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# Current Reforms in Professional Development through Training of the Public Administration in the Republic Of Macedonia

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### ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the reforms of professional development through continuous training of the public administration in the Republic of Macedonia provided with the last changes of the legislation on public administration in 2014. According to the provisions of the Law for the Public Sector, each employee within the public administration in the country has the right and the obligation to be subjected to the process of professional development and training which is considered to be the crucial determinant of his/her status within the public/state institution in which he/she works, as well as of his/her professional competence. The continuous training of the public administration should provide professional, competent, service oriented and politically neutral public administration, capable to provide full realization of all the rights and freedoms of Macedonian citizens.

### KEYWORDS

public administration, public service, professional development and training, generic trainings, specialized trainings, mentorship

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## Текущие реформы в профессиональном развитии государственных служащих республики Македония посредством их обучения и повышения квалификации

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**РЕФЕРАТ**

Работа посвящена вопросам профессионального развития государственных служащих республики Македония посредством непрерывного обучения, в соответствии с последними изменениями законодательства о государственном управлении 2014-го года. Согласно положениям Закона, каждый сотрудник органов государственного управления в стране имеет право и обязанность профессионального развития и обучения, которое считается решающим детерминантом его/ее статуса в общественном/государственном учреждении, в котором он или она работает, а также его/ее профессиональной компетентности. Непрерывное обучение государственных служащих должно обеспечить профессиональное, компетентное и политически нейтральное государственное управление, способное обеспечить полную реализацию всех прав и свобод граждан Македонии.

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА**

государственное управление, государственная служба, профессиональное развитие и обучение, родовые тренинги, специализированные тренинги, наставничество

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**Introduction**

Up to 2014 the legislation on public administration in the Republic of Macedonia provided public sector employees the right of professional development and training. However, this basic right was not supported with mandatory provisions, i. e. public administration was not obliged to participate in professional development programs and trainings as a precondition for determining the status of the employees within the public sector, their career development and promotion and their treatment in regard of the rewarding system. The Law for Civil Servants brought in 2000 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia N 59/2000) provided the possibility of professional development and training of employees in traditional state bodies, such as the ministries and the local self-government bodies, which covered 10% of the total number of employees in the public sector. According to Article 24 of the Law, civil servants had the right and duty to increase their professional capability according to the needs of the body in which they were employed. Professional development of civil servants was supposed to be realized according to the annual program brought by the concrete state body, approved by the Agency for Civil Servants in the Republic of Macedonia. Professional development programs and trainings were supposed to be financed by the State Budget, and the Government defined the way of the usage of financial means. Nevertheless, the Law did not provide any provisions on mandatory professional development and training of civil servants. Therefore, in the period from 2000–2014 the implementation of the Law did not lead to providing any financial means for training of civil servants, the state bodies did not plan the professional development of their employees and the Agency for Civil Servants did not keep any records of employees' professional development within the traditional state and the local self-government bodies.

In 2010 the new Law on Public Servants was brought (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia N 52/2010). This Law redefined the status of an employee within the public sector and except the employees in traditional state administration; it included the employees in public institutions, public services, public enterprises, funds, regulatory bodies, etc. The Law provided that public servants had the right and duty to be professionally upgraded and trained according to the needs of the institution in which they were employed. Professional development and upgrading should have been pro-

vided through Training Centers of the Agency for Civil Servants, as well as through other specialized training institutions.

However, the Law from 2010 did not bring significant improvements, which imposed the necessity of thorough reforms in this area in the country. In 2014 two new laws were brought for this purpose — the Law for the Public Sector and the Law on Administrative Officers (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia N 27/2014).

## **1. Reforms of the legislation on professional development and training of the public administration in the Republic of Macedonia**

The two new laws on public administration in the Republic of Macedonia passed in 2014 initiated a reform in the area, making professional development through training a mandatory obligation for each employee within the public sector.

The Law for the Public Sector provides that employees in the public sector have the right of continuous professional education and for this purpose public institutions are obliged to pass and adopt appropriate programs. The Law also provides the possibility to organize professional education on the languages of the minority communities in Macedonia if needed.

The Law on Administrative Officers provides a whole chapter in regard of the professional development through training of administrative officers. Administrative officers have the right and duty to be professionally educated and trained according to the individual professional development plan. They are also indulged to disseminate the acquired knowledge with other administrative officers. According to legal provisions the individual plan may contain generic, vocational or mentorship professional trainings. Generic and vocational professional trainings may be organized through class tutorials and lectures or through internet access to the electronic training management system provided on the very working post of the administrative officer.

The new legal framework also provides provisions on the administrative management of which the Ministry of Information Society and Administration is also in charge. The basic regulation on professional development and training of administrative officers will be briefly presented further in the text.

