

CAPACITY BUILDING OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN KOSOVO

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Abstract

Efficient civil service remains the cornerstone for the overall social development of a country. This is of enormous importance for transitional societies facing many challenges that hinder administrative institutions development towards accountability and transparency. In Kosovo context, the capacity of civil servants to develop and implement public policies plays an essential role in determining the results of reforms and progress towards achieving certain institutional objectives. Consequently, the performance of the public administration in general depends mainly on the skills and professional capacities of civil servants. Kosovo Institute for Public Administration is an executive agency established with the purpose of enhancing the skills of civil servants through specially designed training programs. Nevertheless, professionalism remains one of the biggest challenges for the civil service in Kosovo, which is failing to fulfill its function to the extent required by legal provisions. This paper analyzes the efforts undertaken in Kosovo to increase the professional capacity of civil servants through thematic training programs. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, qualitative, quantitative, normative and comparative methods have been used to reveal the legal obligations of increasing the skills of civil servants by comparing it with the established practices.

Keywords: public administration, civil service, professional training, public policy, performance.

JEL Classification: K23

1. Introduction

The public administration is essential apparatus that carries the responsibility of functioning of state institutions and interaction between citizens and the state. Public administration is the most important provider of public services to their citizens and its performance is closely interlinked with the fulfillment of basic rights of citizens. Consequently, the State should establish a professional public administration, sustainable and politically impartial to ensure democratic governance. Functionality of Civil Service in countries in transition is essential to restore effective democratic governance. The reforms have always begun with civil service in order to ensure its professional capacity increase. Thus, the degree of difficulties within countries in transition grows further, due to the difficulties to preserve the stability and political unity of the country and thereby the civil service falls to the bottom of the priorities. Consequently, the public administration becomes overcrowded, inefficient and incompetent to provide public services and implement policies.

Professional and efficient public administration is an important tool of state-oriented social development. This is precisely the target to be achieved through the Law on State Administration in Kosovo, the Law on Civil Service and a series of laws in the field of administrative activities with the ultimate goal of creating an administrative apparatus based on merit, professionalism, consistency and efficiency. *However, the current situation in Kosovo is characterized by powerful political influence in the recruitment of civil servants, with an inadequate and non-standardized training and assessment system which hinders the new administration to function based on meritocracy and professionalism. Rather than having the civil service as a catalyst of social development, it has become an obstacle because of the lack of professionalism.*

The general training courses remain the basis of civil service training in the Western Balkan countries and these activities continue since a while. Civil servants in countries such as Kosovo continue to receiving basic training in order to become familiar with the new legal framework of the politico-administrative system. Moreover, the transposition and implementation of EU policies requires that civil servants continuously update their knowledge of the body of law in their

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country.³

On the other hand, despite the strategy for modernization of public administration (2015-2020), the Government has continued to reduce the budget for the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration. Consequently, programs and trainings for civil servants failed to improve to the level targeted by the national strategy for the modernization of public administration.

This paper discusses the need to establish a functional and sustainable training system as a factor in the development of the civil service. The analysis examines the current mechanism and options for building a sustainable system which will affect a better performance of the country's institutions. The reason why this research was initiated comes from the fact that the training system of civil servants in Kosovo so far is barely functional. The research might give a valuable contribution at a time when discussions are taking place to determine a more precise direction for the future of the civil service and its further development.

Furthermore, by analyzing one of the challenges of the civil service, which has to do with professional capacity building as a precondition for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the public administration in general, comparative approach enabled us to learn the lessons from other contexts in Southeast Europe. Some of these countries have achieved significant progress in reforming and professionalizing the civil service, while some have noted stagnation. Thus, based on the comparative approach, it has been possible to identify potential solutions that could be easily applicable in the case of Kosovo, taking into account the aspect of adaptation to the prevailing circumstances in Kosovo as well.

