



NEWSLETTER

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

*Public Administration at Citizens' Service***PROJECT "SUPPORT TO THE STRATEGY OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN THE
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA – SECOND PHASE"**

-The Project has been developed with the purpose to provide support in the development of efficient and reliable citizen-oriented public administration-

As part of the overall social reforms, in November 2004 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy of Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia. The main objectives of the reform are creation of a democratic state based on the rule of law, accountability, transparency, economy and efficiency as well as creation of a citizen-oriented public administration, capable of offering high quality services to the citizens and private sector, against payment of reasonable costs. Strategic-level management of public administration reform has been entrusted to the Public Administration Reform Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, while the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government is in charge of operational-level management of public administration reform, i.e. its implementation in practice. However, for public administration reform to be successful there is a necessity for coordination and active participation of all public administration bodies, given that each state authority is responsible for the implementation of specific activities which constitute the substance of the reform.

The Project is being implemented by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with donor support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the UK Department for International Development (DfID). The Project is directed at providing support to successful implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy, improvement of public administration bodies' work efficiency and better understanding of public administration reform by the public.

SUPPORT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM STRATEGY focuses on the revision of the Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Implementation and the Public Administration Reform Strategy. Through this, inter-ministerial coordination and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be developed. Thus, preconditions will be created for continuous monitoring of implementation of the revised Action Plan and the Public Administration Reform Strategy, i.e. of Serbia's progress in the public administration reform process. This process will actively involve representatives of all public administration bodies, while the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government will draft reports on the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy.

SUPPORT TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BODIES' WORK EFFICIENCY is based on implementing organisational reviews and issuing recommendations for enhancing the organisation and functioning of certain public administration bodies (pilot ministries). It has been planned that all the experiences acquired and solutions used in this process thus far will be applied in an appropriate manner to the entirety of public administration, i.e. that they will be institutionalised and made applicable and sustainable.

SUPPORT TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM BY THE PUBLIC focuses on implementation of various informational and educational activities targeted at civil servants, media representatives and citizens.

More information on the Project can be found on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (in Serbian):

<http://www.drzavnauprava.sr.gov.yu/pages/article.php?id=234> ■



On the Road to the European Union

A NEW IMPULSE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

-adoption of the Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Implementation 2009-2012 by the end of the year-

Public administration reform will receive a new impulse by the end of this year with the adoption of the Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Implementation (AP) for the period 2009-2012. This document will serve to plan activities in all segments of public administration reform for the next four years.

COOPERATION OF ALL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BODIES

AP 2009-2012 will be produced in cooperation with all public administration bodies, using the so-called participatory method, while the bearer of the job will be the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government as the body responsible for the implementation of public administration reform on the operational level. This approach will ensure proper identification of needs in all areas of public administration reform, both in those areas where certain progress has already been achieved (e.g. professionalisation, depoliticisation) and in those where development has hitherto been much slower (e.g. modernisation and development of e-government). That way, a more successful realisation of the reform will also be made possible.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

Intensifying the public administration reform process is immensely important from the viewpoint of Serbia's accession to the European Union, given that all other reforms which need to be implemented on the road to the EU rest on public administration. Only a modern, efficient and well organised and coordinated administration will be able to successfully deliver all other reforms and ensure that one day the Republic of Serbia "speaks with one voice" in Brussels, i.e. that it coherently represents single and agreed-upon interests of our country in all EU institutions. In view of the ever-growing conscience about the significance of administrative reforms for future EU membership, the European Commission is also increasingly insisting on the importance of these reforms, which can be noticed in all relevant documents (e.g. Annual progress reports, European Partnership). Given the present acceleration of Serbia's integration into the European Union, it is the right moment to breathe new life into public administration reform and give it a clear orientation by engaging all public administration bodies in designing the future course of this reform.

The production of AP 2009-2012 will progress through submission of concrete contributions by the public

administration bodies to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. The Ministry will provide continuous support to its partners in the production of these contributions, starting from the initial meetings to give instructions and ending with individual meetings and joint work wherever this might be needed. The process of production and submission of contributions should be finalised by mid-October, so as to enable their timely processing and completion of the Draft Action Plan 2009-2012.

PUBLIC DEBATE AND ADOPTION OF THE ACTION PLAN

Draft AP will be made available to the public, which will mark the beginning of the public debate on this document, lasting for approximately two weeks. The public debate will end with an international conference, which will take place in early December this year. The participants of the Conference will be all domestic stakeholders as well as renowned international experts in the public administration field. Financial and professional support to the production of the AP 2009-2012 and to the organisation of the international conference will be provided through the Project "Support to the Strategy of Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia – Second Phase".

OVERVIEW OF REALISATION OF THE STRATEGY AND THE AP

In order to identify as objectively as possible the results of public administration reform since the adoption of the Strategy of Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia and the Action Plan 2004-2008 (November 2004), an Overview of Realisation of the Strategy and Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Implementation 2004-2008 has been produced. The production of the Overview was financially made possible through the Project "Support to the Strategy of Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia – Second Phase". Data collection for the purposes of this Overview was conducted through 35 interviews with representatives of all relevant public administration bodies and other stakeholders. On the basis of this working document, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government will, in cooperation with other public administration bodies, define the activities for AP 2009-2012.

After the public debate, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government will produce a Draft AP for the period 2009-2012 and forward it for Government adoption in December this year. ►



It is envisaged that the Government will adopt two new annexes of the Public Administration Reform Strategy together with the Action Plan. These annexes will pertain to the improvement of inter-ministerial coordination and the system of monitoring and evaluation of the public

administration reform process. More will be said on the contents of these new elements of the Strategy, aimed at ensuring maximum success of the implementation of public administration reform in the future, in the upcoming editions of the Newsletter. ■

Administrative Modernisation – A Step on the Road to the EU

EASIER WAY TO OBTAIN CERTIFIED COPIES OF VITAL RECORDS

-new legal provisions which will bring about an improvement in the quality of services for citizens-

The Draft Law on Civil Registers, prepared by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, envisages a number of provisions whose application will make it easier for citizens to obtain certified copies of their vital records.

