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Recruitment and Promotion in State Authorities

- Quarterly Monitoring Report -
(January 01 – April 01, 2013)

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The making of this report has been supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The opinions expressed here are the authors' own and do not necessarily coincide with those of FES.

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Summary

Start of the implementation of the new Law on Civil Servants and State Employees (hereinafter: LSCEE) was marked by the failure of authorities to meet all the legal and institutional preconditions for successful application of this act. Only four of thirteen envisaged by-laws were adopted during the 17 months long transition period, which marks the time between entering into force of the Law and launching of its implementation. Between January 1, 2013 and April 1, 2013, which is a period covered by our first quarterly report on the recruitment and promotion in state authorities, only three additional necessary by-laws were brought.

By April 1, the Rulebook on content and manner of keeping the Central Human Resources Record has not been adopted, although this record is a main precondition of the successful human resources management in the state administration. Data about near seven thousand of state administration's employees have not been submitted to this information system yet, although it should contain the basic information about all civil servants and state employees in Montenegro. In general, capacities of Human Resources Management Authority (hereinafter: HRMA), which is in charge of keeping the Central Human Resources Record, are not satisfactory, especially with respect to the training of staff to implement new procedures on testing candidates' abilities to perform tasks of the state administration job.

During the first three months of the implementation of the LSCEE, a total number of 18 vacancies for state administration jobs were announced. However, apart from the selection of heads of state administration authorities, only four candidates have gone through the newly regulated procedures of testing and evaluating candidates' abilities, following the two separate vacancy announcements. In both cases the final ranking list consisted of only one candidate, who subsequently got the job. Therefore, it is too early to bring conclusions about the extent to which the new Law encouraged establishment of the merit-based system in state administration, or more precisely, about the consistency of the application of the new general rule that the candidates with the highest ranking should be given a job position.

Yet, findings indicate that the implementation of the LSCEE lacks transparency. One authority rejected to state the name and surname of the selected candidate, under the excuse of protecting his or hers personal data, although the Law on Free access to Information envisages obligation of all authorities to publish the list of its servants and employees, along with their positions. Furthermore, the competence of conducting internal announcements within the state authority was assigned to the state authority itself, contrary to legal provisions which gave the HRMA a central role in implementing all the vacancy announcements and competitions.

With an aim of enhancing recruitment and promotion in state administration, it is thus necessary to finalize the legal framework for application of the new rules. The HRMA and state authorities should ensure the consistent implementation of the provisions which clearly regulate the competences for conducting the vacancy announcements and

competitions. All state authorities should regularly update and publish on their websites the lists of all their servants and employees along with their job positions, and thus ensure the transparency and easier monitoring of recruitment and promotion in state administration.

Introduction

Implementation of the new LCSSE¹ started on January 1, 2013. The Law is expected to bring the working and expert skills, as well as candidates' overall abilities, as key criteria of recruitment and promotion in state authorities. It was actually adopted on July 22, 2011, but with the postponed implementation. In the meantime, a total of 13 by-laws should have been adopted.

Following the implementation of the new Law is particularly important given the remarks of the European Commission that this act laid down the main foundations for the establishment of a de-politicized and professional public administration². Accordingly, the goal of this monitoring report is to identify the challenges in application of its rules, and offers recommendations for overcoming them by reviewing the first three months of the Law's implementation.

The report focuses on state administration authorities³. Due to the different procedures envisaged for the selection of senior managerial staff⁴, the IA did not go into the detailed analysis of these cases either. Relevant information was collected by continuous following of the Internet presentation of the HRMA⁵ and by the freedom of information requests, which had been sent to this institution and state administration authorities. Requests referred to practically entire documentation with regard to announcements for filling the vacancies which fall under categories of expert-managerial, expert and executive staff. Also, analysis of the content and dynamics of adoption of legal acts, whose implementation is directly or indirectly relevant to the recruitment and promotion in state administration, served as indicators of fulfillment of legal and institutional preconditions for implementation of the new Law.

The first section of the report offers a review of adopted by-laws, aimed at facilitating application of the new rules, as well as a review of fulfillment of institutional preconditions for their implementation. The second section focuses on the quantitative data about the implementation of vacancy announcements in state administration and on the transparency of the law's implementation. Following the findings about the challenges during application of the new provisions regulating recruitment and promotion in state administration authorities, recommendations, aimed at improving these procedures, are presented.

