

## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN SLOVENIA 2015-2020: STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION AND REFORMS IN THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the 2015, Slovenia adopted the national strategy for public administration development for the period 2015-2020. The need to do so comes from the precondition for fulfilment the European Commissions' Thematic objective 11: *Enhancing the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration*. The 11 thematic objectives are determined in the Partnership agreement for each EU member for the 2014 – 2020 period, and so for Slovenia. All member states have the commitment to contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth (Europe 2020 Strategy) in accordance with EU and national legislation.

The Slovene Public Administration Development Strategy 2015–2020 recognized the importance (1) of transfer of gained knowledge from public servants and officials to co-employees in their working environment, (2) to preserve the competences of older employees, and (3) to improve cooperation of older civil servants with experience in internal training, which will facilitate inter-generational transfer of knowledge to other employees (Strategy 2020, 78).

With a case study research, we would observe the making and realising the strategy in detail – the analyse of the strategy from different points of view would enable us to examine a lot of factors that had an impact on the strategy and would provide evidence to depicts complex, multiple factor processes and multiple perspectives.

Because public administration<sup>1</sup> requires professional and trained public servants, we would try to figure out what focus made Slovene policy to the aspect of knowledge transfer in the strategy for public administration development. We would be interested in the process that produced the strategy, how many stakeholders had the possibility to participate and in which way. Then we would analyse which aims and what reforms (with special attention to knowledge transfer) the strategy introduced in the national public administration. In the end, we would also analyse the progress made in the period from 2015 to nowadays in the knowledge management in the public administration.

### **POINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

The paper represents a review of a progress in Slovene public administration on the field of human resource management. The emphasis is on the measures of the strategy in the field of human resources management, more precisely the transfer of knowledge. We will determine which measures have been implemented and what effects they have on efficiency of human resource management in Slovene public administration. The findings may benefit the general public or individuals from the public administration working in the field of human resource management (personnel officers, head of offices, etc.) and the responsible of training programs (inside the institutions and external training provider as the Administration Academy).

### **KEY WORDS**

efficient use of resources, human resource management, knowledge transfer, public administration, Public Administration Development Strategy, stakeholders' participation.

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<sup>1</sup>The Slovene public administration comprises state administration, municipal administrations, and holders of public authority.

## 1. CAUSES AND FOUNDATIONS FOR STRATEGY PREPARATION

In the 2010, the European Commission adopted A Strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth (further on Europe 2020 Strategy) to come out stronger from the economic crisis. As derives from its name the Strategy addresses three priorities: smart (developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation), sustainable (promoting a more resource efficient, greener, and more competitive economy) and inclusive (fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion) growth (Europe 2020 Strategy, 3). This last would interest us for further research as “inclusive growth means empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection system to help people anticipate and manage change, and built a cohesive society” (Europe 2020 Strategy, 16).

Some reviews emphasized the need to make the Slovene public administration more efficient and stable in the long term. In 2012, the OECD issued a review of the operation of Slovenian public administration, which established that Slovenia’s strategy to overcome the crisis is not enough effective. It also stated that a well-functioning public administration is crucial for providing support and assistance to the Government when determining a feasible strategy to rebuild the economy and the State, for urgent long-term growth, and for the recognition and implementation of suitable measures. In 2013, the European Commission issued the Position of the Commission Services on the development of the Partnership Agreement and programmes in Slovenia for the period 2014–2020 whose prerequisites to attain thematic objective 11 include a strategy to improve administrative efficiency of Member States, including reform of public administration (Strategy 2020, 21).

In November 2012, the European Commission released the Position Paper regarding the adequacy of the development of the partnership agreement for the period 2014–2020. The Position Paper exposes the challenges based on experience of the 2007–2013 programming period. Based on the Position Paper and the country-specific recommendations of the Council, Slovenia prepared the Partnership Agreement between Slovenia and the European Commission for the period 2014–2020 (Partnership Agreement, 21).

The Partnership Agreement represents a strategic document for drawing from EU funds. It contains 11 thematic objectives. The 11<sup>th</sup> thematic objective is about enhancing the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration (Partnership Agreement, 109). The thematic objective 11 comprises two main investments areas – one of them is (1) capacity building of all stakeholders implementing policies in the field of education, lifelong learning, training, and employment, as well as (2) social affairs, including sectoral and territorial agreements for the promotion of reforms at the national, regional, and local level. The pursued goal is to *update civil service system and improved competences of public servants, particularly in the field of integrity and limitation of corruption risks, strategic management, project management and public procurement* (Partnership Agreement, 117).

Even before the crisis Europe was dealing with the accelerating demographic ageing. As the baby-boom generation retires, the EU’s active population started to shrink as from 2013/2014. The number of people aged over 60 is increasing twice as fast as it did before 2007 – by about two million every year compared to one million previously. The combination of a smaller working population and a higher share of retired people will place additional strains on Europe welfare system (Europe 2020 Strategy, 5).

