

Meeting minutes

2nd Plenary session on Public Administration Reform

Date: 18.11.2019

Time: 12:00

Place: Conference Hall, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Ilindenska nn.

Participants: Attendance list enclosed

Opening Statements

- Minister of Information Society and Administration, Mr. Damjan Manchevski welcomed the attendees and continued by elaborating the overall situation regarding the establishment of the fully-fledged sector approach. He pointed out the importance of the Sector Working Groups in our country as a valuable asset that will ensure a comprehensive approach in this process and thanked EUD and other partners for their support in the Public Administration Reforms process. Concerning the criteria for strategic framework, the Minister referred to the adoption of the PAR strategy and its Action Plan as an umbrella for the PAR Sector. The Minister also provided a clear picture on the progress made in terms of the institutional setting, leadership and capacity for the implementation of the sector strategy. In this regard, he explained that although a significant process was expected with the implementation of the IPA funded project “Support for state reorganization” which had already started, some key institutions already conducted a functional analysis. Minister described the mechanisms for coordination on different levels that were introduced with the Strategy and underlined that the Action Plan of the strategy identifies the institution that is responsible for a particular activity, costing of the same and expected source of funding. The minister referred to the last criteria that is the Performance Assessment Framework explaining that this criterion represents a set of regular performance measurements which will enable all stakeholders to assess progress in achieving a set of policies which is important in the decision making process. In this regard the main purpose of this session was to represent the draft Performance Assistance Framework that should be adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia as well as identify possible gaps and opportunities for improvement of the same.

Mr. Janmaat stressed the importance of these meetings that serve as a platform for sector and donor coordination and continued with elaboration of the projects that are part of the Action Document IPA 2017. He said that these projects cover different aspects from the Public Administration Reform process and emphasized that the big project on eGovernment that should commence soon should make a big step in digital transformation of the national public administration. He pointed out that on the other hand, EUD also supports SCPC and

CPRFAPI through a project for promoting accountability and transparency in the public administration, as well as State Statistical Office through two contracts. He emphasized the importance of the Performance Assessment Framework as one of the sector approach assessment criteria that provide a picture for the readiness of the sector for introducing fully-fledged sector approach, but also stressed that the preparation and adoption of the PAF should be done in an inclusive and transparent manner. In line with the Rules of Procedure, agenda was unanimously approved following Mr. Janmaat's opening statement.

Session I: Presentation of the Draft Performance Assessment Framework

- Mr. Drago, Team Leader within the project "Support for management of IPA funds", briefly presented the process for preparation of indicators for all sectors that have functional Sector Working Groups. He explained PAF scope and indicators and said that the same are intended to measure the progress in the implementation of reforms. In addition, Mr. Fabio clarified that in the process of preparation, TAT together with MISA and EUD tried to use publically available sources and that the team's aim was to ensure that the methodologies used for collection and presentation of the indicators are comparable. He provided a brief explanation on the draft initial version of PAF portal for all sectors and continued with presentation of the General indicator for the Public Administration Reform subsector.
- Ms. Gordana Gapikj Dimitrovska, coordinator of the Priority area 1 of the Public Administration Reform strategy 2018 – 2022 presented 4 main indicators which are considered relevant for policy creation and coordination and provided information on the methodology for calculation, source of information as well as values of the same for 2017 and 2018. Ms. Gordana also provided insight into the criteria used for selection of these indicators that covered different aspects such as comparability, availability, relevance and etc. Ms. Gordana explained that the first indicator refers to the implementation rate for the Annual Work Plan of the government, while the second indicator she had elaborated takes into account rate of the draft Ria reports that were in line with procedures and transparency. The third indicator which was meticulously described by Ms. Gapikj was about the engagement of the stakeholders on ENER. She concluded her area with the last indicator which was about the Law publication on ENER and by giving the details on calculation methodology as well as the baseline values.
- Ms. Biljana Zagar, coordinator of the priority area 2 Public Service and Human Resources Management, stressed out that this area is crucial for the strategy Public administration reform strategy and Action Plan of 2018-2019. She mentioned that the specific goal of this area is the de-politicization of the administration and the professionalization of top management service. Ms. Biljana presented two main indicators defined for this priority area. The first one being about the grounded complaints and appeals submitted by candidates on decisions related to recruitment or promotion. The second indicator is about the rate of appointed senior civil servants, on the basis of open competition, over civil servant positions. Ms. Biljana explained thoroughly the calculation methodology and the available baseline values.