### *1.1. Legal provisions on generic, vocational and mentorship professional trainings*

**Generic professional trainings** are effectuated in order to provide professional development of administrative officers within the framework of general competences. These trainings are financed by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of Macedonia. The Ministry prepares an annual program on generic professional trainings which should be passed by the Minister until the 1st of July in the current calendar year for trainings that should begin with the start of the upcoming calendar year. The Minister prescribes the content and the form of the annual training program by passing a bylaw. Following the annual plan, the secretary or the manager in charge of a public institution which does not appoint a secretary, is due to choose at least five different trainings per employee within the institution on annual basis, as well as to put the chosen trainings in his/her individual professional development plan.

**Vocational professional trainings** are organized in order to provide professional training within the framework of special (vocational) competencies and they should be effectuated through the Academy for Administrative Officers Professional Development. They are financed from the budget of the institution that is in need of the training. The institution that is in charge of the training is obliged to certify the trained administrative officers on the successful accomplishment of the training. The mutual rights and obligations of both the institution and the administrative officers that went through the process of a vo-

ational training are regulated by a written contract which stipulates the exact date and year by which the officer could not terminate his/her employment status. If the administrative officer terminates the employment status within the institution on his own request or responsibility, than he/she has to undertake material responsibility and cover all the costs for his/her accomplished trainings. The way of organization of trainings with class tutorials and lectures or through the electronic training management system, as well as the duration and the value of trainings for which written contract is not necessary are prescribed by the Minister.

The secretary of the public institution or its manager in charge if secretary is not appointed, are obliged according to the Law to submit not only training plans, but also reports on the effectuated trainings of administrative officers. The annual training plan should be submitted at latest by the 31st of December of the current calendar year for the up-coming calendar year, on previous approval of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration. Reports on the effectuated trainings should be submitted twice a year — for the period January — June at latest by the 15th of July of the current year, and for the period July — December on the 15th of January the following year.

Professional development and training could be also effectuated through the **mentorship method**. Mentorship is a method of transferring knowledge and skills upon administrative officers on advisory or practical basis. The advisory mentorship is knowledge and skill transfer by concrete advices of the mentor given in order to provide general competences of the employee. Practical mentorship consists of monitoring the work of the administrative officer who is in the process of training, using permanent consultations and practical work. This kind of mentorship is relevant for providing vocational competences of the employee. As a mentor could be appointed an administrative officer who is engaged on a working post at higher level than the officer who works under mentorship and who has a proof of accomplished training on mentorship. The Ministry keeps a Register of Mentors which provides data on the available mentors (their names, working position and institution). The Register is published on the web-site of the Ministry. After the accomplishment of the training, both the mentor and the trained employee complete statements on the accomplishments of training through mentorship. The way of effectuating the mentorship, as well as keeping the Register of Mentors is prescribed by the Minister of Information Society and Administration.

### *1.2. Legal provisions on the administrative management*

The legislative framework also regulates the administrative management for which the Ministry of Information Society and Administration is obliged to prepare an annual training program. The Minister has to pass this program at latest by the 1st of July of the current calendar year and its realization should start with the beginning of the following calendar year. Following this annual program, the secretary or the manager in charge of a public institution that does not appoint a secretary, is due to provide an administrative management program for each administrative officer employed on a working post at the level B1 and should note it down in his/her individual professional development plan. The content and the form of this annual program are prescribed by the Minister.

Administrative officers are obliged to take an exam on the accomplishments of the administrative management training. This is a professional exam and according to the Law, it is a special precondition for promotion of administrative officers on a working post at level B. The exam is organized and effectuated by the Agency in cooperation with the Ministry at least once a week. The exam contains two parts:

- A theoretical part in a form of a computer test questionnaire through which the candidate should validate his/her knowledge on the general legal acts from the concrete administrative field;

- A practical part which consist of case studies in electronic form through which the candidate is tested on his/her capability to manage public finances and projects, as well as on his/her knowledge on the Codex of Administrative Officers.

The lot of at least 200 theoretical questions and at least 50 case studies is created by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration in cooperation with an institution of higher education in the country. The question lot and the case studies are revised at least once a year. The literature and all the legal acts upon which the questions and the case studies are created are publicly available on the webs of the Ministry and the Academy. The examination method as well as the content and the form of the certificate on the accomplishments of the exam are prescribed by the Minister of Information Society and Administration.

## **2. Bodies in charge of professional development and training of public administration in the Republic of Macedonia**

According to the Law of Administrative Officers (art. 7, pf. 2) the Ministry of Information Society and Administration is obligated to create an organizational unit in the form of an Academy for Administrative Officers Professional Development. The Academy should take care and provide professional training and development for all administrative officers.

An exception of this rule is the establishment of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors which is exclusively responsible for training of judges and prosecutors in the Republic of Macedonia. The number of these administrative officers in the country is less than a 1,000.

The Academy for Administrative Officers Professional Development however, faces much bigger challenge, as it is responsible for a total of 129,653 employees in the public administration in the country. Therefore it has to cooperate with institutions on higher education, as well as with professionals from the public sector in order to be able to meet the needs for professional development and training of all employed administrative officers, as well as those who will be employed in future.