Emanating from the projections of The 2018 Ageing Report, in the period 2020–2070 Slovenia would deal with big demographic challenges. The working age population (15–64) is going to fall by 8%, the share of elderly population (over 65) is going to increase by 8%, the share of older employee (aged 55–64) is going to increase by 3% from 15 to 18% (The 2018 Ageing Report, 345–347). The ageing of workforce (as stated in the ELF webinar COVID-19 Pandemic and Public Organizations on 26th November 2020) would be one of the biggest future challenges in the Slovene public sector.

Based on that reviews, European Commission recommendations, and considering public administration as a knowledge-based field (public servant are the bearer of knowledge) we could conclude that the workplaces in public administration will challenge problems of knowledge leakage (i.e., because of retirement of public servants,

and insufficient knowledge transfer). Because of that we would be interested in how the strategies and reforms that Slovenia adopted improve the knowledge transfer between public servants. That is supposed to be the contribution that the paper brings to the general understanding of the knowledge transfer in public administration.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

With a case study research, we would observe the making and realising the strategy in detail – the analyse of the strategy from different points of view would enable us to examine a lot of factors that had an impact on the strategy and would provide evidence to depict complex, multiple factor processes and multiple perspectives. We would strive to assemble an overall image of the researched issue - the making of the Slovene public administration strategy. The case study research is considered the most focused and content intensive approach (Bryman, 71) and provides a large amount of information that enable us to understand the case in its totality (Kumar, 127).

We started our research with analysing the European Commissions' documents from the programming period 2014-2020. The base of all the programming is the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, adopted in the 2010 by the European Commission (EC). It determines the priorities and defines the main targets to achieve the vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As our research focus is the knowledge transfer in the public administration, we followed the Europe 2020 Strategy's themes that emphasises this issue. In that way we reviewed the documents that lead to the acceptance of the Slovene strategic document that treats the knowledge transfer in public administration.

Doing so we reviewed the following documents:

- the *Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth*,
- the *Partnership Agreement between Slovenia and the European Commission for the period 2014-2020*,
- the Operational Programmes,
- the *Slovene Public administration 2020: public administration development strategy 2015-2020*,
- the Biennial Action Plans for the implementation of the Strategy,
- the year reports on the implementation of measures from the Biennial Action Plans,
- decision maker's documents.

With the research we would point our focus on different aspects of the Strategy: (1) the possibility of stakeholders to participate to the strategy creation (i.e., call for participation, way of cooperation, way of dealing with proposals and comments, type, and number of participant); (2) the goals that have been selected to improve the knowledge management in the public administration organizations. The cause effect relations would become more visible and develop richer, more comprehensive explanations that can capture the complexity of the strategy creation. This would (we hope) reveal how the public administration development in the 2015-2020 evolves - if there were any improvements of the knowledge transfer process between public servants.

For our research, we first analysed the EU strategic documents (as stated in the chapter *1. Introduction*). Then we continued with the analysing of the Slovene strategy of public administration. First, we checked the process of making it and then its content, where we have been interested in parts related to the knowledge transfer. After that, we analysed how the findings and targets from the Strategy were realised. We did the analyse by monitoring the reports of the biennial action plans. Doing so, we were able to determine if there were any improvement in the knowledge transfer between public servants.

In the next stage of the strategy preparation phase, we checked the publicly available documents that accompanied the formation of the Strategy. In this part, we paid attention on the possibility that different stakeholders had for participation and which comments and suggestions were considering.

After the strategy was adopted, we analysed the share of knowledge transfer in the Strategy. We did this with a detailed analysis of the Strategy structure. We also analysed the progress that the Strategy contributed to the field

of knowledge transfer – what were the implemented measures and what effects it had/has. In that phase of the research, we also checked which reforms in the field of knowledge transfer based on the Strategy.

### 3. THE PREPARATION OF THE STRATEGY – PHASES, PARTICIPANTS AND REFORMS

On 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, the Slovene Government confirmed the Public administration strategy 2015-2020. It represents the main development-strategic document for the Slovene public administration. It was prepared considering the Europa Strategy 2020, the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020, OECD reviews, Position Paper etc. The adoption of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015–2020 is important for several justified reasons, as mentioned before, as some institutions have established that there was no strategic document laying out the long-term development of Slovenian public administration (Strategy 2020, 21).

#### 3.1. Stages of the preparation of the Strategy

The preparation of the Strategy took place in stages. There were carried out several tasks by different institutions. The Slovene government had the competence to accept the Strategy. The preparation of the Strategy was of the competence of the Ministry of Interior, which appointed an inter-ministerial working group. Later in 2014, the jurisdiction has passed from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Public Administration.<sup>2</sup> The inter-ministerial working group consisting of experts of various profiles (ministers, state secretaries, directors of directorates, professors, experts, public servants from different ministry...). The inter-ministerial working group was composed of a strategic council (ministers, state secretary, and external experts) and an operational group (public servants from different state administration bodies).

The strategic council had the obligation to monitor and evaluate the work of the operational group, the confirmation of plans of Strategy exercise and the approval of annual operational reports. It had the duty to report to the government about the annual performed activities until next 15<sup>th</sup> February. The operational group participated to the preparation of the action plans, monitored the implementation of the measures, and reported to the strategic group about the implementation of measures and about the annual progress (Government decision, 2017). The following table shows the activities that have been carried out until the Strategy adoption.