- Coordinator of the Priority Area 3: Responsibility, Accountability and Transparency, Ms. Kristina Dimovska started her presentation of the indicators by pointing out that this priority area is one of the most heterogeneous areas of all three areas incorporated in PAR. She also mentioned that these areas were quite broad and cross-sectorial and therefore it was a quite hard task to define indicators that would grasp the entirety of the sector, so with the help of the experts they had chosen the most adequate indicators based on the data that had been available from the institutions. The first indicator, the rate of reorganization of the state administrative bodies, agencies and inspections, should measure the progress of the one of the major operations, that is the reorganization of the institutional setup in the Republic of North Macedonia as a key activity for resolving the accountability problems across the institutions and also for increasing the responsibility and transparency of the same. For this indicator there is a methodology but there are no benchmarks and baseline value since this indicator was predicted to be measured for the first time in the upcoming year, 2020. The second indicator was trust in the public administration. This indicator will serve as a proxy of whether the institutions are responsible enough or transparent enough. This indicator was measured by Eurobarometer survey. The third indicator Ms. Kristina presented was integrity and ethical policy rate in the state administrative bodies agencies and inspectorates which was measured on reasonability and accountability principal. And the last indicator presented by Ms. Kristina should measure rejected request rate for access to public information by public institutions. This indicator was based on the transparency principal. Ms. Kristina explained meticulously the calculation methodology, the baseline values as well as relevant benchmarks.
- Ms. Nadica mentioned that for this area they had chosen only two indicators highlighting that the same are valuable but at the same time challenging indicators. She explained the first indicator which is Satisfaction of users of public services and clarified that the measure will take into consideration all users, no matter of delivery method, i.e. whether the same are electronic or traditional.,. The second one is the rate of availability of public services in the National Portal. She stated that the National portal will make easier for citizens to get services.

Mr. Manchevski opened the floor for discussions, suggestions and remarks.

- Mr. Misha Popovikj from Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis- Skopje had some suggestions for improving the framework. He added that he would move the indicator on trust in the institutions as an overall indicator, together with the corruption perception index since these were the three dimensions of the governance, thus providing comprehensive picture of the overall implementation of the public administration reform... Concerning human resource management, he stated that there should be an indicator which would measure the learning and improvement of the state administrative servants, not only the employment. Mr. Popovikj mentioned that in the area of responsibility, accountability and transparency an indicator about the whistleblowers mechanism in the institutions should be included.

