In addition to designing and assessing competencies, the deliverables of the project also included the preparation of a **catalogue of competencies**, a document on the **methodology for determining and assessing competencies**, a **manual for using the competency model**, **training for managers and HR specialists**, and **support** in introducing the competency system.

A competency model determines a combination of desired / required behaviours, skills and abilities that enable civil servants to successfully perform the required tasks and achieve the set goals of state administration bodies. As such, it is sort of a **map showing what kind of people are needed**

and **what is important for the administration**, i.e., the “ideal” to which the administration aspires. It reflects the values, culture, and success-oriented way of performing in the work environment. As such, competencies express the “**vocabulary**” of employees.

As the starting point for the selection of key behaviours that distinguish between **more or less successful public employees** in the state administration, **numerous interviews were conducted with employees in various fields of work**. The information from these interviews was qualitatively processed and the behaviours that appeared most important for the individual field for the majority of interviewees were selected. Through numerous workshops, the selected behaviours for core and leadership competencies were combined in a meaningful way into key competencies by employees of the state administration, employees in the field of human resources, and managers. Other groups of experts reviewed and supplemented the resulting solutions in focus groups. The final selection of key behaviours for core and leadership competencies was assessed by a wider circle of employees in the state administration through an **online survey**. At the same time, we also **reviewed strategic documents of the state administration** and models of competencies of state administrations from abroad and prepared a theoretical proposal of core competencies that comprised sets of important behaviours according to modern management theories.

The comprehensive competency model for state administration bodies, i.e., for all ministries, bodies within ministries, government departments and administrative units, comprises three key sets of competencies: core competencies, leadership competencies, and job-specific competencies. Each set covers a number of competencies, each defined by its description and associated behavioural descriptions.



The uniform competency model for the state administration (Arzenšek, Boben, Juričko, Lepoša, Mrdaković, Potočnik, Rusiti, Špital, 2019).

Core competencies refer to the desired functioning of civil servants in the state administration irrespective of their specific position. These include the following four competencies defined as fundamental: commitment to professional development, enhancing cooperation, proactiveness, and a focus on users. These apply to all employees in the state administration and are the basis for

the selection, assessment, and development of all employees. For some employees, these are also the only competencies that are monitored and developed.

Leadership competencies apply to leaders in the state administration. The four defined leadership competencies, together with the four core competencies, comprise a set of characteristics, knowledge, skills and abilities important for the efficient performance of tasks and the role of a leader at various levels of management in the state administration: orientation to the future, commitment to goals, efficient work organization, and the development of teams and individuals. Since leaders can be found in the state administration at different levels in the organizational structure, behavioural descriptions in each of the managerial competencies are specifically defined for each of the three levels of leadership. Behavioural descriptions for some competencies differ, as expectations and responsibilities of leaders differ depending on the level of leadership. Some behavioural descriptions are the same regardless of level because they are important at all levels. From a career planning perspective, this also makes it easier to predict leaders’ performance at a higher level.

In accordance with existing legislation, the basis for the competency model for the top management has already been established in the state administration, though not for middle and lower management staff and other civil servants. Competencies have been developed and implemented in practice for the highest positions for which the Council of Officials adopted standards of professional qualification, selection criteria and methods of verification of professional competencies, and these can serve as the basis for establishing a competency model for other positions.

Job-specific competencies are a set of competencies that are important for successful working in a particular professional field. Some jobs are more similar in terms of work content than others. Jobs operating in a content-related field are therefore grouped into **clusters** of similar job positions and are subject to the same job-specific competencies. Each professional position that is not managerial, is defined – in addition to basic competencies – by two to four job-specific competencies, depending on the cluster of similar job positions in which the position is located.