2. The rights and obligations of civil servants in Kosovo

The rights and obligations of civil servants are an important component of human resource management within the administrative apparatus. Also, the rights and obligations of civil servants play an important role in the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. After 1999, with the consolidation of the international administration in Kosovo, the first regulations were drafted regarding the code of conduct for civil servants, salaries, leave, etc. However, the issue of training of civil servants has been treated as a not mandatory issue.⁴ Later on, with the supplementary legislation of 2006-2007, the issue of training of civil servants was given greater importance, culminating with the civil service law of 2010.

Thus, the rights of civil servants in Kosovo are guaranteed by the Law on Civil Service and include the right to a salary, the right to hold a job and maintain an equivalent position, the right of association, the exercise of political rights, the right to strike, the right to participate and be represented in the civil service management bodies and the right to appeal. Thus, civil servants enjoy the right to equal treatment in all aspects of personnel management, including career, remuneration, compensation and legal protection. Furthermore, it is the duty of the public administration to eliminate all administrative barriers, which restrict the freedoms and equality of civil servants and which hinder their professional development. Civil servants have the right to be encouraged and supported in their career advancement and professional development through training and other means as well.⁵

Civil servants receive salaries which are regulated by a special law through the established salary system. The law guarantees the protection of civil servants against any unreasonable or unnecessary removal from their workplace. Furthermore, civil servants have the right, but are not obliged, to form and join a political party, association, private non-governmental organization, trade union or professional association, which works to achieve the objectives and which are in

³ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Civil service professionalization in the Western Balkans - SIGMA paper No. 48", page 62. Available online at: [5k4c42jrmp35-en.pdf](https://oecd-ilibrary.org/5k4c42jrmp35-en.pdf) (oecd-ilibrary.org) [Accessed on May 3, 2021].

⁴ Section 13 of Administrative Direction 2003/2 on implementing the Regulation No. 2001/36 on the Civil Service of Kosovo, United Nation Interim Administration of Kosovo, 25 January 2003. Available online at: https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/regulations/02english/E2003ads/ADE2003_02.pdf [Accessed May 03, 2021].

⁵ Article 43 of the Law No. 03/L-149 on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo (Official Gazette of Republic of Kosovo, No. 72/2010). Available online at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2679> [Accessed May 03, 2021].

compliance with the existing legislation on public order, provided that this position is not in conflict of interest with the duties assigned to the civil servant. After taking office and at all levels of the functional hierarchy, civil servants have the right to retain the political rights to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal or central elections. However, the career of the civil servant will not be affected by the attitudes expressed during the election campaign or the election result. Being a candidate in local or central elections, civil servants have the right to be dismissed, free of charge, during the duration of the election campaign.⁶ Civil servants have the right to strike in accordance with the law but there are also conditions for restricting the strike in special civil service services which are defined by regulations issued by the Government of Kosovo.⁷

In some areas of civil service, such as domestic security service, water supply maintenance service, electricity supply maintenance service, air traffic control service, fire protection service, prison services, veterinary and sanitary services, diplomatic services and telecommunication services, the organization of strikes is prohibited in which case civil servants must perform special services which are necessary for the minimum functioning of the administration. Employees, who are obliged to ensure the minimum functioning of the work process, can express dissatisfaction through a statement or other alternative forms.⁸ Civil servants have the right to appeal against administrative decisions affecting and relating to their employment relationship and in case of violation of their rights, civil servants have the right to protection through internal administrative or judicial proceedings.⁹

The Law on Civil Service has also foreseen the obligations that civil servants have: the obligation not to abuse authority, the obligation to refuse illegal rewards, the obligation to inform and justify administrative actions, the obligation for secrecy and respect for privacy, the obligation to facilitate and expedite administrative procedures, etc. In the exercise of their activity, civil servants must be determined in the implementation of legality and protection of the public interest by making decisions within their competencies expressly defined by applicable laws and regulations. Civil servants are not allowed to use their position to force a third party or their subordinates to perform work, make concessions or take illegal measures. For any violation of this rule, civil servants will be subject to administrative disciplinary measures and criminal prosecution.