- Ms. Elena Ginovska from State Statistical Office came with an intervention that an indicator from State Statistical Office that had been sent to Miroslav should be included in PAF. It refers to the alignment with EU statistics which measures the degree of alignment of Macedonian statistics with EU statistics.
- Maja Mirchevska from Foundation Open Society had a general remark that the indicators should go beyond PAR strategy, as the expert had explained, but the document presented highly rely on the existing PAR Strategy and its Action plan. She pointed out that this would be problematic approach as other strategic documents had not been taken into consideration, thus assessment of the cumulative effect of these strategies was not possible... On policy creation and coordination, she suggested that there might be an option to measure the percentage of returned materials by the General Secretariat due to lack of professional excellency or lack of strategic compliance. Concerning the indicator that measures the engagement of stakeholders on ENER she stated that although this was a good start, we need an indicator to measure state institutions engagement on the same, which might be a reason for lack of engagement by the stakeholders. On the other hand, she referred to the indicator for publication of laws on ENER and pointed out that it would be more useful if we measure the percentage of adopted laws that were published on ENER. Ms. Mirchevska continued with analyses on the indicators within the Priority area 2, with general remark that maybe more data should be used in order to verify the functionality of mechanisms for protection. Furthermore, she stated that in order to avoid ambiguities the first indicator might need to be rephrased, especially related to the meaning of 'grounded' and proposed two more additional indicators that would provide for a better picture, i.e. overview of the priority area. She mentioned the rate of senior civil servant indicator as being a bit unclear. In continuation she stated that the indicator on proportion of administrative bodies that have completed the reorganization is a good start, but it would be more useful if there is an information on how many administrative bodies, agencies and inspection services had ceased to exist, were merged or established and once again referred to the need of indicators that will combine all the strategic documents, as well as data that will show the cooperation between institutions, including data that will show how many information sets had been submitted to the Government by SCPC, Audit Office or the Ombudsman. .
- The word was given to Irina Mangova from International Republican Institute, who proposed that instead of measuring number of laws published on ENER that maybe all laws should be published. In addition she referred to the indicator on engagement of stakeholders on ENER and stated that we should measure the response from the institutions as well. Another suggestion by Ms. Mangova was to include an indicator which will measure the proportion of trained public servants on the adopted policies on integrity and ethics, as well as indicator that will show the rate of resolved public services requested
- Ms. Lilian Kandikja from the United Nations provided information on the ongoing process for checking the relevance of PAF with the DG indicators and their possible integration.

- Ms. Iskra Belcheva from Center for Change Management had a remark that the indicator 7 refers only to the internal reorganization, not to the sectoral reorganization. She stated that the indicator on adopted integrity policy will not indicate the progress in terms of high corruption, while the indicator on the number of e-services provided via the portal should also include the number of information on the services available on the same.
- Ms. Irena Stevchevska from the British Embassy mentioned that out of 8 areas for introducing PAF this was the most complicated one, and continued by asking how many indicators we should have and if the same are high-level indicators. In her statement she wondered why we have public service and service delivery in separate priority areas and if there is some difference between these two. Regarding the policy creation and coordination, Ms. Stevchevska stated that the indicators measure the legislation but it would also be useful if there is the way to measure use of data in the process of policy development.
- Mr. Freek said that he was impressed by all the comments and that some could improve the indicators. He had one remark about the Public service and Human Resource Management about the rate of appointed senior civil services on the basis of open competition over civil servant positions and proposed that it might be better if we compare the number of senior civil servants that are recruited on the basis of open competition with the number of overall senior civil servants that are recruited per year rather than to compare it to the total number of civil servants.
- Mr. Drago explained that some of the indicators that were proposed by the attendees already exist in other sectors, such as the indicator on corruption that is part of the sector Justice. He clarified that some of the proposals would require huge efforts by the institutions and that the participants should have in mind this was only one of many tasks and responsibilities of the institutions. However, in the interest of the discussion, he stated that after the meeting a template would be shared with all participants so all the proposals could be suitably addressed.
- Minister Manchevski said that for some proposals that the SWG had its extremely difficult to be translated into numbers while some could be easily defined. Therefore, he asked the Sector Working Group to focus on what was important for the citizens and life events and prioritize the issues on the level of available resources, as the limited human resources should be used smartly. To cover all the materials, he said that we need to other ministries for the entire area. He mentioned the courts, he mentioned that from some courts we can get data and from some of them they don't receive data. He stated that ongoing project for digitalization of registers will significantly change the interaction and cooperation among ministries and other institutions, resulting in better and more effective and efficient way of service delivery.

Conclusions

1. Members of the PAR Sector Working Group to submit their comments, proposals and suggestions for revision of the indicators, in writing to the MISA no later than 28 November using the template sent by MISA

2. MISA will take into consideration the comments, remarks and suggestions received by the participants at the 2nd plenary session of the PAR Sector Working Group. Based on the discussion, MIAS will prepare an updated version of the PAF to the members of the SWG by December, 08, 2019.