Within the project, 14 clusters of similar job positions have been defined, with cluster 1 (basic tasks of the administration) having three sub-areas or sub-clusters. The clusters are as follows:

- basic tasks of the administration - preparation of regulations;
- basic tasks of the administration – execution of regulations;
- basic tasks of the administration - review of regulations;
- tasks in the field of financial administration;
- tasks of inspection and other control;
- tasks in the field of the execution of criminal sanctions and psychosocial assistance;
- internal audit tasks;
- tasks in the field of diplomacy and foreign affairs;
- tasks in the field of human resources;
- legal tasks and public procurement;
- tasks in the field of finance and accounting;
- tasks in the field of IT;
- professional, administrative and technical tasks;
- tasks in the field of communication and public relations; and
- tasks in the area of research and analysis and project management tasks.

Clusters of similar job positions are defined according to the content of the work based on the assumption that substantively similar jobs or work tasks require similar skills. Due to the complexity of work tasks and related competencies in some jobs, **two different levels of difficulty** had to be distinguished for some sets of similar job positions. In these cases, the same competencies are graded (level A - lower level, especially for jobs with secondary level of education; level B - higher level, especially for jobs with tertiary level of education). Competencies are not graded according to the level of education in the case of inspection and other supervision tasks, where level B refers to councillor inspectors and level A to other inspectors and inspection bodies. The situation is similar in the case of research and data analysis tasks, where level A refers to data analysis and level B refers to research planning.

To establish a unique cluster of job-specific competencies, at least one of the following conditions must be met:

- **Size of the state administration body:** at least 500 employees in the body with a unique set of job-specific competencies, or
- **Representation of jobs in various bodies of the state administration:** jobs within the cluster can be found in at least three bodies of the state administration.

In determining job-specific competencies, an additional **analysis of the systematisation of state administration bodies** was performed using job descriptions, the organisation charts of individual state administration bodies, and existing competency models in foreign state administrations and individual state administration bodies. The development of job-specific competencies took place in several steps. In the first step, various documents were analysed related to descriptions of typical official positions and the classification of professional and technical posts, etc. Based on this analysis, 11 initial clusters of similar job positions were formed. The criterion for placing a job in an individual cluster was the degree of homogeneity of work tasks in the workplace and related expected job-specific competencies. In addition to the content of the work (nature of work tasks), the jobs were included in a cluster based on five other criteria, i.e., job title, typical level of education, typical career class, typical salary group, and typical salary rate bracket. Individual jobs within clusters were further differentiated into three levels of complexity since they were expected to require different levels of behavioural descriptions.

Initially, a model of 12 clusters of similar job positions emerged, some of which included jobs spread over three levels, some over two levels, and some confined to only one level. The adequacy of determining the number of clusters of similar job positions to cover all typical and key jobs in the state administration and the adequacy of the placement of jobs in individual clusters was verified through **pilot interviews** conducted in the next step. The determination of the final set of job-specific competencies took place in **consultations with experts of the professional fields**. These consultations reviewed the competency and behaviour proposals prepared by external contractors based on a **qualitative analysis of the interviews**. At the two final **macro workshops**, the participating employees were able to give their opinion on the whole system of competencies for all clusters of similar job positions. At a meeting of the project partners and the MPA's project group, it was agreed to create an additional two clusters of similar job positions: cluster 13: Tasks in the field of research and analysis, which has two levels of complexity; and cluster 14: Project management tasks. It was agreed to try to place other areas in the existing clusters of similar job positions or to adjust competencies for them after the completion of the project in cooperation with the MPA (if this proves justified) and in a manner consistent with the entire set system of competencies for the state administration.

Application of the competency framework

Given that the full potential value of identified competencies can only be harnessed by linking them with other personnel functions, the competency model serves as a basis for developing tools for assessing the development of competencies and a starting point for developing identified gaps in employee competencies. According to the Public Employees Act, line managers must monitor the work, professional qualifications and careers of civil servants and conduct an interview with each civil servant at least once a year. The assessment of competencies thus takes place within the framework of **annual interviews** when the manager and employees discuss the development of their competencies and goals over the preceding period. These interviews also set new goals for the future and specify any **necessary training to acquire missing competencies**. In this way the competency model helps managers and HR specialists to communicate **expectations regarding ways of working, performance at work, and planning the further development** of employees.