Civil servants are prohibited from soliciting and accepting from other parties any gifts, monetary rewards, favors and special treatment. Gifts that can be accepted may be symbolic without any significant value and in accordance with anti-corruption law. In addition, civil servants should provide the public, stakeholders and public institutions with all the information and guidance needed to complete timely, orderly, efficient and effective administrative procedures by providing valid justifications for actions and decisions obtained during the exercise of administrative activity. While carrying out their duties, civil servants must protect confidential information intended for internal use and not disclose it to the general public. They must also respect the right to privacy by not interfering in the private lives of individuals and organizations by prohibiting any benefit from knowledge and secrets intended for internal use. Civil servants have an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of information held but without prejudice to the public's right of access to official documents.¹⁰

Administrative procedures within the civil service must be fast, efficient, effective and economical. Therefore, civil servants should avoid any complication of procedures by assisting citizens in completing the formalities and should avoid any situations that may harm the interests of the administration, individuals or groups of citizens. Within the civil service, high standards of

⁶ Article 44-47 of the Law No. 03/L-149 on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo.

⁷ Regulation 30/2012 on conditions for restrictions on the right to strike in specific services in civil service was approved on 107 meeting of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo with the decision no. 07/107, date 07.12.2012. Available online at: RREGULLORE_NR_302012_PER_KUSHTET_E_KUFIZIMIT_TE_SE_DREJTES_PER_GREVE_NE_SHERBIME_TE_VECANTA_NE_SHERBIMIN_CIVIL.pdf (kryeministri-ks.net) [Accessed May 04, 2021].

⁸ Article 4 and 6 of the Regulation 30/2012 on conditions for restrictions on the right to strike in specific services in civil service. Available online at: RREGULLORE_Nr_302012_PER_KUSHTET_E_KUFIZIMIT_TE_SE_DREJTES_PER_GREVE_NE_SHERBIME_TE_VECANTA_NE_SHERBIMIN_CIVIL.pdf (kryeministri-ks.net) [Accessed May 04, 2021].

⁹ Article 48 and 50 of the Law No. 03/L-149 on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo.

¹⁰ Article 52, 53, 54, 55 and 56 of the Law No. 03/L-149 on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo.

professional work must be applied, which are provided by various trainings in favor of increasing the efficiency of the state administration. Civil servants must carefully manage public property and are not allowed to use it, personal gain or illegal activities. Furthermore, civil servants are obliged to comply with legislation and service orders. While implementing mandatory administrative measures, cannot exercise discretionary powers but must act as defined by law. Any deviation from this obligation is sanctioned with appropriate disciplinary measures. Civil servants should not carry out orders to commit an act contrary to the law or outside their mandate and consequently the execution of such orders should be refused.¹¹

With the adoption of new legal acts regulating the work of the civil service in Kosovo, the issue of training and capacity building of civil servants becomes a right but also an obligation of civil servants. Namely, all Civil Servants are eligible for and also required to upgrade and enhance their professional capacity through training in the Civil Service. Civil Servants may also be authorized to attend, outside the Civil Service, specialized educational programmes, for their professional development, as long as relevant for the Civil Service of Kosovo. Civil Servants' participation in capacity building events planned and delivered within the Civil Service shall be treated as equivalent to performing professional duties and supervisors are responsible to facilitate and support participation of their subordinates. Participation in capacity building events becomes mandatory for all Civil Servants.¹²

Overall, civil servants express an ongoing willingness to increase their professional skills, but this right is often neglected and considered a waste of time by senior management. During a survey conducted with civil servants in 6 municipalities of Kosovo, about 58% of them stated that they have not undergone any professional training despite 42% who have been trained in various fields.¹³

Moreover, from the qualitative method (semi-structured interviews), it is understood that training of civil servants is at the discretion of superiors who usually prefer certain groups of employees who constantly participate in diverse training modules. As per legal provisions, professional development is a right of employees and an obligation of public institutions. This is not being appropriately considered within administrative apparatus in Kosovo. The issue of training for civil servants is considered more as a reward and favor for certain employees, without any prior assessment of the institutional needs for relevant training. It often happens that a civil servant with legal profile is sent to technical training related to financial auditing, or even an economist to attend training in the implementation of the provisions of the Law on General Administrative Procedure.