Table 1: Activities performed for the adoption of the Strategy

Period	Task holder	Performed activity
September 2013	Government of the RS	appointing of the inter-ministerial working group to prepare the strategy
Dec 2013 – mar 2014	Operational group	formation of Starting points for strategy preparation and its approval at the strategic council
24 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Government of the RS	approving Starting points for the preparation of the Strategy for further development of the Slovenian public administration 2014-2020
May 2014	Operational group	call to the expert public to submit proposals for preparation of the Strategy
May 2014	Government of the RS	inter-ministerial working group for strategy preparation expanded
May and June 2014	Operational group	promotion of starting points of a strategy to obtain the opinion of stakeholders, professionals, and the general public
June 2014	Operational group	reviewing, examining, and reasonably considering the comments and proposals in the Strategy draft
June 2014	Strategic council	validating design, concept and starting points
July – September 2014	Operational group	drafting the first text (SWOT analysis and draft chapters)
Oct and Nov 2014	Operational group	upgrading the draft text
November 2014	Strategic council	approval of the first draft of the Strategy

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, nos. 24/05 – official consolidated text, 109/08, 38/10 – ZUKN, 8/12, 21/2013, 47/13 – ZDU-1G and 65/14), the Ministry of Public Administration took over the tasks regarding public administration from the Ministry of the Interior in October 2014.

December 2014 and January 2015	Inter-ministerial working group	inter-ministerial discussion, promotion, and discussion of the draft of the strategy with ministries, experts and wider public
January 2015	Strategic council	final approval of the proposed Strategy
March 2015	Government of the RS	approving of the final proposal of the Strategy and publication, information, promotion, and preparation of biennial action plans
April 2015	Inter-ministerial working group	inter-ministerial reconsideration of the proposed Strategy between ministries
April 2015	Government of the RS	final approval of the proposed Strategy

Source: Public administration 2020: public administration development strategy 2015-2020 (144-149) and own.

After the approval of the Starting points for the preparation of the Strategy for further development of the Slovenian public administration 2014-2020 there were found out that the inter-ministerial working group should be extended by ministry representatives and other state authority representatives. The creation of the Strategy started with the formation of starting points that involved the inter-ministerial working group (the operational group prepared it and the strategic council approved it) and the Government of the RS who finally confirmed it. After that, the calls to the expert and interested public started. First, there were a public call that contributed the first responses and comments on which the first draft was based. The first draft was prepared by the operational group who reviewed, examined, and reasonably considered the comments and proposals. After the validation of the design, concept and starting points by the strategic council, the operational group drafted the first and the upgraded draft. In November 2014 the first draft were approved by the strategic council and after that another important public debate took place until January 2015 (*see more in the next sub-chapter*). The strategic council approved the final proposal of the Strategy in January 2015. Finally, in March 2015 the final proposal was approved by the Government of the RS. The proposed Strategy were reconsidered once again between ministries and after the final harmonization completed, the Slovene government approved the Strategy on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

### 3.2. Stakeholders involved in the preparation of the Strategy

In the process of preparation of the Strategy, the Ministry of Public Administration wanted to maximize the participation of external stakeholders. Because of that on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2014, it was released a government document N° 010-124/2013/186. It represented a request to the interested professional and other public to provide opinions and proposals in the preparation of the Public Administration 2020: Public Administration Development Strategy 2015–2020. After reviewing the proposals, a public debate followed. It was also planned that the stakeholders' responses should be available on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration.

During the research, we could not find any collected comments or proposals published on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration. The Strategy itself named the participants in the public discussions and presentations in the period January – February 2015 (147): representatives of NGOs, trade unions representing the public sector, associations, chambers, Members of the Officials' Council, the National Assembly, Coalition deputies in the National Assembly, the State Secretary, the media, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, and State secretaries of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. When browsing the World Wide Web, we find some documents with comments and proposals of some non-governmental organisations (e.g., CNVOS, Institute for the development of an inclusive society, Confederation of Slovenian public sector trade unions):

- CNVOS, as the national non-governmental organisations umbrella network, on 28th January 2015 invited his members on a public consultation with members of the interdepartmental working group from the Ministry of Public Administration (<https://www.cnvos.si/novice/1432/020>). After the public consultation, which took place on 12th February 2015, the CNVOS members sent their comments on the Strategy.
- The Confederation of Slovenian public sector trade unions in 2015 discussed the proposal of the Strategy, sent by the Ministry of Public Administration. The Confederation agreed with the measurement for transparent operation and zero tolerance to corruption (Report KSJS, 2015).
- The Institute for the development of an inclusive society connected experts' volunteers who contributed their views to the development of the Strategy. There are no comments directly related to human resources management or knowledge transfer. Their comments relate to the organisation of public administration where is paid not enough attention to operational units of public administration such as administrative units and other

- organisational forms who are in direct contact with citizens. They warned that these units over time were becoming less and less adaptable to people's needs (IRVD, 2015).
- In June 2014, the Strategy was discussed on the strategic council of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (CCIS, 2014).