The Public Employees Act also stipulates that civil servants must follow the rules of the profession in their work and for this purpose must undertake constant training and improvement, while the conditions for professional development and training are provided by the employer. The Act further stipulates that civil servants have the right and duty to receive on-the-job training and to improve their expertise according to a specific programme and after the referral of a superior. Accordingly, based on the identified gaps between required and actual competencies, civil servants are assigned to training courses available within the Administration Academy. Where appropriate, the planned training courses of the Academy were included under development activities for individual core competencies, leadership competencies or job-specific competencies. The results of competency assessment also help inform the **formulation of strategies and plans for education and training** determined by the government for all state administration bodies.

In the case of the **selection of new employees**, questions linked to behaviour are linked to competencies to help select the most suitable candidate. HR experts and managers can use the competency framework in selection interviews. The Manual for the Assessment and Development of Competencies which was prepared within the project can also assist Interviewers in formulating questions for identifying competencies.

It should also be noted that the establishment and implementation of the competency model strengthens the **strategic role of the human resources function**, enabling a modern systemic approach to HR development (strengthening the role of the HR department as an aid to managers), supporting more efficient management of employees and enhancing decision-making in the field of human resources by providing clear expectations, criteria and requirements related to the field of work, greater performance of management.

An important guideline in designing the competencies model was that it has to be comprehensive and yet clear and easy to use. Taking this imperative into account, the model must reflect not only the current situation but also behaviours that will be important in the future and will contribute to the development of an efficient state administration. In the broadest sense, linking the competency model to existing and future human resources processes can help ensure the right people are appointed to the right jobs and thus make better use of employees' potential. The result and goal of this is to increase job satisfaction among employees and thus provide quality services to the economy and citizens. In the long run, the use of the competency model can also contribute to the development of a **better leadership culture** and strengthen a **development-oriented organisational culture**.

Based on their participation in the creation of a competency model in the state administration, some **state administration bodies have started projects to create their own competency models** that will be complementary to the state administration model and will include specifics of the field of the particular state administration body. The content for these projects is drawn from all that has emerged through the process of determining competencies in the state administration.

Because the competency model is a professional tool for state administration bodies in the field of human resources management and its use is not normatively prescribed, it is used in diverse ways in accordance with the existing organisational and personnel structure in individual state administration bodies. This means that the **competency model can be supplemented by a state administration body with examples of behaviours specific to its work area.**

Support for implementation

To support the implementation and use of the model, it proved important in the case of Slovenia to transfer the contents of the competency model to the **training programme of the Administration Academy**, including training for various target groups such as managers, HR experts, internal trainers⁷⁷ and members of the Council of Officials. As part of the training programme, the Academy also provides training to strengthen core competencies, leadership competencies and job-specific competencies. To facilitate the implementation of the model, we continue to **train managers to use the competency model** in public administration in development activities with employees. We also train **HR specialists to use the competencies in selection procedures** and for assessing competencies and interpreting results, further providing **development-oriented feedback**. We will also continue with **“train the trainer”** training to further support the introduction of the competency model and the transfer of knowledge on the use of the competency model. It is also very important to train members of the **Council of Officials** to use competencies in selection procedures.

The project team encountered various obstacles during the implementation of the project, especially at the end of the first and second phases of the project when there was insufficient response to training on the use of the competency model provided for managers at different levels of management. To encourage managers to apply for training, we included the MPA management, which invited the management of state administration bodies and their leaders, as well as introducing additional incentives and invitations to leaders from members of the projects’ wider and narrower interdepartmental groups.

The most widespread use of the competency model in state administration bodies is in selection procedures, using the method of behavioural interviews. In the selection process, competencies can be used immediately, since it is not necessary that the method be supported through an information system, such as in competency assessment in the framework of annual interviews. This is why the use of the competency model in individual internal organisational units of the state administration bodies for the purpose of appraisal is least widespread, or rather state administration bodies use it only within individual internal organizational units in various ways. For example, the internal trainer, who is also the head of the Human Resources Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, sends questionnaires for assessing competencies to the new employees when they conduct a personnel interview with them after three months of working at the Ministry. Such an approach is important to raise awareness of what behaviours are desirable in the area of work covered by the employee.