¹ Official Gazette of Montenegro, 39/11, 50/11, 66/12

² European Commission, *Montenegro 2011 Progress Report*, Brussels, 12.10.2011

³ The Law also regulates filling the vacancies in the service of President of Montenegro, Parliament of Montenegro, judicial and prosecutorial authorities, as well as in the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Montenegro, Employment Bureau of Montenegro, Agency for Peaceful Resolution of Labor Disputes

⁴ Article 5, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 39/11, 50/11, 66/12

⁵ http://www.uzk.co.me/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=209&lang=sr

Dynamics of Adopting the By-laws

Until January 1, 2013, not all the legal preconditions for start of the implementation of the new LCSSE were met, although that was legally prescribed obligation. During the 17 months long transition period, only four by-laws were adopted, while only three more acts were brought after this deadline expired. Adoption of six by-laws was still pending.

The timeline of adoption of by-laws, required for the implementation of the LCSSE, was as follows:

- Code of Ethics of Civil Servants and State Employees (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 39/11) – adopted at the Government’s session from March 5, 2012;
- Rulebook, regulating the way of monitoring and appraisal of probationary work of civil servants and state employees (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 51/12) - September 28, 2012;
- Rulebook on criteria and manner of compiling members of disciplinary commissions, (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 62/12) – December 12, 2012;
- Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 4/13) – – adopted at the Government’s session from December 27, 2012;
- Rulebook on the content of vacancy announcement, method of correction and withdrawal of the announcement and electronic application to the announcement (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 8/13) – adopted on January 31, 2013;
- Decree on classification of civil servants’ job positions within levels and categories (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 12/13) – adopted at the Government’s session on February 14, 2013.

Table 1: Dynamics of adopting by-laws for implementation of the new Law on Civil Servants and State Employees since its entering into force in August 2011 until April 2013

2011					2012										2013				
Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Mar	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
							X						X			XX	XX	X	

The new Law also envisaged the adoption of the following acts, although they were not brought in the reporting period:

- act about the program and method of taking the professional examination for work in state authorities (the basis for it given in the Article 33 of the Law);
- act about the type, detailed content, method of preparation and adoption, as well as about the methodology of the training programs (Article 116 of the Law);

- act on the content and manner of keeping the Central Human Resources Record and records of internal labour market, as well as on the method of allowing the access and insight into this data and of their erasure (Article 152 of the Law);
- act about the criteria and method of evaluation of civil servants' and state employees' work (Article 110 of the Law);
- act about type and procedure of granting recognition to civil servants and state employees (Article 114 of the Law);
- act about the content and manner of keeping the records about gifts received, as well as about the form content (Article 72 of the Law).

Delays in adoption of the acts for the implementation of the LCSSE had a negative impact on consistency of the application of the new rules regulating recruitment and promotion in state authorities. For example, the categorization of job positions in state authorities is a pre-requisite of the successful implementation of the LCSSE. The new law thus prescribed obligation of the state authorities to align their acts on internal organization and systematization with its provisions 60 days after the start of its implementation the latest. Yet, the two acts, providing basis for categorization of job positions⁶, entered into force only in January and February 2013. State authorities thus did not have enough time to align their acts within the given deadline, and there was not enough time for civil servants to be properly trained for their implementation. Consequently, only 5 out of 32 state administration authorities⁷, defined by the Decree on organization and manner of work of state administration, adopted acts on internal organization and systematization by March, as previously prescribed by the law.

⁶ Decree on the classification of job positions of civil servants within levels and categories (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 12/13) and the Decree on criteria for internal organization and systematization of jobs in the state administration authorities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 7/13)

⁷ Ministry of Labor and Social Care, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Science, Legislative Secretariat, Administration for Inspections

Institutional preconditions

Four institutions – the HRMA, Ministry of Interior Affairs (Administrative inspection), Appeals Commission and Administrative Court, have key roles in filling the vacancies in state authorities (via internal procedures for promotion and via public competition for the recruitment of new staff).