The process of drafting the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015–2020 included cooperation and acquisition of the opinions of key stakeholders in public administration in Slovenia, and expert and wider public (Strategy 2020, 21). As mentioned above, several stakeholders participated with proposals and comments. The operational group received many proposals reviewed, studied, and sensibly observed in the drafting of the contents and action plans (period from June to August 2014). From December 2014 to January 2015 took place a public discussion including inter-ministerial discussion and cooperation of experts and wider public. In April 2015 took place another inter-ministerial reconsideration of the draft Strategy.

We noted that in the period from June 2014 to April 2015 the participation was made possible for several stakeholders. The strategy makers tried to involve as many stakeholders from wider public as it was possible. Their comments were taken in account in the drafting of the Strategy. Next to the ministries who are by function involved in the preparation of policies and strategies, other experts and the interested public also had the opportunity to participate. That gives the Strategy the value in terms of participation and the possibility of co-creating public policy. We can find out that the preparation of the Strategy followed the horizontal partnership principle. In that way it was possible to involve all (or mostly of) key stakeholders, whose knowledge and expert opinions can enhance a common commitment to a good governance.

### **3.3. The importance of the knowledge transfer in the Strategy**

The Slovene Public administration 2020: public administration development strategy 2015-2020 (further on Strategy 2020) represents a basic strategic framework, concept, and direction for the public administration development. From the government document N°01000-2/2014/6, derived that the human resource management in public administration is one of the priorities in program and strategic documents that define the further development of the country as a whole (2014, 2). Because of that, it is necessary to provide appropriate normative bases and systemic solutions, which will enable legally correct and efficient implementation of labour law and other personnel procedures. This is crucial for organizational, public financial and substantive changes in public administration, so that work performance will be rewarded, and motivation to achieve goals will be the basic guideline in dealing with civil servants (summarized after Drafting a concept paper on the organizational structure of the executive public administration, SIGMA, 2008).

The Strategy, among other, pointed out also some targets and measures that would lead to an efficient use of resources. The resources that the Strategy 2020 treats are human resources, the simplification of the public procurement system and the economic management of real property. For the HRM field, the Strategy define a strategic objective for “flexible management of employees using mechanisms of responsibility, and the upgrading of the salary system with motivation mechanisms” (Strategy 2020, 67). The objective should be achieved through measures in the field of competence, the system of civil servants and salary system (Strategy 2020, 67). These measures target better civil servant system, professional administrative management, and the development of the HRM function (Strategy 2020, 67).

The 2014 situation in the field of HRM, based on the findings in the Strategy, shows two existing tools of the HRM: (1) the annual interviews with civil servants (this one should be improved because does not consider career opportunities or employees’ potential emanating from competence profiles), and (2) a special open competition (Strategy 2020, 68). The detected priorities in the field of HRM are:

(1) demographic characteristic of employees (the share of employees younger than 30 has been significantly declining in Slovenian public administration due to limited employment; the generation gap may produce negative effects in the transfer of knowledge and taking leadership positions);

(2) a computerised database of personnel records of state administration (additional functionalities of the personnel IT system that will facilitate the preparation of modern personnel analyses, simulations and statistical reports must be ensured);

(3) the Civil Servants Act (it follows European standards for the civil servant system and comprises institutions comparable to EU institution) (Strategy 2020, 68-69).

The system of civil servants was rated (before 2015) as unsatisfactory by individual state authorities (i.e., Public Sector Inspectorate, Complaint Commission, Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia, Human Rights Ombudsman, and Officials' Council), administrations of local communities, OECD, and SIGMA (assessing the performance and remuneration of civil servants; establishing disciplinary responsibility; verifying the knowledge of civil servants; job security and the possibility of dismissing senior officials upon a new government taking office) (Strategy 2020, 72). The identified shortcomings are vague and rigid legislation without facilitating problem solving in practice within the available financial and human resources; limited options for transfers for the rational use of existing human resource capacities to perform tasks; vague definition of responsibilities and competences of highest officials; insufficient regulation of legal bases for organising work and devising job classifications (determining conditions for filling posts, etc.); insufficient regulation of competences and possible actions of inspectors for the civil servant system (Strategy 2020, 70).

### 3.4. The reforms in public administration in the field of knowledge transfer

The Slovene Public administration 2020: public administration development strategy 2015-2020 recognised the influence of the limited resources (public servants, public procurement, real estate) to the Slovene public administration and the impact of their effective use on the stability of the public administration and quality of public services (Action Plan 2016, 6).

The Strategy contains 10 strategic targets. Three of them relate to the field of human resources (1) efficient use of human, financial, spatial, and environmental and energy resources; (2) professionalization and development of professional skills and innovation of employees; (3) a system of flexible treatment of employees with accountability mechanisms and an upgrade of the salary system with motivational mechanisms (Action Plan 2016, 3).

The three targets for an efficient use of resources (human resources, public procurement, and real estate) were divided into sub-targets. Within the efficient use of human resources, the targets and sub-targets in the Strategy are sorted as follows:

- target 2.1. Improving of the human resource management (competencies, civil servant, and salary system),
- sub-target 2.1.1. Enhancing the competence of civil servants.

