

Development of Middle Level Managers in Estonian Civil Service: *Joining Forces and Breaking Silos*

ANNA LAIDO

Department of Public Administration and Public Policy

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

EU2017.EE

Building a civil service fit for purpose

1. **Determine.** What are the needed skills and where are the gaps?
How can they be identified?
2. **Attract and select.** How can the right people with sought-after skill sets be attracted to jobs in public sector?
3. **Develop and nurture.** How can public organizations create a culture of learning for a dynamic and fast-changing world?
4. **Use.** What kind of organization and leadership is needed to motivate employees and provide opportunities to put skills to use?

OECD Public Governance Review, *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*, 2017

„Leaders of the future will need to be
adapt conceptual and strategic thinkers,
have deep integrity and intellectual openness,
find new ways to create loyalty,
lead increasingly diverse and independent teams over
which they may not always have direct authority, and
relinquish their own power in favor of collaborative
approaches inside and outside the organization.“

Hay Group (2016)

Changing skill needs: abilities to solve problems and manage complex projects

- **Policy advice and analysis.** New technologies, a growing body of policy- relevant research and a diversity of citizen perspectives, demand new skills for policy advice.
- **Service delivery and citizen engagement.** New skills are required for civil servants to effectively engage citizens, crowdsource ideas and co-create better services.
- **Commissioning and contracting.** Governments are increasingly engaging third parties for the delivery of services. This requires skills in designing, overseeing and managing contractual arrangements with other organizations.
- **Managing networks.** Civil servants and governments are required to work across organisational boundaries to address complex challenge. This demands skills to convene, collaborate and develop shared understanding through communication, trust and mutual commitment.

Outcomes from Leadership Development workshop at EUPAN WL meeting

- Performance Assessment
- Digitalization
- **More attention to middle-level managers**
- Motivating leaders to get out of the comfort-zone
- Mobility, variety of experiences
- International cooperation, benchmarking

Challenges for Estonian Civil Service

- ✓ Reduction of general government sector in accordance with the decrease of labour force
- ✓ Elaboration of long-term personnel plans integrated with the framework of strategic development plans and budgeting process
- ✓ EU Presidency started in July 2017
- ✓ **Maintaining competitiveness of public sector salaries, while avoiding too fast increase**
- ✓ **How to attract good managers and keep them in public service?**

EU2017.EE

Main features of Estonian civil service training system

Decentralized:

- ✓ Majority of funding and main responsibility for training public servants lies with individual organisations (e.g. agencies, ministries)
- ✓ No compulsory measures
- ✓ Civil Service Act + government`s regulation “Training of Officials”
- ✓ Adult Education Act

Funding sources:

- Organisational budgets (around 90%)
- European Union Structural Funds (central training program and top civil servants development program)
- Other foreign aid (Development projects e.g. Nordic Council of Ministers)

Development goals of middle level managers

- **General goal:** To increase administrative capacity and cooperation of public agencies, increase the efficiency of executing strategic goals through improving management quality
- **Specific goals**
 - ✓ Systematic development
 - ✓ Securing the succession and sustainability of middle level managers
 - ✓ **Carrying of common values and goals**
 - ✓ Practical tools for day-to-day management tasks

Objectives and main results achieved

- ✓ Estonian Ministry of Finance has been launching centrally coordinated and financed horizontal (i.e. involving different ministries and governance areas) innovative training and development programs for mid-level managers since 2012, when it was set as a priority target group for our central development activities.
- ✓ We pay special attention to enhance the cooperation between the managers of different organizations, in order to manage the risks of Estonian decentralized public service system and cope with the challenges of increasingly complex external environment.
- ✓ Since 2014, we have offered a comprehensive development program for mid-level managers that offers a unique combination of development support, practical exercises and training to ensure the fulfilment of the objectives set in the personal development program of each participant.

