

**So important a profession would attract into its ranks the ablest and most ambitious..'  
Recruitment, selection, appointment and the development of top civil servants from a  
comparative European perspective**

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**Abstract:** The institutional model and practices used to select and appoint senior officials are key elements in defining the character of a civil service system. They represent an architecture for public service employment traditionally built around the idea of a system distinct from the private sector and justified in terms of good governance values for the wider society. The recruitment architecture is influenced both by developments to modernise and reform public administration and by the cultural-political influences of tradition. This is reflected in open or closed merit-based recruitment systems for the most senior officials and in varying degrees of politicised appointments in national settings. This paper surveys the legal frameworks and practices used in the recruitment, selection, and appointment of top civil servants in a variety of European settings, including Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Romania, and Slovakia. We will explore how the recruitment approaches employed aim to select the best-suited candidates with the appropriate competencies to ‘rise to distinction and public eminence’.