Measures in the system of civil servants targets the renovation and improvement of the system, professional administrative management, and the development of HRM function. Within the human resource management development, one of the most important aspect is the enhancing of the competence of civil servants. It is focused in creating conditions for implementing a systematic training of the civil servants that would set a base to achieve other strategic targets.

In the table below, we present the documents adopted based on the Strategy. On 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015, The Slovene government adopted the first Biennial action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2015-2016. The operational group had the task to report to the government about the performed activities by the end of March for every calendar year. There were adopted three biennial action plans – in 2015, 2016 and 2018.

Table 2: Documents adopted based on the Strategy

Period	2015-2016	2016-2017	2018-2019
<b>Biennial plan</b>	Two-year action plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-	Two-year action plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 for the years 2016-2017	Action plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 for 2018 and 2019

	2020 for the period 2015-2016				
<b>Responsible</b>	Government of the RS				
<b>Date of acceptance (N° of the document)</b>	29. 7. 2015 (01000-2/2015/13)	2. 6. 2016 (01000-2/2016/9)		19. 4. 2018 (01000-3/2018/10)	
<b>Implementation report</b>	Report on the implementation of measures as at 31 December 2015	Report on the implementation of measures as at 31 December 2016	Annual report on the implementation of measures from the Biennial Action Plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 for 2016 and 2017. Situation as at 31 December 2017	Annual report on the implementation of measures from the Action Plan for the implementation of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 for 2018 and 2019. Situation as at 31 December 2018	Annual report on the implementation of the measures of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 in 2020. Situation as at 31 December 2020
<b>Responsible</b>	Ministry of public administration	Government of the RS			
<b>Date of acceptance (N° of the document)</b>	1. 2. 2016 (010-66/2016/2)	10. 2. 2017 (007-242/2016/23)	14. 2. 2018 (010-378/2017/38)	9. 9. 2019 (010-48/2019-74)	2. 7. 2021 (010-48/2019-122)

Source: summarized after the Strategy.

Every action plane defined the targets/sub targets with short content descriptions, expected results, measures, indicators, target values and the holders, deadlines, and the financial resources. We would analyze which measures were determined and which of them were fulfilled by the end of 2020. We will do it by checking the three biennial action plans and the four reports for each year. Our attention will be focused on the improvement of the knowledge transfer. Links to this are not direct, so we will look for them in HRM measures. There are 13 measures related to the HRM – as written before there are measures targeting the improving of the human resource management (competencies, civil servant, and salary system) and enhancing the competence of civil servants.

***A review of the measures taken in the light of the objectives on the human resource management:***

**Target I: Improving of the human resource management** (five measures for its improving):

***Measure 1 (2.1): Amendments to regulations on the civil servant and salary systems***

*Expected results:* Efficient personnel procedures

*Indicator:* Number of amendments carried out (amendments, improvements, and simplifications) to the civil servant and salary systems

*Target value for 2020:* at least five amendments

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration

*State of realization:* unfulfilled

*Comment:* There is no direct impact to the improvement of knowledge transfer. The measure is focused on the normative aspect of the human resource management – the amendments of the Public Sector Salary System Act. The measure was not implemented as the government and the social partners accepted the Agreement on measures for labour costs and other measures in the public sector which stopped the legislative procedure until the social partners give consent to its continuation.

***Measure 2 (2.1): Establishment of a unified competency model***

*Expected results:* Recognise/analyse competences of civil servants



*Indicator:* Number of posts with the established competency model

*Target value for 2020:* at least 80%

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration

*State of realization:* fulfilled

*Comment:* It enables a management of skills, knowledge, and abilities of civil servants. Once recognized, the knowledge could be transferred from its owner to the employee that need it. It is crucial to recognize the needed knowledge and the source of it and find a proper way to transfer it. The tool such a unified competency model could be of great help in managing the knowledge transfer.

**Measure 3 (2.1): Upgrading of the IT system for human resource management**

*Expected results:* Recognise/analyse competences of civil servants

*Indicator:* Number of new functionalities/types of tools provided by the upgraded IT system

*Target value for 2020:* at least three new functionalities

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration

*State of realization:* partially fulfilled

*Comment:* Due to the protection of the personal data the functionalities weren't implemented in the IT system. The new functionalities were offered individually to organisations in public administration and would not be connected with other information systems.

**Measure 4 (2.1): Simplification of procedures for establishing performance and promotion**

*Expected results:* Better connection between work performance and remuneration

*Indicator:* Share of employees whose salary increased due to above-average performance AND Average ratio between the fixed and variable part of salaries in the public sector

*Target value for 2020:* Up to 20% of employees AND Increase in comparison with the period prior to the introduction of amendments

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration

*State of realization:* unfulfilled

*Comment:* Possibly effects to the knowledge transfer improvement as remuneration of e.g., mentoring, could fastened the process of knowledge transfer.

**Measure 5 (2.1): Better normative regulation of competences and measures of inspectors in this field**

*Expected results:* Efficient supervision over the civil servant and salary systems

*Indicator:* Number of justified complaints, reports, and applications by civil servants in inspections

*Target value for 2020:* by 10% less

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration

*State of realization:* unfulfilled (no data available)

*Comment:* No direct connection to the improvement of the knowledge transfer process.