3. Civil service training system in Kosovo

Professional and efficient public administration remains the foundation for the economic and political development of a country. For Kosovo, as a country aiming at integration into various international organizations, the capacity of the public administration to develop and implement policies plays an essential role in determining the results of reforms and progress towards fulfillment of objectives set. Public administration in Kosovo continues to be overcrowded, poorly paid and politicized, reflecting a continuing lack of professionalism.¹⁴ The performance of the civil service depends mainly on the training and professional capacities of civil servants. The Ministry of Public Administration is responsible for setting recruitment standards, implementing compensation and remuneration policies, implementing training programs for civil servants, and developing

¹¹ Article 57, 58, 60, 61 and 62 of the Law No.03/L –149 on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo (Official Gazette of Republic of Kosovo, No. 72/2010). Available online at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2679> [Accessed May 03, 2021].

¹² Article 35 of the Law No.03/L –149 on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo (Official Gazette of Republic of Kosovo, No. 72/2010). Available online at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2679> [Accessed May 03, 2021].

¹³ The survey with civil servants (523 respondents) is conducted during October 2020 in Municipalities: Mitrovica, Vushtrri, Obiliq, Fushë Kosovë, Ferizaj and Gjilan. The survey on challenges of Civil Service is conducted by Dr.Sc. Avni H. Alidemaj.

¹⁴ Group for Legal and Political Studies, "For a professional public administration: An orientation toward strengthening the professional education of civil servants in Kosovo". Policy analysis No. 03/2011. Prishtina, pp. 4-5. Available online at: www.legalpoliticalstudies.org [Accessed on April 3, 2020].

objectives for the civil service system. The Ministry of Public Administration uses a specialized agency, the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration, to train professional-level civil servants.

Professionalism is one of the biggest challenges in the public administration in transition and this is exactly the distinctive challenge of the public administration in Kosovo. Lacking a certain degree of professionalism, public administration cannot fulfill the function of achieving the highest degree of efficiency. To have problem-solving public administration it must be willing to offer an appropriate category of solutions through an appropriate number of standardized skills. This reinforces the argument that the quality of performance of a public administration depends heavily on the skills, education and professional capacity of civil servants working and managing the administration. This suggests that the level of vocational education provided and received by civil servants is an indicator of the efficiency, merit and performance of public administration.¹⁵ According to legal provisions, the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration (KIPA) is in charge of the training of civil servants whether they are at the central, municipal level or those from independent administrative institutions. KIPA faces declining support from the Government of the Republic of Kosovo while on the other hand dissatisfaction with this Institution is increasing. So, we have a skewed relationship between declining financial support and growing dissatisfaction with this institution. The main complaints are related to the small number of trained civil servants, short-term training programs and insufficiently adapted to the needs of different functional categories of civil servants.¹⁶

However, during 2019, KIPA has conducted a large number of trainings in which case 127 trainings were reported, with 274 groups of civil servants, with a total number of 4516 trained. The majority of the trainees are from the local government and there is a continuous deviation of the management level to undergo trainings in KIPA. KIPA has managed to organize 54 trainings with the help of financial support provided by various donors (International Institutions, International Organizations, etc.).¹⁷

It should be noted that KIPA has prepared different training areas for different categories of civil servants:

- Senior Executive Level: Training on leadership issues that are in line with Public Administration reform for the training of senior management officials;
- Executive Level: Training in organizational management issues focused on the basics of management, decision-making, delegation of responsibilities, team building and teamwork, dispute resolution, employee motivation, HRM, etc. ;
- Professional Level: The training focuses on the development of policies and documents and project management, especially the development and implementation of projects under EU funding;
- Administrative Level: The training aims to increase their capacity regarding administrative procedures, effective writing, communication and dispute resolution, and relations with third parties.¹⁸

The main areas of training of civil servants in the framework of public management and administration include:

- introductory programs for public administration: These programs will be in the future one of the basic programs of KIPA.
- HRM training program: This program focuses on increasing the skills and knowledge of HRM units in recruiting, managing, developing, and retaining skilled and motivated people, managing diverse staffs in terms of individuals and teams, adapting ethical approaches towards

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Interview with high officials of Kosovo Institute for Public Administration. The interview was conducted on October 21, 2020, in Prishtina, Kosovo.