Definition of middle level manager

- ✓ Middle level manager is a direct subordinate to the head of an agency (Secretary General, Director General of Board and Inspectorate, Court Director, Head Prosecutor, Auditor General) or his/her deputy (Deputy Secretary General, Deputy Director General), who has direct subordinates
- ✓ Target group does not include high level experts in direct subordination to the top managers, who are process managers, but who do not have direct subordinates
- ✓ The overall number of mid-level managers in Estonian government sector is ca 2000 at the moment

Development activities for mid-level managers and the number of participants



Main benefits of development activities

- an opportunity to receive high level training, designed specially for middle level managers
- developing contact and cooperation networks
- to receive individual coaching and take part in the group coaching
- to participate in job shadowing
- to compile an individual development plan
- an opportunity to learn from experienced managers
- personal and practical approach to each participant

Challenges

- The activities rely mostly on ESF funding
- Ministry of Finance has limited human resources
- Cooperation between organizations
- Programs are relatively time consuming for the participants

Process of implementation: lessons learned (1)

What have we learned in the process of implementation of trainings and developing mid-level managers as a high priority target group?

1) As breaking the silos in a decentralized public administration system is difficult and time-consuming, the cooperation with the different **ministries** and other **stakeholders** is critical, especially in terms of division of responsibilities and tasks.

2) **“Peer-to peer” marketing** is an effective way to gain the best publicity and high participation rates for the development programs. Therefore, the **participants** of the programs are the **key stakeholders** in promoting the programs and special attention should be paid to them **before, during** and **after** their participation in development activities.

Process of implementation: lessons learned (2)

- 3) The development activities should be **negotiated** with and **supported by** the top level managers and **connected** to the **strategic plans** of organizations. Otherwise, the programs will not have the desired impact and will often be considered as “side activities”, instead of being part of organizations **strategic goals**.
- 4) The **spreading** of **common values** happens mostly through (both formal informal) **networking** and by **personal examples**, the training can only support this.

Summary of the questionnaire about mid-level managers

- With our questionnaire we aimed to examine the member states' experience regarding the development of mid-level managers, the goals of specific programmes and other government initiatives
- The questionnaire was sent to 32 countries + EC
- The questionnaire was answered by 26 countries + EC .
- Mid-level managers development varies among member states. More detailed conclusions will be sent to you after the EUPAN DG Meeting.

Summary of the conclusions 1/5

- There is no general pattern in the organisation of civil service training among surveyed countries. Almost all countries (only some exceptions) have central training for the purpose of balancing and unifying decentralized training systems.
- There are also countries, where the training is organized only centrally and/or is provided by a specific institution. The latter is more common for countries where the civil service system is career-based.
- There are also examples, where central training and development activities are provided by the coordinating departments in the corresponding ministry (e.g. Ministry of Finance in Estonia, Ministry of Interior in Hungary etc.).

Summary of the conclusions 2/5

- Almost all countries have central training for managers in different levels. It can be said that central and top managers are priority groups for most countries and therefore special programs are provided for them.
- Programs are holding different objectives, but there is a shared interest to promote networking and best practices, to discuss different views and thus bring the added value to the programs.
- Some countries have quite systematic development for managers and even compulsory elements (more common for career-based civil service systems). Many countries are practicing induction training for new managers.

Summary of the conclusions 3/5

- Most countries do not have a formal definition for mid-level managers, though there is a common understanding of the position. It is mainly based on tasks and responsibilities (considering required competences), job families and/or salary scales. Most often, mid-level managers are managing people, though there are some exceptions, where specialists and subject area experts are also considered to be mid-level managers).
- Most countries do have specific training or development programs for mid-level managers and many countries are providing programs for different managing levels (top, middle and primary level).

Summary of the conclusions 4/5

- In development activities there is a tendency towards forward looking approach. The topics of the training include coping with changing dynamics of public sector and taking an advantage of the new opportunities that technology and new know-how is bringing to managers.
- In most cases mid-level managers are perceived as priority target groups (though there are some examples where mid-managers are not getting much special attention in terms of training).

Summary of the conclusions 5/5

- Mid-managers are important because they serve as links between specialists and top civil servants. Mid-managers skills to translate strategical long-term view into operational and measurable targets is of critical importance to successfully implement the political and strategic agenda.
- Most countries found that comprehensive training (area specific training combined with competency training) is most useful for mid-managers. To tackle the challenges and take into account the learner's individual needs the training forms are more flexible (promotion of blended learning, and digital learning) and dynamic (adaptive training, coaching, supervision etc.)
- Some outstanding and novel approaches were also shared (like reverse mentoring in France).

THANK YOU!

Questions?

EU2017.EE



EU2017.EE



EU2017.EE



EU2017.EE