⁷⁷ Dedicated and proactive HR experts, whose mission as internal trainers at the body is to expand the use of the competency model within the body and transfer the knowledge to managers.

Because we wanted to maintain a high level of commitment of human resources even after the completion of the project, we established **regular meetings of internal trainers**. The purpose of these meetings is to agree on the gradual application of the competency model in connection with other personnel processes, to strengthen the skills of HR specialists and managers in this area, and to enhance the developmental function of HR services.

To help in the assessment of competencies, the internal trainer at the Ministry of Health carried out internal training for managers in conducting annual interviews using the competency model. The internal trainer prepared questionnaires for managers according to the clusters of similar job positions covered by employees within individual internal organizational units. The response of the managers to the presented content was extremely positive. In addition, the internal trainer at the Ministry of Public Administration within the Human Resources Department conducted internal training for employees and managers in conducting annual interviews with the help of the competency model.

In May 2022, the Council of Officials adopted new **Standards of Professional Competencies**, which include the development of core competencies as one of the four criteria for working in the position of an official. The competencies are checked within the selection procedures.

As part of further efforts to implement the competency model, intensive activities are underway to provide comprehensive **information system support** to the competency management process, which is crucial for the implementation of competency assessment in the framework of annual interviews. The Recovery and Resilience Plan also envisages the establishment of a **Competence Centre** that will systematically support the implementation, monitoring and development of the competency model and will assist managers and HR in personnel processes such as recruitment, training and employee development, talent discovery, succession planning, and intergenerational cooperation. It will also provide professional and financial support to the Council of Officials in the process of selecting managerial officials and assessing the competencies.

Throughout the project, we used a methodology designed to encourage a **collaborative, interactive and inclusive process**, providing managers and employees with a transparent and structured way of communicating and the opportunity to build open relationships and trust. We strived to involve as many employees as possible in the creation of the competency framework to ensure the widest possible knowledge and maximum usability of the framework. We started from what already exists and is deemed to be satisfactory in the state administration and from a vision of which areas we wanted to develop in the future. The essence of this process is that it is a bottom-up approach. The results we have achieved together draw clear directions of where and in what ways we want to channel work with employees in the state administration to ensure it is both strategic and comprehensive. The project’s slogan was “Together for development and growth!”, reflecting our belief that through cooperation and co-creation it is possible to build trust and create common directions for employee development.

Annex 4:

Self-assessment framework for analysing the professional requirement and competency frameworks

I Job Evaluation		
1. Does the job evaluation system enable a fair and harmonised categorisation of jobs?		
The job evaluation system should enable a fair and practical categorisation of jobs based on the level of complexity and responsibility so that different categories, levels and titles are easily distinguishable from each other. The job standard job/task descriptions of the different categories, levels, or titles should be clear enough to enable harmonised application across different institutions.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
2. Does the job evaluation system support setting clear and meaningful job requirements or competency frameworks?		
The standard job/task descriptions set at the central level via legislation should give a clear understanding of the contents of job tasks and their level of responsibility and complexity for setting the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or other (KSAO) attributes. These task descriptions at different hierarchical levels and/or professional areas should help define the content and level of complexity of the KSAOs required in different job positions. Accordingly, the job/task descriptions should be clear and meaningful enough to enable this. If descriptions are too general or generic, they will not provide enough content and clarity for establishing meaningful KSAOs.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
3. Are the centrally set job descriptions adjusted to institutional needs?		
Centrally set job descriptions typically define only a general framework or the minimum requirements that need to be adjusted to institutional needs. This enables adjusting job requirements to the needs of specific job positions. As the civil service is a complex institution		