The HRMA has the key role in filling the vacancies in state administration authorities. It announces vacancies, implements them for the purpose of a state authority, forms the Commission for testing candidates' abilities for each vacancy, and delegates its representative to each of these commissions. This institution is also in charge of keeping the Central Human Resources Record, which should also contain the annual grades of civil servants' work. These grades, in return, should be one of the criteria of testing the candidates' abilities to work in state administration. However, as already highlighted, neither the act on content and manner of keeping the Central Human Resources Record nor the act on the criteria and method of assessment of civil servants and state employees have been adopted in the reporting period. An even greater cause of concern is a lack of data in the Central Human Resources Record and a fact that servants predominantly receive excellent grades, what hardly reflects their actual performance.

Number of civil servants and state employees in state administration authorities of Montenegro, defined by the Decree on organization and manner of work of state administration, as of January 1, 2013 in the Central Human Resources Record was 3,739⁸, although it is estimated that the total number of civil servants and state employees in state administration is 10,500⁹. That means that data for more than seven thousand of state administration employees are missing. In addition, only 6 authorities submitted the data about the grades of their employees into the Central Human Resources Record by April 1, 2013¹⁰.

The HRMA is also in charge of informing the competent inspection authority about the illegalities and irregularities during the implementation of acts about civil servants and state employees. Hence, with an aim of ensuring that the Central Human Resources Record is regularly updated, the joint activities of this authority and Administrative inspection should be intensified. It is a duty of inspection to perform oversight of regularity and timeliness of submission of data to the Central Human Resources Record, and, depending on the findings, to undertake certain actions. In other words, if, while performing oversight, inspector finds that the filling of vacancies in state authorities and their announcement failed to comply with the law and other rules, it is his or hers duty to undertake measures

⁸ Answer to the freedom of information request

⁹ *Public Administration Reform in Montenegro: Between Ambitious Plans and Realistic Possibilities*, Institute Alternative, 2012

¹⁰ Answer to the freedom of information request

envisaged by the acts regulating inspection oversight and to inform the Appeals Commission and the HRMA.

Representatives of state authorities in commissions for testing candidates' abilities also play an important role. Those servants, apart from the expert knowledge in the field, must be familiar with the procedures of filling the vacancies in state authorities. During 2012, the HRMA organized numerous trainings for implementation of the LCSSE. Nonetheless, delays in adoption of the Decree regulating testing of candidates' abilities caused a delay in organization of trainings for its implementation. According to information from its Internet presentation, the HRMA organized two trainings about the Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities. Insufficient capacities for implementation of the new rules might cause a lot of problems, especially in the initial phase of the new rules' implementation from the side of commissions for testing candidates' abilities.

It is indicative that internal announcements between state authorities and public competitions at the Internet presentation of the HRMA state that the "procedures of obligatory testing of abilities (oral interview) will be conducted in line with Article 42 of the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 39/11, 50/11, 66/12)". Such formulation raises doubt that that testing of candidates' abilities will be performed only via oral interview and not also via the written exam and testing specific skills as envisaged by the LCSSE and Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities. If so, the new provisions regulating the testing of candidates' abilities are then not being implemented. That might be caused by the lack of relevant capacities of the HRMA and state authorities. The Decree, however, clearly regulates the method of testing candidates' abilities and all the procedures need to be implemented accordingly.

Filling the vacancies

During the reporting period, between January 1, 2013 and April 1, 2013, total number of 18 vacancies for 24 job positions and 24 persons in state administration authorities of Montenegro, defined by the Decree on Organization and Manner of Work of State Administration¹¹, were announced. That is significantly smaller overall number of sought employees than merely in the last month of the implementation of the old Law (See Tables 3 and 4)¹². In total, there were also 8 public competitions for selecting heads of state authorities¹³, but different and more flexible procedures are envisaged for filling this category of job positions¹⁴. One public announcement was also published for three positions in Administration for Property¹⁵. However, the decision for filling the vacancy in this authority was launched in December 2012 and hence the new LCSSE was not applicable.

Table 2: Calls for filling the vacancies in state administration authorities in the period between January 1, 2013 and April 1, 2013

<i>Type of call</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Number of advertised jobs</i>	<i>Number of employees wanted</i>
Internal announcement within the state authority	2	3	3
Internal announcement between state authorities	7	10	10
Public announcement	1	3	3
Public competition	8	8	8
Total	18	24	24

¹¹ Official Gazette of Montenegro, 05/12, 25/12, 61/12, 20/13

¹² Apart from these 18 advertisements and announcements, the 6 advertisements for 8 vacant job positions and 12 executives were also announced in the period between January 1, 2013 and April 1, 2013, for the purposes of state authorities which are not under the scope of the Decree on Organization and Manner of Work of State Administration (basic courts, State Prosecution and Misdemeanors Council).