¹⁷ Interview with Enver Haxhijaj: Head of the Training Department of Kosovo Institute for Public Administration. The interview was conducted on October 21, 2020 in Prishtina, Kosovo.

¹⁸ Ministria e Administratës Publike – Departamenti i Administrimit të Shërbimit Civil, “*Strategjia e trajnimit të nëpunësve civil 2015-2020*” Qeveria e Republikës së Kosovës, Prishtinë, 2015, p. 16-17. Available online at: MPBAP (rks-gov.net) [Accessed on May 5, 2021].

people, etc.

- training programs in Budget and Finance and Public Procurement: These trainings are mandatory.
- country legislation: The training program aims to increase the knowledge of civil servants about the legislation, especially the requirements of new laws.
- local government training: KIPA cooperates with Ministry of Local Governance to identify trainings for local government.
- public relations training: KIPA has designed and conducted public relations trainings for civil servants working in public relations at central and local level.
- training in Information Technology (IT): Pursuant to the e-Government Strategy (2009-2015), KIPA has designed and implemented trainings in the field of IT, with special emphasis on trainings related to ECDL.¹⁹

Furthermore, the strategy for training of civil servants is aiming at meeting five strategic objectives:

- Objective 1): Increasing the level of professionalism in the civil service,
- Objective 2): Increase the level of general and specific knowledge needed for Kosovo's membership in the European Union,
- Objective 3): Increasing the level of administrative services that meet the needs of citizens,
- Objective 4): Increase the level of use of modern technology in the daily work of civil servants, and
- Objective 5): Centralization of financial resources for the implementation of the strategy.

To fulfill this strategy, KIPA is obliged to take the following actions:

1. Training based on state needs and personal needs of career civil servants,
2. Compulsory state trainings and exams for career civil servants,
3. Compulsory training and licensing of civil servants issuing administrative acts,
4. General and professional training of civil servants dealing with general and specific EU issues,
5. Specialized trainings for local level civil servants,
6. Training of trainers, decision makers and senior civil servants,
7. Training in the field of communication and information technology and
8. Strengthen training activities from local sources of funding and contributions from international donors.²⁰

However, most strategies, including this one in the professionalization of the civil service are being implemented in part due to lack of political will and constant focus on quantitative indicators and neglecting qualitative indicators.

3.1. Disadvantages of the current training system

During the period 2016-2020, KIPA has managed to achieve some of the strategic objectives but still much remains to be done. However, given the number of civil servants and especially at the municipal level, the needs for involvement in vocational training are high. In some municipalities, the number of civil servants involved in training is consistently small and there are even cases where civil servants with many years of experience are not involved in training.²¹ Another prominent feature in the KIPA training program is that training in the field of legislation and administration has been given little importance. On the other hand, civil servants have major shortcomings in this area, having obvious shortcomings in the conduct of administrative procedures, proper drafting of administrative decisions and understanding of the administrative oversight process. It is rare for civil servants at the municipal level to be able to draft a fair and

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Interview with civil servants from Municipalities of Ferizaj, Viti, Kaçanik and Shtërpce. The interviews are carried out during October 2020.

lawful administrative decision. The municipalities of Vushtrri and Mitrovica have over 200 civil servants who have been involved in various trainings. However, the greatest difficulty arises precisely in cases when fair and lawful administrative decisions have to be issued. Only a very small number of civil servants have knowledge of drafting administrative decisions.²² During 2019, KIPA has organized 10 trainings related to the law on general administrative procedure, in which case 123 civil servants were involved. The training lasted two days and mainly involved municipal administration institutions.²³

Table No.1: KIPA training statistics - 2019²⁴

KOSOVO INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - Training sessions 2019 -					
No.	Training	Curses	Groups	Days of training	Participants
1.	General Management	15	37	94	584
2.	Administration & Legislation	22	62	122	1173
3.	Human Resources	10	21	86	289
4.	Budget and Finances	28	68	218	1129
5.	IT	12	25	54	299
6.	Municipal issues	21	30	58	519
7.	European Union	20	35	92	555
Total		128	278	724	4548