**Target II: Enhancing the competence of civil servants** (eight measures for its enhancing)

**Measure 1 (2.1.1): Preparation of a methodology to determine the needs for training and preparation of training plans by bodies based on the competence analysis of employees**

*Expected results:* Upgrade knowledge of civil servants and strengthened internal training

*Indicator:* Share of bodies which have adopted an annual training plan which especially emphasises the needs for horizontal training at the Administration Academy

*Target value for 2020:* 100%

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration

*State of realization:* unfulfilled (no data available)

*Comment:* It could have a big impact on the knowledge transfer process as it based on concrete needs for training. It could possibly encourage a great number of approaches for transferring knowledge between employees of same or different age.

**Measure 2 (2.1.1): Enhancement of training based on plans of administrative bodies**

*Expected results:* Strengthening of the internal training

*Indicator:* Average number of training days per civil servant per year

*Target value for 2020:* five training days per civil servant per year

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* partially fulfilled

*Comment:* Possibly great impact on the knowledge transfer between employees as gained knowledge (mostly acquired during the Administration Academy) could be shared between employees in a way like internal trainings. As at 31 December 2017, the Administration Academy's report found that the number of participants from 2015 was increasing (in 2015, 7,824 participants attended the trainings, in 2016 there were 10,335, and in 2017 11,034); in the following years, the implementation of the measure was determined on the basis of the number of participants in trainings (according to state authorities, a total of 48,554 participants were trained in 2018, in 2019 there were 50,239, which is a 10.6% increase).

**Measure 3 (2.1.1): Enhancement of training in key fields (public procurement, HRM, digital competences, integrity and corruption prevention, better legislation, quality systems in public administration, inspection, project management, etc.)**

*Expected results:* Strengthening of the internal training

*Indicator:* Share of participants at training in key fields

*Target value for 2020:* + 30%

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* fulfilled

*Comment:* The share of participants in trainings in key areas in relation to all conducted trainings of the Administrative Academy in 2020 was 39.6%. Also, these measures could have a great impact on the knowledge transfer. As mentioned before, gained knowledge from the training could be shared from the participant to other employees during internal trainings.

**Measure 4 (2.1.1): Increase in the number of qualified internal training providers**

*Expected results:* Strengthening of the internal training

*Indicator:* Number of qualified lecturers

*Target value for 2020:* 100%

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* partially fulfilled

*Comment:* The share of providers who participated in group and, above all, individual training for distance implementation in 2020 is high and amounts to 69%. Possibly great impact of this measure on the knowledge transfer, especially if training providers have also a practical knowledge of a specific issue. The practical knowledge is an added value to the theoretical knowledge.

**Measure 5\* (2.1.1): Preparation of training evaluation methodology**

*Expected results:* Upgrade knowledge of civil servants and strengthened internal training

*Indicator:* Number of adopted methodologies

*Target value for 2020:* one adopted methodology

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* fulfilled

*Comment:* There was established a uniform method of measuring the responses of participants in trainings (a survey in e-format), a method of data processing to obtain appropriate analyses related to the program, the contractor, the organization of training. The methodology for evaluating trainings at the Academy of Management was adopted on 30 August 2018.

**Measure 6\* (2.1.1): Preparation of new training programs**

*Expected results:* Upgrade knowledge of civil servants and strengthened internal training

*Indicator:* Number of new training programs

*Target value for 2020:* 50 new programs

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* partially fulfilled

*Comment:* At the end of 2020, there is 57 new and renewed training programs.

*Measure 7\* (2.1.1): Preparation of e-materials and e-trainings* (the measure was introduced in 2018)

*Expected results:* Upgrade knowledge of civil servants and strengthened internal training

*Indicator:* Number of e-material and e-trainings

*Target value for 2020:* 30 e-learning materials

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* partially fulfilled

*Comment:* By the end of 2020, a total of 31 e-materials had been prepared within the e-learning environment of the Administrative Academy.

*Measure 8\* (2.1.1): Building an information system to support the implementation of training and professional exams*

*Expected results:* Upgrade knowledge of civil servants and strengthened internal training

*Indicator:* Number of established information systems

*Target value for 2020:* established information system with which the Administrative Academy will acquire an e-learning environment, a renewed website and computerization of most processes (including e-application)

*Leader:* Ministry of public administration and other bodies

*State of realization:* partially fulfilled

*Comment:* An information system to support the implementation of training has been established, and it is planned to establish a support for professional exams, which requires the regulation of the legal basis in the Public Employees Act.

\* measures marked with an asterisk were introduced later (not included in the Strategy) with the biennial action plans.

### 3.4. The effect of the reforms on the performance of public administration in the field of knowledge transfer

Based on the measures from the Strategy, we can state that some reforms took place in the Slovene public administration. Those that have been completed are the:

- Establishment of a unified competency model,
- Enhancement of training in key fields (public procurement, HRM, digital competences, integrity and corruption prevention, better legislation, quality systems in public administration, inspection, project management, etc.),
- Preparation of training evaluation methodology,
- Preparation of new training programs,
- Preparation of e-materials and e-trainings.