¹³ These advertisements referred to the following job positions: director of Education Bureau, director of Administration for Youth and Sports, director of the HRMA, director of Police Directorate, director of Institute for Execution of Criminal Penalties, director of Directorate for Anti-Corruption Initiative, director of Tax Administration, director of Administration for Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism.

¹⁴ Testing the abilities of candidates for the heads of state authorities, after the list of candidates who meet eligibility criteria is determined, is practically reduced to the conversation between the candidate and the relevant minister (LCSSE, Article 57)

¹⁵ Independent advisor III in the Department for management and protection of state property, State Employee IV – book keeper in the Financial Service, and a probationer

Table 3: Calls for filling the vacancies in state administration authorities in December 2012

Type of the call	Total number	Number of advertised jobs	Number of employees wanted
Internal announcement	3	6	6
Public announcement	15	30	31
Public competition	0	0	0
Total	18	36	37

Therefore, the nine announced vacancies¹⁶, for overall number of 13 employees, are relevant from the aspect of the implementation of new procedures for testing candidates' abilities¹⁷. No candidates applied to three vacancies for total number of five employees¹⁸. Finally, until May 20, 2013, the HRMA did not compose the list of candidates who meet the eligibility criteria for two announcements published on February 19, 2013 and on March 25, 2013¹⁹.

Due to the relative small number of calls, longer time periods for determining the lists of candidates who meet eligibility criteria and for the testing, as well as the fact that the decision on initiating the filling of vacancy in the Administration for Property was announced last year, only two candidates were selected based on two separate announcements and in line with the new Law²⁰. In both cases, the ranking list consisted of only one candidate who has been subsequently selected for the post²¹.

¹⁶ Seven internal announcements between state authorities and two internal announcements within the state authorities

¹⁷ As they are prescribed by the LCSSE and Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 4/13)

¹⁸ Secretariat for Development Projects informed the IA that there was no applications for job positions Independent clerk I in the General and financial service and for Independent clerk II in the General and financial service, which were announced on March 25, 2013. That was also the case in the Customs Directorate, where there were also no applications for job positions Independent advisor - leading planner in Department for statistics and development of customs system and for the job position of the Independent advisor - leading system engineer, specialist for hardware, database, and operational system in the Department for the revenue collection, which were announced on March 4, 2013. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration stated that there were no candidates for the job position - Independent clerk I, head accountant in the Financial service

¹⁹ These are internal announcement for the Ministry of Justice, published on February 19, 2013, for job position of Independent clerk I - chief book-keeper, and internal announcement, published on March 25, 2013, for the Real Estates Administration which sought employee for job position of Independent Advisor II for its unit in Niksic.

²⁰ The two decisions are brought for the post of tax inspector in one of the units of Tax Administration and for the position of Independent clerks - secretary of the Minister of Defense.

²¹ In one case, for the tax inspector position, there were four applications. However, one candidate did not go through the testing procedures, while the other two candidates did not receive satisfactory grades.

The HRMA did not specify a condition of indefinite employment as one of eligibility criteria for applying to internal announcement between state authorities (as defined by Article 40 of the LCSSE). Consequently, one candidate who did not meet this criterion applied for one vacant position²². If the list of the candidates who meet eligibility criteria contained personal data of the candidates who are not employed for an indefinite period in public administration, there would be a realistic possibility for legality of the entire procedure for filling the vacant post to be disputed.

²² It was the job position of Clerk IV – technical secretary in the Financial and general service of the Secretariat For Development Projects

Transparency of filling the vacancies

During the first three months of monitoring, the IA faced numerous difficulties in obtaining certain information, delays in getting responses to the freedom of information requests, and with different interpretations of the legal provisions by different authorities. Loose interpretation of certain procedures results in insufficient transparency of the application of the new rules.