During the survey conducted with civil servants in six municipalities of Kosovo, only 17% of trainees stated that they were satisfied with the quality of training and the benefits of training. Whereas 87% of the respondents stated that the trainings are useless and do not reflect on the increase of effectiveness at work.²⁵

Vocational trainings organized by the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration or other structures are not of a level that guarantees the advancement of professional knowledge. The reasons are more of a programmatic character which does not guarantee the advancement of the skills of public servants. Numerous efforts have been made by KIPA to change this but it has not been possible to harmonize the training program with the needs of public institutions. This is caused due to the lack of objective assessment of training needs by public institutions as well as the financial shortcomings of KIPA itself. During 2020-2021, efforts are being made to change the training strategy that “will most probably fail” due to high budgetary implications which cannot be covered by KIPA and the Ministry of Public Administration.

In order to have an efficient and effective public administration, the capacities in the involvement of civil servants in various professional trainings must be increased. The constant demand of civil servants is that the training modules last longer, at least up to two weeks, and not two-three days as currently. Furthermore, the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration should be transformed into a proper public administration school in charge of “producing” professional staff for the needs of the civil service in Kosovo by offering training courses for beginners (up to six months) but also advanced courses for the needs of civil servants who have accumulated relevant experience during their career (two - four weeks of training). Raising the professionalism of civil servants can be done only when objective training plans are established. Those training plans should be based on the needs of civil servants and transforming the trainings into proper ongoing education. Moreover, the trainings and increase of civil servants capacities should be considered not only as a right of civil servants but also as their legal obligation.

²² Interview with Xhavit Mehmeti: Head of EU integration office within Vushtrri Municipality. The interview is conducted on 22 October 2020 in Vushtrri.

²³ Statistics received from Kosovo Institute for Public Administration. October 2020. Prishtina, Kosovo.

²⁴ Statistics received from Training Department of Kosovo Institute for Public Administration. October 2020, Prishtina, Kosovo.

²⁵ The survey with civil servants (523 respondents) is conducted during October 2020 in Municipalities: Mitrovica, Vushtrri, Obiliq, Fushë Kosovë, Ferizaj and Gjilan. The survey on challenges of Civil Service is conducted by Dr. Sc. Avni H. Alidemaj.

3.2. Applicable experiences from the region

Kosovo institutions can use the experiences of countries in the region to reform public administration, with particular emphasis on raising the professionalism of the civil service. Much can be learned from the Croatian context about the overall approach to reforming and increasing the efficiency of public administration. Namely, public administration reform must be in full compliance with the key objectives adopted within a country. Then, different administrative levels need different reforms. The central administrative level should be subject to changes that are not necessarily the same as the intermediate or local level. Thus, a sectoral approach is required during public administration reform. In the early stages of the administrative reform in Croatia, only the measurement of qualitative indicators was taken into account, neglecting the measurement of quantitative indicators. The approach should be combined using quantitative and qualitative indicators to verify the implementation of the envisaged measures. Among other things, the success of the administration reform is directly dependent on the powerful administrative bodies that have the role of overseeing the implementation of the reform. Laws in the administrative field can accelerate or even freeze the administration's reform efforts but cannot replace the genuine will to modernize and improve the public administration. Thus, the exclusive normative approach versus reform is characterized by obvious limitations. Attention should be focused on the implementation of the new regulations harmonized with European standards and the capacities of the public administration for the implementation of the new legal basis and functions in favor of the general civic interest.²⁶

The Croatian context shows clearly that success in increasing the efficiency of the civil service depends on the mechanisms of administrative oversight, political will and centralization of financial means to be used for capacity building of the civil service.