## **3. Implementation of the new legislation on public administration in the Republic of Macedonia**

According to the legal framework, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration in the Republic of Macedonia is in charge for the generic and vocational professional trainings of administrative officers. In the period form 2015 up-to date a total of 71 different programs for generic professional trainings were adopted. Those programs are delivered either in the traditional way through a classroom lecturing or are available on-line through two different electronic systems — Micro-Learning and LMS (<http://administracija.mk/strucno-usovrsuvanje/obuki/>).

Table 1 presents titles of generic trainings effectuated in the period from 2015–2017 in traditional way of classroom lecturing.

The on-line learning is available for each employee within the public administration by entering a user name and password. Up to date about 10,000 administrative officers used some of the available on-line trainings (<http://e-obuki.mioa.gov.mk/>).

The Micro-Learning System is based upon the concept generated by the Nobel laureate Leitner. Courses are divided in small portions on learning cards, didactically grouped in units, courses and programs. The system supports different languages and enables the listener to choose if he would start the process of learning or not, as well as to follow up his own progress. The system is available through PC or on a mobile phone and it integrates all the participants in the process- listeners, trainers and managers. The number of visitors and visits is unlimited.

**Effectuated generic professional training (traditional form) for the period 2015–2017**

	Title of the training	Events	Participants	Target group
1	“No wrong door”	5	60	Central government
2	Effect (results) management	3	32	Central government
3	Strategic leadership and skills on policy creation	2	27	Central government
4	Leadership	1	12	Central government
5	Practical training on preparation of internal organization legal acts and working posts systematization	1	92	Central government
6	Anticorruptive measures and ethics within the administration	9	131	Central government
7	Administrative working	8	119	Central government
8	Trainers for mentorship	5	86	Central government
9	Mentors	4	85	Central government
10	Implementation of the Law for the Public Sector and the Law on Administrative Officers	70	700	Local self-government
11	Human Resources Management System (HRMIS)	121	1020	All
12	Using the System on Learning Management	16	171	Central government
13	European Union Fundamentals	2	31	Central government
14	Human resources management	1	19	Central/local government
15	Introduction in E –Government	5	69	Central government
16	Functional analysis	2	54	Local self-government
17	Methodology on preparation of annual plans on new employments in public sector institutions	2	70	Central/local government
	<b>Total of events and trained admin. officers</b>	257	2778	

Source: Ministry of Information Society and Administration.

The Learning Management Electronic System (LMS) is a software application that provides e-learning. It enables e-learning of certain topics on the basis “any time, everywhere”. This system registers participants for following of a certain e-topic, but it also provides possibilities for testing and certification of participants.

Table 2 provides a list of the e-topics provided in the LMS and target groups of administrative officers.

In 2017 the Ministry of Information Society and Administration introduced for the first time a vocational e-learning both through the Micro-Learning and the Learning Management System. This kind of vocational training is mandatory for promotions of all professional administrative officers ranked within the category C in order to achieve the high-

List of e-topics and target groups of the LMS generic professional trainings

	Topic title	Target group
1	Problem solving	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
2	Learning and development	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
3	Communication skills	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
4	Results accomplishment	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
5	Working with other people	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
6	Strategies and innovations	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
7	Orientation towards clients	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
8	Management and development	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
9	Change management	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
10	Policy creation and definition	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
11	Programs and policies evaluation	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)
12	New laws (the Law on Administrative Officers and the Law for the Public Sector)	Administrative officers (category B, C and D)

Source: Ministry of Information Society and Administration.

est rank within this category — C1. This kind of training is also recommended for knowledge strengthening and upgrading of the managerial staff of the public administration within the category B. The number of visits and visitors for both of the e-learning platforms is unlimited. Topics covered through this kind of vocational training derive from general legal acts, the Administrative Officers Codex, special legal acts concerning the working post; public administration effect management; project management; public finances management (<http://e-obuki.mioa.gov.mk/>).

## Conclusion

It is evident that professional development through training of the public administration in the Republic of Macedonia has been neglected in a relatively long period of time. The latest reforms of the legislation in the area brought some progress and made the process of public administration professional development and training a right, but also a mandatory obligation for all administrative officers and a key prerequisite for their professional promotion. However, real professionalism of the public service could be provided only through implementation of good practices and well established human resources management standards. The implementation of the good practices and standards in public administration development through training is possible only by establishment of a separate institution within the system that will be designed only and exclusively for this task. The implemented reforms up-to-date confirm that this task exceeds the capacity of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration in the country, which is devoted to the development and training of its employees, but cannot provide development and training of the public administration in the country as a whole. The proposal of the new Strategy on Public Administration Re-

forms for the period from 2017–2022 focuses upon the professional training of the administrative officers based on action plans that note down all the necessary planned activities, dead-lines, estimations of costs, sources of financing and indicators for measurement of the effect of future professional development and trainings. Yet, it seems that the country needs a new Law which would terminate the duties and obligations of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration in regard of professional development and training of the public administration and would create a legal framework for the establishment of a new specialized institution (academia) for this purpose.

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