Ministry of Justice submitted decision of a selection of a candidate for a vacant position of minister's secretary in a limited form. Namely, name and a surname of the selected candidate have been erased under the excuse of personal data protection, as we have been said during the oral conversation. In a written response, Ministry stated Article 14 and 24 of the Law on Free Access to Information as reasons for its decision. These articles prescribe the possibility of limiting access to information and regulate such access. However, this interpretation is opposite to the Article 12 of the same Law, which encourages proactive sharing of information among the state authorities, by envisaging duty of the state authority to publish a list of its servants and employees with their position at its Internet presentation²³. Subsequently, the IA was allowed insight into the list of servants and employees of Ministry of Justice and into their positions. Although that wasn't enough for the name of the selected candidate to be undisputedly determined, the fact that the Ministry itself subsequently submitted the names of its employees with their job positions makes its previous rejection to provide an insight into the name and surname of the selected candidate even more questionable.

The Ministry of Justice also in one of the answers to the IA's request rejected the insight into the copy of the Decision about filling the vacancy, under the excuse that such Decision was not brought. Still, the HRMA previously announced the vacancy and delivered the Ministry's decision for initiating the procedure for its filling²⁴.

Demands from certain authorities, such as Ministry of Justice and Real Estates Administration, for paying the expenses of meeting the freedom of information requests is another cause for worry, especially given that those expenses are often merely 10 cents. This practice hampers the timely access to the necessary information. Its justification, which partially refers to the work efficiency of the entire state administration, is even less founded if one bears in mind that most of the documents could have been submitted in electronic form.

²³ Article 12, The Law on Free Access To Information, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 44/12

²⁴ Internal announcement between state authorities, Number 02/1177/1

Legal provisions²⁵ about the obligation of securing necessary funds prior to initiating the procedure for filling the vacancy are differently interpreted by different state authorities. Namely, some authorities (e.g. Ministry of Defense, Secretariat For Development Projects, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration) regard this obligation as a fact that the budget funds for filling the vacancies were already allocated and that the job positions were envisaged by the acts on internal organization and systematization. Certain authorities rejected our demand for delivering a confirmation that they had secured the necessary funds without any further explanation (Customs Administration), while the Tax Administration made a reference to the Article 36 of the LCSSE and explained that, given that the filling of vacancy was conducted upon the internal announcement, it was not obliged to submit the confirmation.

Uneven interpretation of the legal acts is also reflected in the insufficient transparency of conducting internal announcements within the state authorities. In other words, the HRMA rejected to deliver documents with regard to one internal announcement within the state authority. As a reason for rejecting the access, it stated that the documents are in the domain of the state authority, which is in charge of implementing this type of announcements, while the HRMA is only in charge of publishing them²⁶.

Nonetheless, neither LCSSE, nor the Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities, prescribe the exemption with regard to the implementation of internal announcements within the state authorities. Hence, the foundations for assigning this competency to the authorities are not clear. Furthermore, if such practice is continued, the basic concept of the LCSSE, aimed at selecting the best candidate for a job in state authorities, will be endangered. On the other hand, by giving the HRMA the key role in implementation of all vacancy announcements can have a positive impact on professionalism and transparency of the procedures, especially given that this institution is specialized for human resources management in state authorities. The intention of the lawmakers was directed precisely towards such practice at the first place. Interpretations that internal announcements within the state authorities should be conducted by the authorities themselves are thus not only opposite to the solutions from the LCSSE, but they will have a negative impact on the legality and transparency of the procedures' implementation, but also on the establishment of the merit-based system in the Montenegrin civil service.

²⁵ Article 35 of the LCSSE prescribes that the head of state authority can bring **the Decision on Initiating the Procedure for Filling a Vacancy only if** the state authority has provided funds for such purpose. Article 26 further prescribes that If filling a vacancy is carried out by public announcement, a state authority shall be obliged to obtain a confirmation of the allocated funds from the Ministry in charge of budget affairs.

²⁶ Answer to the freedom of information request

Conclusion

Start of the implementation of the new Law was primarily marked by the failure of authorities to meet all the legal and institutional preconditions for successful application of this act. That is a cause of justified concern about the consistency of current and future implementation of the new solutions, which are expected to bring the break with nepotism and politicization in Montenegro's state administration.