In Slovenia, public administration reform has become a priority since 1996 when the government adopted a public administration reform strategy. In recent years, public administration reform is in the process of continuous development. In the area of training, special emphasis has been placed on the implementation of training programs in the field of European studies, in line with the strategy adopted in 2000. A three-year training program has been implemented for the elite group of young officials. In 2003 a special training program for top-level employees began to include 8 modules from the areas of administration management, organization theory, human resource management, strategic planning and decision making, relationships and communication, management methods and teamwork. The training was conducted by the Administrative Academy, an internal unit of the Ministry of Public Administration, established in 1997. The Academy, meanwhile, took on a new role in preparing Slovenia to organize and lead all necessary EU activities during the first half of the year 2008.²⁷

According to the Slovenian experience, similar to the Croatian one, the public administration reform has been implemented thanks to the strong support of the political level. Consequently, in addition to drafting new legislation in the field of administration, great importance has been given to the reorganization of the administration and the training of civil servants to prepare them to pave the way to development and EU integration.

On the other hand, the efficiency of the civil service in Albania has started to improve significantly thanks to the professional trainings organized by the Albanian School of Public Administration. This school enjoys support from both international and local institutions.

The Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) is a central public institution, with administrative and academic autonomy, with the mission of training the civil servants of central government, local government, and independent institutions. ASPA has been operating since 2000, initially organized as the Training Institute of Public Administration (TIPA) and since 2013 as the Albanian School of Public Administration. The organization and operation of ASPA is governed by

²⁶ Ivan Koprivic. "Managing Public Administration Reform in Croatia", *Hrvatska Javna Uprava*, god. 8.br. 3., p. 559.

²⁷ Polana Kovač, "The never-ending story of public administration reform in Slovenia". Public Administration Faculty of University of Ljubljana, p. 62-63. Available at: Microsoft Word - Uprava December 2006.doc (core.ac.uk) [Accessed on May 6, 2021].

Law No. 152/2014 On the Civil Servant, as well as the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 138, of 12 March 2014 on the Organization and Functioning of the Albanian School of Public Administration and Training of Civil Servants. ASPA provides various services in the framework of classroom-based training programs, Trainer of Trainers Programs, internship programs, e-learning programs, etc. Every year ASPA trains approximately 5,000 public officials, based on more than 100 didactic Training Modules. ASPA collaborates with experienced trainers coming from the Academia and Public Institutions that have the expertise in various fields.²⁸

This progress in Albania, among other things, has been achieved with the strengthening of the training institution and its independence both organizationally and financially. KIPA in Kosovo, at this stage of development, can use the experience of Albania in designing various training modules in various fields as well as the engagement of trainers who have clinical knowledge in the field of public administration.

4. Conclusion

Efficient and effective public administration in enforcing laws and providing quality services to citizens is a prerequisite for overall social development. A professional administration, impartial and independent of politics is a strong pillar of the consolidation of the state, guaranteeing the well-being of a functioning democracy. The development and strengthening of the state has always started with the reform of the public administration in order to adapt it to the strategic goals that are sought to be achieved by the state itself. Many countries in transition, including Kosovo, face numerous challenges in achieving strategic objectives, ignoring the importance of professionalizing the civil service as a primary mechanism that guarantees the fulfillment of standards towards overall social development.

It is quite clear that the legal regulation of public administration in Kosovo remains an issue that should continue in the new decade in order to harmonize secondary legislation with primary legislation but also with European Union legislation. However, the application of an exclusively normative approach to civil service reform, with particular emphasis on civil service capacity building by adopting medium-term strategies and other documents, has not shown any success. Moreover, the Ministry of Public Administration continues to be focused on meeting the quantitative indicators bypassing the qualitative ones, which has led to a state of stagnation regarding the professionalism of the civil service.

It is the last moment for the political and administrative institutions in Kosovo to show their will in strengthening the civil service by strongly supporting KIPA financially and starting the phase of preparations for the transformation of the latter into a proper school of public administration. In the meantime, KIPA should focus on designing and implementing a short-term strategy which would enable the increase of the quality of trainings through enrichment with new modules based on the objective needs of civil servants. Consequently, the methodology of training and selection of professional associates would have to change as well. Finally, the issue of training of civil servants in Kosovo should be treated as an obligation and not just as a right from which civil servants can relinquish depending to the given circumstances.

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