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**Panel: Public Service Reform in the Post-Soviet Countries**

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Author(s) **Jahi Jahija**

Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of  
Macedonia  
Skopje Republic of North Macedonia

Title **Creating a Top Management Service in Macedonia**

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**Abstract** Professionalisation of the top management is a key determinant of organisational performance in the public sector. The creation of a Top Management Service (TMS) for the public sector in MK is aimed at strengthening the public service and contributing to the modernization of the state administration and the enhancement of good governance. According to the “Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018 – 2022”, the Government assumes “Professionalisation of senior management structures – regulation of the clear distinction between the political and professional management level”, as one of the de-politicisation measures. This is to be done by regulating transparent and competitive procedures based on merit for the selection and termination of senior public managers.

Currently, all top management positions of the State hierarchy, such as State Secretary and equivalent positions in public bodies, are not recruited and selected by open competition procedure, instead discreetly appointed by the Government; yet the nature of the job is significantly managerial and committed to the implementation of public policies. These position holders develop professional functions in the upper hierarchy, playing a key double role: advising on the design of public policies and simultaneously linking the civil service with the elected and appointed political authorities.

For these office holders, the present proposal is a new model, the TMS, based on two core values: 1) professionalism, merit selection to ensure competent professionals; 2) political responsiveness, needed to build a functional and trusting relationship between ministers and senior managers.

The model proposed is designed under the principle of two legitimacies or rationalities, democratic and technical. Since the XIX Century, this has laid the foundation for building a professional and neutral administration: the political objectives are fulfilled through the action of public servants under the leadership of a TMS that seeks effectiveness and the best use of resources in pursuit of the objectives laid down by the Government.

The proposal is to create an ambitious system but to develop and implement it progressively and prudently. Ideally, the new TMS positions should be identified in previously “rationalized” ministries and other public bodies. In this sense, a previous functional analysis providing a new organizational chart would be recommended for the ministries and institutions before filling the new TMS positions. In the case of autonomous or semi-autonomous public bodies, the lines of accountability should be defined to ensure clarification of functions and responsibilities of the new TMS positions.

The TMS system is exclusively intended for top or very high positions with clear managerial responsibilities. It is not intended for middle management or operational management positions (heads of the sector are to be probably excluded from the system, at least initially). It is also not to be used for the appointment of governing bodies, management boards and other collegial bodies as those perform governance functions and not executive management<sup>1</sup>. The positions developing political functions or providing political advice, such as heads of cabinet and advisors, are excluded from the TMS system.