We are talking about 5 fulfilled measures out of a total of 13 (38% realization). On the other hand, there are four unfulfilled measures:

- Amendment to regulations on the civil servant and salary system,
- Better normative regulation of competences and measures of inspectors in this field,
- Simplification of procedures for establishing performance and promotion,
- Preparation of a methodology to determine the needs for training and preparation of training plans.

For two measures (Better normative regulation of competences and measures of inspectors in this field, and Preparation of a methodology to determine the needs of training) there are no available data of their realization in the annual reports or in the final report. Those measures were not included in the biennial action plans although they were set out in the Strategy. For the other two unfulfilled measures the implementation was stopped as the realization depends on the agreement between the government and social partners. As the social partners did not

agree with the proposed change of the law in the civil service field, the negotiations were stopped until they reach an agreement. The other four measures have been partially implemented.

The greatest achievement is undoubtedly the unified competency model which would contribute to the professionalisation and enhancing the competence of civil servants. This achievement is of a great importance for the main target of the improving of the human resource management. The concrete results would be noticeable over time, but the acquired tools (such a catalogue of competencies, assessment manuals, methodology documents) already represent a solid foundation for the HRM improvement in public administration.

Some other fulfilled (and partially fulfilled) measures represent the reforms in the field of training carried out by the Administration Academy. In the past five years there was a significant progress in its performance. Six measures from the Strategy were aimed to improve its functioning, where four of them were fulfilled (Enhancement of training in key fields, Preparation of training evaluation methodology, Preparation of new training programs, and Preparation of e-materials and e-trainings) two of them were fulfilled partially (Increase in the number of qualified internal training providers and Building an information system to support the implementation of training and professional exams). This could be seen in its performance as there was established the information system to support the implementation of trainings in the e-learning environment. This one includes a support in the application process, the training calls with a list of participants automatically created, and the automatization of final reports and issuing of certificates of attendance. The renewed website allows to follow the training catalogue, access to e-materials and video guides and excerpts from e-trainings. This upgrade of the Administration Academy's information system enables greater access to knowledge to a wider circle of public administration employees. There were also 57 new or renewed training programs and a significant increase of the number of qualified internal training providers (increase of 69%). An evaluation methodology was also developed to ensure continuous improvement. With an e-survey the Administration Academy collects data and suggestions from participants which contributes to the training improvement. In the 2020 the Administration Academy made another big step in its performance as it was able in few months to move to e-learning because of the Covid 19 restrictions. Mostly of its training programs (except the professional exams) was accessible in an e-learning environment (on-line).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

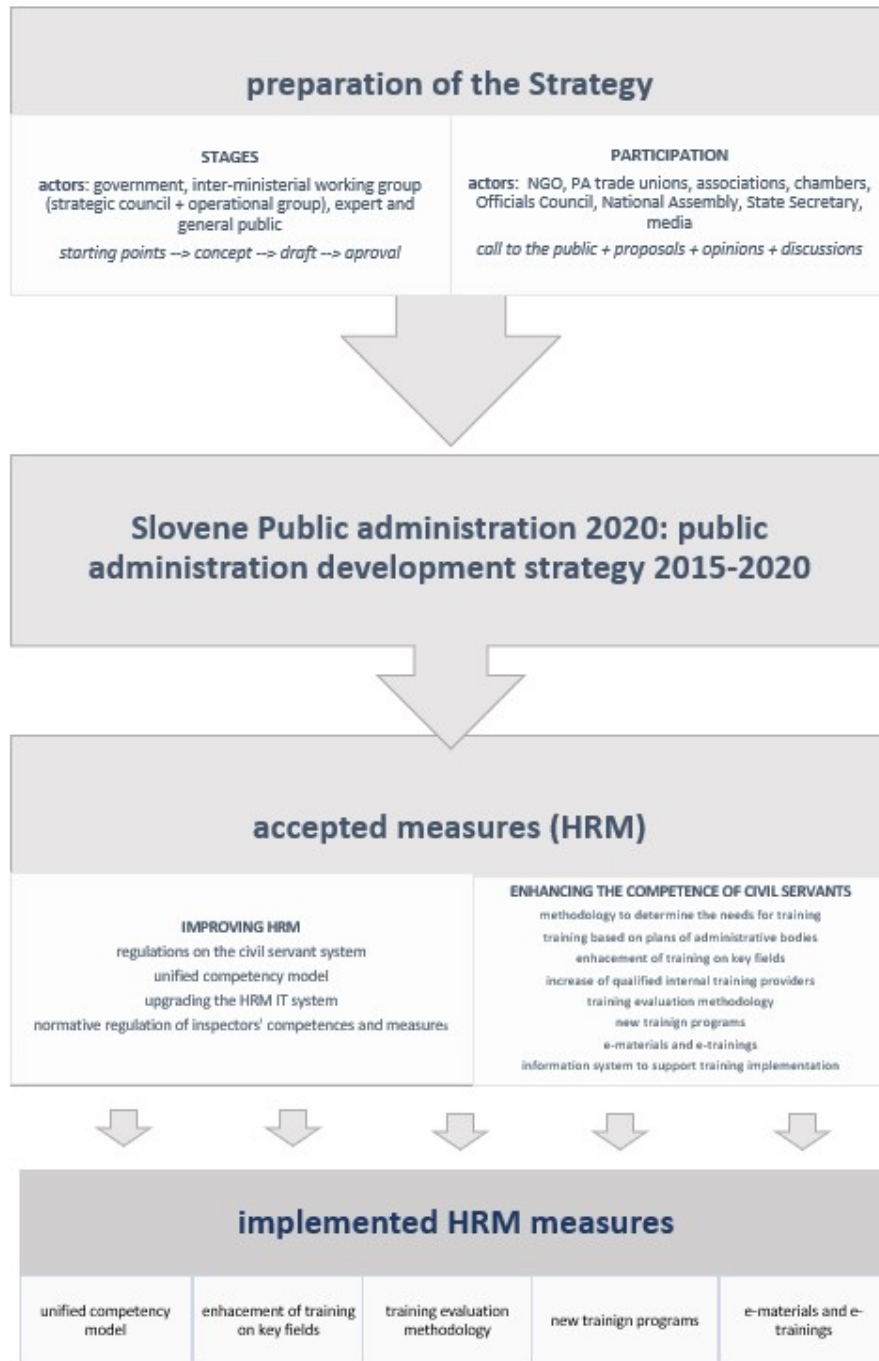
Analysing the document regarding the development of the Slovene public administration we can see that first steps were taken toward modern public administration. The general impression is that many taken measures contributed to a more responsive public administration. Checking the aspects listed at the beginning of the paper we could say that effort has been indeed put in the public administration processes. The aspect of knowledge that interested us was recognized as crucial. And progress has been made also in this area. However, not much attention has been paid to knowledge transfer, much less to knowledge transfer between generations. Going precisely through single aspects that interest us we could find out the achieved improvements.