comprising different types of organisations and jobs, the centrally set requirements are usually not specific enough to provide a basis for conducting different HRM processes. If the institutions do not specify the jobs descriptions further, there is a higher risk that they will not reflect the actual tasks of a job position. This would also not allow setting relevant job requirements for the position.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
II Job requirements		
4. Do the centrally set job requirements balance formal criteria with other KSAOs that have a higher predictive value in terms of future performance?		
Purely formal criteria (e.g. level of education, years of experience, legal knowledge of the constitutional order and the legal framework of public administration, etc.) will not help predict the future performance of a civil servant. More balanced requirements would ensure that the criteria used for selecting, promoting, evaluating, and developing civil servants are relevant for the tasks performed in the job position or category. The professional requirements set for civil servants should therefore include other criteria that are relevant for a job category, job family, or title. Although the most job specific criteria are usually set at institutional level, the centrally set standard requirements should establish a general framework that gives clear guidance and minimum standards for HR units. The centrally set requirements can also reflect the government's strategic priorities (digitalisation, EU accession, etc.), so that they are not neglected at institutional level. For assessing balance, the centrally set criteria can be listed and categorised by using the KSAO model. In addition, the weight of these different attributes in different HRM processes should be analysed (see also section III: Horizontal integration).		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
5. Are the centrally set job requirements balanced in the HRM procedures?		
Even when job requirements are formally well-balanced between KSAOs, it is important to ensure balance with HRM procedures. The weight given to non-formal requirements in the selection, evaluation or development procedures should reflect the actual needs of the job categories, families, or titles. If the balance in these procedures is not right, it will limit their effectiveness.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		

6. Are the centrally set job requirements adjusted to institutional needs?		
The centrally defined job requirements should be further specified at institutional level to ensure a better fit with organisational needs and specific tasks performed in the job. When requirements are not further defined, there is a higher risk that they will not reflect the actual needs of a job and may cause problems in selecting, evaluating and developing employees.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
7. Do the centrally set job requirements reflect future challenges for the government?		
The job requirements set for civil servants should not only reflect the competencies needed to help solve current problems but also to prepare governments for future challenges. The centrally set requirements should give an indication of the priority KSAOs that would strengthen the capacities of the public administration in meeting these challenges so that they are not forgotten or overlooked at institutional level. Useful reference points for future oriented KSAOs have been provided in the following documents by the OECD and can be adjusted to the needs of any administration:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills for A High Performing Civil Service⁷⁸ - Six Core Skills for Public Sector Innovation⁷⁹ 		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
8. Do the centrally set job requirements reflect the key priority areas of the government?		
The vertical integration of job requirements / competency frameworks presumes that civil servants have the necessary skills for designing and implementing government policies. For example, if the government's key priorities are related to the digitalisation of services, then it would be logical to see relevant requirements reflected in the centrally set professional requirements. This would require analysing the key policy documents (public administration reform, public financial management and other public governance related strategies) to ascertain which KSAOs are needed to achieve the key priorities and whether they are included in the current framework.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		

⁷⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/skills-for-a-high-performing-civil-service-9789264280724-en.htm>

⁷⁹ https://www.oecd.org/media/oecdorg/satellitesites/opsi/contents/files/OECD_OPSI-core_skills_for_public_sector_innovation-201704.pdf

