



ESF project "Top Civil Service development programme"

Estonia

Key facts

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

'Professional competence and management of general government has improved'

TARGET GROUPS



100 top civil servants

BENEFICIARY ORGANISATION

Government Office of Estonia

PROJECT DURATION

01/01/2014 – 31/12/2020

COORDINATOR

Eve Limbach-Pirn, Head of the Top Civil Service Excellence Centre (TCSEC), Government Office (GO)



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PARTNERS

N/A

BUDGET

EUR 3,156,863

ESF contribution

EUR 557,093

Contribution from the national budget of the Republic of Estonia



PROJECT/ORGANISATION WEBSITE



<http://bit.ly/37wOd3K>

<http://www.riigikantselei.ee/en>



<http://bit.ly/3aNJ09U>

Activities implemented

PROJECT IN NUMBERS



Participation among top civil servants



Share of top civil servants committed to work



Percentage of recruitment contests successful



Satisfaction with work of the TCSEC

MAIN PROJECT TASKS



To improve the **management and co-operation capacity of top civil servants**, providing support for individual development in the form of coaching, mentoring, work shadowing, going to internship or consulting, as well as various types of training to support the strengthening of common values, cooperation models and the sharing of good practices.



Various recruitment and development activities to **ensure promotion to the top level of the civil service**, such as activities to improve the image of the state as an employer; development programmes for middle managers with top management potential; and the fast-tracking of entrants from outside the public sector.



Updating the system for top civil service recruitment and selection, appraisal and development, and carrying out activities such as the analysis and updating of the competency framework; the development of the information system and user interface for the management of recruitment and selection; providing appraisal and development-related information, commissioning necessary studies; developing methods and guidelines; and sharing of experience and contacts in this field.

Project journey: from conception to delivery

INITIAL STAGE

CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

In 2004, the Government of Estonia adopted the Concept Paper on Civil Service Development, which proposed the giving of special attention to the country's top civil service. The GO developed the first competency model for the top civil service in 2004-5, and launched its first development activities in 2005. The first dedicated Top Civil Service Development programme was launched in 2008 and funded by the ESF. In 2009, the development of the top civil service was separated from the development of the civil service as a whole. In 2013, a new Civil Service Law was enacted, recognising the top civil service as a distinct group of civil servants.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The programme aims **to improve the management, innovation and co-operation capacities of top civil servants** and **to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable candidates** to compete in public recruitment contests for top civil service positions in the future. Finally, the programme also aims to **continuously update the development activities and support system** for top civil service development.

MAIN CHALLENGES FACED, AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

When the programme co-ordinator, Ms. Eve Limbach-Pirn, joined the GO in 2004, she and the Secretary of State, Mr. Heiki Loot, began working with top civil servants, no-one had a clear idea what it would take to engage the target group and secure their commitment. No ready-made solutions were available; everything had to be figured out through experimentation and rapid learning guided by strong leadership. One major **challenge** was therefore to establish, using the relatively limited knowledge available, a system that could meet the development needs of the target group. Procuring innovative programmes has proved an ongoing **challenge**, due to rigid public procurement rules. Overall, project's greatest **difficulty** has been convincing top civil servants to take responsibility for their own development.

PROJECT PHASE

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The Top Civil Service Excellence Centre's (TCSEC) team has already prepared a fourth iteration of the development programme for the years 2014-2020. The activities remain the same as before, but they are approached in an increasingly systematic way. The team has prepared a new version of the competency model to build better links between competencies, performance appraisal and eventually development activities. In 2017, the team commissioned a third study on top civil servants' commitment and satisfaction. In 2016-17, development trainees graduated from the fourth Newton (for middle-level managers) and the second Top Manager Talent (for future top managers) programmes.

KEY RESULTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

In 2019, according to the TCSEC, 85% of top civil servants in Estonia took personal responsibility for their own development; 78% of them were committed to their work; and 94% of public recruitment contests for top civil service positions have been successful. On the five-point scale, satisfaction with the work of the TCSEC receives an average rating of 3.9. Continuous support from the ESF has been a key factor in the success of the project.

RESULTS, IMPACTS

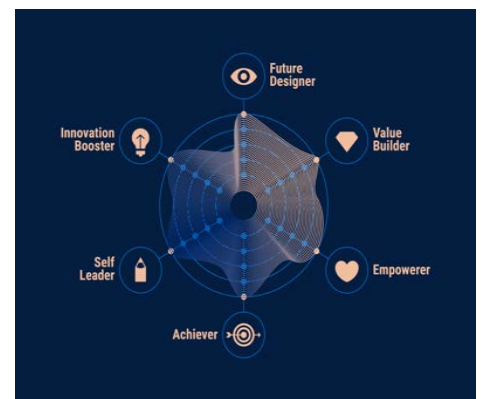
(EXPECTED) IMPACT ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The programme raises the competencies, such as the ones depicted on the graph, of existing top civil servants and delivers competent candidates for public contests to recruit top civil servants. This, in turn, has led to better cooperation between public institutions, as well as more innovative and better management of top civil servants who contribute to the achievement of Government objectives, as well as to increased professionalism across the civil service as a whole.

LESSONS LEARNT: THE ROLE OF ESF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

This ESF-supported project has contributed decisively to the strengthening of the system for the management and development of the top civil service in Estonia. The team at the TCSEC has learnt that in order to be successful, it is necessary to create systematic links between activities, from developing a competency model to recruitment and selection, and from performance appraisals to development activities.

REFLECTIONS



Source: TCSEC

Personal experiences



'To get top managers interested in change, you need to make them part of its design and keep them constantly on board. Only then can you expect them to commit to something that they may not entirely have believed in at the start. It takes a readiness to experiment to get things going. We have witnessed that it is not laws that you need to support you, but leadership that you have to provide for yourself.'

Heiki Loot, former Secretary of State at the Government Office

'Although we have already run the fourth iteration of the Top Civil Service Development programme, we are still constantly striving to innovate. By gaining experience throughout years we have become so much better at building a system that caters to the needs of an individual [top civil servant] by taking into account an appraisal of their competencies, but also by making sure that we keep in mind the Government's agenda, as well as long-term societal trends.'

Eve Limbach-Pirn, Head of the Top Civil Service Excellence Centre at the Government Office

The study "Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration" (PAPA) aims to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity building initiatives. The contractor prepared 30 case studies and factsheets on ESF supported projects funded in 17 beneficiary countries of Thematic Objective 11 during the programming period 2014-2020.

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PPMI

Find out more about the project by following the link <http://bit.ly/PAPA-PPMI> or scan the QR code using your smartphone camera.

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