The Strategy gave a sufficient emphasis on knowledge transfer in Slovene public administration as it was recognised as one of the tools that would help to the renewal and modernisation of Slovene public administration by the excellence of a professional, efficient, and professional public service (Strategy 2020, 74). There was determined also a target state that:

- includes the duty of stakeholders to raising the awareness of all civil servants that knowledge is a value and that should be transferred between employees;
- notes that competences of older employees should be preserved with regular training;
- encourages better cooperation of older civil servants with experience in internal training for facilitate intergenerational transfer of knowledge to other employees;
- promotes on-the-job learning and training.

Based on that findings there were prepared measures to improve human resource management and to enhance the competence of civil servants (presented in chapter 3.4). But none of the measures directly addressed the knowledge transfer.

Figure 1: Process of the Strategy preparation and implementation of the reforms



Source: own.

The process of Strategy making begun in 2010 as the European Commission started with a realising of the European priorities from the Europe 2020 Strategy. Based on the Europe 2020 Strategy all members states have the duty to contribute to the Union smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The process went through different

phases (from the preparation of the partnership agreements, through operational programs, and finally to the national strategies). Once the Partnership Agreement in 2014 was adopted, the concrete strategies for different areas were adopted at national level. For the Slovene public administration, it was adopted the Slovene Public administration 2020: public administration development strategy 2015-2020. The preparation process at national level (chapter 3.1) took place under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of public administration which appointed an inter-ministerial work group consisting of experts of various profiles. There were performed various activity till the final approval of the Strategy as formatting and approval of Starting points, calls to the expert public to submit proposals, draft texts, harmonization of the draft and the final approval.

The making of the Strategy involved a wide circle of stakeholders (presented in chapter 3.2). They were invited by public calls and had the possibility to cooperate to the creation of the Strategy through various discussions. Also, a broader view of the Strategy making – from the first requests originating in the European Commission’s documents to the final national strategic document (the Strategy) – shows that participation at all stages has been made possible for the general and expert public. And stakeholders indeed took the opportunity to cooperate.

The Strategy includes a variety of measures for different fields of public administration operations. In chapter 3.4 are presented the targets and reforms in Slovene public administration from the knowledge management point of view. As previously established the Strategy gave major emphasis to a broadly set measures. That means that measures tried to improve the human resource management in general, not specifically directed to the improvement of knowledge transfer. Nevertheless, mostly of the taken measures were realised, either in whole or in part. Only four of 13 measures from the human resource management were not realised.

The improvement in the human resource management is noticeable on the field of competence of civil servants as the unified competency model was prepared. The functioning of the Administration Academy has also been strengthened and improved. This is evident in its offer and implementation of (new and renewed) training programs and from the renewed information support system. The improvement is noticeable in the offer and implementation of trainings, and less or almost nothing in the strengthening of knowledge transfer between civil servants.

As we take a position that the knowledge transfer is crucial for an effective future performance of the public administration, our suggestion is to pay more attention in further strategies also on this aspect. As the Strategy already determined a measure of the upgrading of the knowledge of civil servants and of the strengthening of internal training is a pity, that this measure was “forgotten” in some way through the realizing of the Strategy. This measure in itself represents the right way to obtain practices customized to the need of singular administrative body. With the methodology which enable to determine the needs for training and preparation of training plans by bodies it could be possible to carry out training focused on the specific needs of each institution and targeted at the transfer of knowledge. This last would be crucial in the future period as the age mismatch between civil servants could represent a serious challenge.

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