Namely, the Draft envisages the possibility that citizens obtain certificates in any civil registers district in the Republic of Serbia, regardless of where a specific entry into a birth, marriage or death register was made. This possibility will arise from the obligation to keep an electronic second copy of civil registers, prescribed by the new Law. The data from the second copy will be stored with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and will be registered within an appropriate information system.

At the same time, citizens will no longer have to make sure that their certificates are no older than six months, as these will now have indefinite validity, all until a change occurs in the data contained in the civil register.

MODERNISATION OF WORK

The introduction of the information system will facilitate easy communication between civil registers districts and the Ministry. This way, a more balanced division of work on issuing birth certificates will also be ensured. Namely, the information system will enable easier exercise of the citizens' right to obtain certified copies of vital records, especially in cases where their records are contained in the birth register of the municipality in which they do not reside.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

Since April 24, 2008, inhabitants of the New Belgrade, Cukarica, Zvezdara and Vozdovac municipalities born on the territory of the Savski venac municipality have the possibility to obtain certified copies of vital records from the civil registers of the Savski venac municipality in the offices of their own municipalities. This has been made possible through realisation of a pilot project of the Ministry, which covers the mentioned municipalities. Minister Milan Markovic has announced the spreading of this initiative to other City municipalities, too.

With the necessary additional investments in technical equipment, it will be possible to extend the ordering of certificates via Internet and their delivery by post (which few municipalities have so far applied in practice) to the rest of municipalities which have not had the possibility to provide that type of service to their inhabitants thus far.

By the end of 2008 the Ministry will finalise its projects financed through the National Investment Plan that deal with preparation of the concept for the development of the information system for storing the second copy of civil registers and with provision of support to municipalities for procurement of the necessary technical equipment and software. In the upcoming years this concept will serve as the basis for establishing the single information system for keeping civil registers on the level of the Republic of Serbia.

PROFESSIONALISATION – NEW CONDITIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

The new Law will for the first time regulate conditions for keeping civil registers. Namely, the registrars will have to possess university diploma in social sciences, have passed a special registrars professional exam, have an authorisation for performing the registrar's duties and will have to undergo continuous vocational training. In addition to the registrars, a number of deputy registrars will operate in the civil registers districts and they will have to satisfy the same conditions as the registrars.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SERBIA

There are currently 4000 employees in Serbia who perform civil registers related duties. Most of them possess high school diploma, but there is a number of them with only elementary education or up to three grades of high school education.

It is envisaged that the Proposal for the Law on Civil Registers will enter parliamentary procedure in autumn this year, which would make this Law one of the first laws adopted by the new formation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The text of the Draft Law on Civil Registers is available on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government:

<http://www.drzavnauprava.sr.gov.yu/pages/article.php?id=808> ■

Enhancing regional cooperation

REGIONAL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – RESPA

-signature of International Agreement is expected by the end of the year providing ReSPA with legal personality-

On June 12, 2008 in Ljubljana, representatives of the members of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) signed the Letter of Intent concerning the establishment of ReSPA, thus creating the preconditions for ReSPA to enter its second phase of development.

The signatories thus reaffirmed their willingness to turn ReSPA – currently functioning as a network of institutions responsible for civil servants training – into an international organization. Negotiations are underway to agree on the text of the International Agreement, which is expected to be signed and ratified by the end of the year.

ReSPA is an initiative of great importance, commenced with the aim of assisting the Western Balkan countries in strengthening their administrative capacities and thus preparing themselves adequately for European Union membership.

ReSPA: PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

The initiative for establishing the School was conceived at the EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Thessaloniki in June 2003.

MEMBERS OF ReSPA

In May 2006, Protocol of Cooperation on the Creation of ReSPA was signed in Brussels among the authorised representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and UNMIK acting on behalf of the AP Kosovo and Metohija, in the presence of the European Commission, which marked the official start of the initiative.

The development of ReSPA is envisaged in three phases.

In its first phase, which will end this year, ReSPA is functioning as a project supported through the EU funds. Numerous training courses for public administration employees coming from throughout the region have so far been organised through this project, with the objective of improving their professional knowledge and exchanging experiences.

STEERING COMMITTEE OF ReSPA

In the current first phase, ReSPA activities are directed by the Steering Committee, whose members are representatives of ReSPA members, while a representative of the European Commission acts as its Chair. The Republic of Serbia is represented in the Steering Committee with one member coming from the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and a substitute member coming from the Serbian European Integration Office.

During the second phase, which is planned to last for three years, starting from January 1, 2009, ReSPA will evolve from the network of national institutions into an international organization, whose main role will inter alia be to serve as a training centre for civil servants in the Western Balkan region. The School will have its seat in Danilovgrad, Montenegro and its work will mainly be focused on providing short in-service training courses for civil servants.

The European Commission will support the implementation of this phase in cooperation with the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), while the signatories of the International Agreement will cover the expenses of ReSPA's functioning.

The School's functioning in the third phase will be determined at a later stage. One of the ideas is to develop ReSPA into a more complex model combining both academic education and vocational training of civil servants.

ReSPA's SIGNIFICANCE

The development of ReSPA is in line with the national public administration reform plans, as its objective is to become a regional centre for networking of schools and institutions responsible for civil servants training as well as to perform an advisory role in improving the work of national administrations. In the context of the Stabilisation and Association Process, ReSPA should become one of the mechanisms that will foster regional cooperation among its members on the road to their eventual EU accession. ■

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