III Horizontal integration		
9. Are the centrally set job requirements / competency framework integrated with the workforce planning process?		
Strategic workforce planning entails forecasting not only headcount but also the skills needed in the coming years. Therefore, the jobs descriptions and requirements / competency frameworks based on these needs should be designed so that it is easy to identify the skills required for these positions. If the standard job/task descriptions do not explicitly detail the skills or competencies needed in different job categories, levels or titles, the workforce plans will have little value for forecasting and planning future skills needs.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
10. Are the centrally set job requirements / competency framework integrated with the selection process?		
To a certain extent, job requirements are always integrated with the merit-based selection process, since this assumes the recruitment process is based on pre-set professional criteria. To ensure full integration, however, the weight of formal and knowledge-based criteria should not be too high in the selection process. In addition, job requirements need to be adjusted to organisational needs (see criteria 4 and 7). Effective integration also entails that the people applying the job requirements / competencies in the selection process, including the selection committee members, have the necessary skills.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
11. Is the centrally set job requirements / competency framework integrated with the performance appraisal process?		
The performance appraisal system should not only evaluate the achievement of objectives but also the KSAOs that contributed to their achievement. In addition, performance appraisals should be used for detecting staff development needs for meeting future challenges even in cases when a civil servant meets all <i>current</i> requirements. The performance appraisal procedure should thus be integrated with the job requirements / competency framework to provide a useful structure for assessing development needs. Full integration entails that job requirements are adjusted at institutional level with specific job needs (see also Criterion 7).		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		

12. Is the centrally set job requirements / competency framework integrated with the professional training and development process?		
Professional training should be based on the identified job requirements / competencies. This assumes that they are defined in a meaningful way to provide enough input for mapping training needs. The performance appraisal results should be summarised at central level and the horizontal training needs mapped and forwarded to the central civil service training institutions. Appraisal results should thus provide an input for training plans both at institutional and central level. Training programmes provided for civil servants at different levels should address the needs mapped via performance appraisals. In addition, training institutions should also proactively provide training courses that are not flagged in performance appraisals but which are still prioritised in the job requirements / competencies framework.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
13. Is the centrally set job requirements / competency framework integrated with the staff mobility process?		
Similar to the selection process, mobility decisions (promotion and demotion, horizontal and vertical career development) should be based on the job requirements / competency framework. In addition to motivational or organisational change characteristics, mobility decisions can be also based on skills needs. Therefore, the mobility process is directly related to the workforce planning and its effectiveness depends on how well the planning process is integrated with the KSAOs.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
IV Implementation		
14. Is the definition of job requirements / competency frameworks balanced between the central and institutional level?		
The guidance and standards given at central level should be sufficient for harmonising job requirements across institutions and reflect the government's expectations and priorities. At the same time, there should be sufficient independence at institutional level for adjusting requirements to organisational or sectoral needs, assuming that the central requirements cannot be weakened but only strengthened at institutional level.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		

15. Do the institutional HR units have enough support for applying the job requirements / competency framework?		
To ensure the uniform application of the framework, the central civil service co-ordination bodies need to provide support in applying the job descriptions and requirements framework. This can be done by combining different tools such as training courses for different target groups (including managers and selection committees), written guidelines, manuals, templates, examples, video tutorials, and helplines, etc.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
16. To what extent are the job requirements / competency frameworks implemented in practice?		
The central civil service co-ordination bodies should regularly monitor the implementation of the job requirements / competency frameworks. This can be done through routine activities, since evidence of the application of the frameworks can be inferred from the outputs of different processes (e.g. workforce plans, vacancy notices, performance appraisal summary reports, training needs analyses, and plans). In addition, central bodies can also conduct regular audits or analyses to test the application of the system.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		
17. Are job requirements / competency frameworks regularly reviewed and adjusted when necessary?		
The central civil service co-ordination bodies should regularly review the job requirements / competency framework (e.g., at least every five years) to check whether it is aligned with the current and future needs of the public administration. They should also check the framework after the introduction of any new public administration reform or other key public governance strategies. Job requirements should be adjusted to changing needs both at central and institutional level.		
Yes	Partially	No
Short description of the state of play:		

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији
Национална библиотека Црне Горе, Цетиње

ISBN 978-9940-37-038-1
COBISS.CG-ID 24664324



ReSPA

Regional School
of Public Administration

BUILDING TOGETHER
GOVERNANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Regional School of Public Administration

📍 Branelovica, 81410 Danilovgrad, Montenegro
☎ +382 (0)20 817 235
✉ respa-info@respaweb.eu
🌐 www.respaweb.eu



ReSPA activities are funded
by the European Union