Main problems noted in the reporting period, with regard to the lack of fulfillment of legal and institutional preconditions, are:

- delays in adoption of by-laws for the implementation of the LCSSE (adoption of the six by-laws was still pending after April 1, 2013);
- large number of authorities have not aligned their acts on internal organization and systematization with the new LSCEE up to April 1, 2013, although the legally prescribed deadline expired on March 1, 2013;
- Central Human Resources Record is only partially updated, and the by-law about its content has not been adopted in the reporting period;
- Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities is not being implemented properly because not all the capacities in the HRMA and respective authorities have been adequately built.

During the reporting period, not enough job candidates have been selected so it is too early to make conclusions about the extent to which the new Law encouraged recruitment and promotion in Montenegro's state administration authorities to be merit-based. Yet, certain experiences with the implementation of vacancy announcements suggest that the implementation of the LSCEE lacks transparency. Main problems, noted in that respect, are:

- Imprecise eligibility criteria for applying to certain announcements;
- Rejection of one institution to allow a complete insight into the decision on selection of a job candidate, despite the absence of legal foundations for such rejection;
- Implementation of internal announcements within the state authorities has been informally assigned to the authorities for purpose of which the announcement was published. That hampers transparency and legality of this type of filling the vacancies;
- Legal duty for securing the necessary funds before initiating procedure for filling the vacancy is unevenly interpreted. There is a tendency for this duty to be restrained only to the procedures for filling the vacancies by public competition.

Recommendations

1. Legal framework for implementation of the new LCSSE needs to be finalized;
2. All state administration authorities, which failed to align their acts o internal organization and systematization with the new law by March 1, 2013, should do so as soon as possible;
3. The HRMA's capacities for the implementation of the Decree on the way of testing the abilities, determining the closer criteria and the assessment method of the job candidates in state administration authorities should be enhanced by organization of focused professional trainings;
4. With an aim of ensuring that the Central Human Resources Record is complete and up to date, the HRMA and Administrative Inspection should intensify their joint activities;
5. In order for the candidates for job in state administration authorities not to waste time and material resources for applying to announcements and competitions for which they failed to meet eligibility criteria, the HRMA should state the condition of indefinite employment in public administration into the text of the internal announcements between state authorities.
6. In line with the Law on Free Access To Information, all state authorities should regularly update and publish on their websites the complete list of their civil servants and state employees, along with their job positions, in order to ensure complete transparency and easier monitoring of the recruitment and promotion in state administration;
7. The HRMA and state authorities should ensure consistent implementation of the legal provisions which undisputedly regulate competences for filling of vacancies, with an aim of stopping the practice according to which the state authorities have been informally assigned the competence of implementing internal announcements within the state authorities.
8. All state authorities should, in line with their legal duty, provide convincing confirmation that they had secured enough funds for initiating procedures for filling the specific vacancy before the decision on initiating them was brought.

References

- *Law on Civil Servants and State Employees*, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 39/11, 50/11, 66/12
- *Decree on classification of civil servants' job positions within levels and categories*, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 12/13
- *Decree on criteria for internal organization and systematization of jobs in the state administration authorities*, Official Gazette of Montenegro, 7/13
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About us

Institute Alternative (IA) is a non-governmental organization, established in September 2007 by a group of citizens with experience in civil society, public administration and business sector.

Our mission is to contribute to strengthening of democracy and good governance through research and policy analysis as well as monitoring of public institutions performance.

Our objectives are to increase the quality of work, accountability and transparency, efficiency of public institutions and public officials; to encourage open, public, constructive and well-argument discussions on important policy issues; raising public awareness about important policy issues, strengthening the capacity of all sectors in the state and society for the development of public policies.

The values we follow in our work are dedication to our mission, independence, constant learning, networking, cooperation and teamwork.

We function as a think tank or a research centre, focusing on the overarching areas of good governance, transparency and accountability. Our research and advocacy activities are structured within five main programme strands: i) [public administration](#), ii) [accountable public finance](#), iii) [security and defense](#), iv) [parliamentary programme](#) and v) [social policy](#).

On the basis of our five programmes, we monitor the process of [accession negotiations with the EU](#), actively participating in working groups for certain chapters. Our flagship project is the [Public Policy School](#), which is organized since 2012.

In our hitherto work, we had joint projects with Center for monitoring and research (CEMI), Centre for Civic Education (CGO) and European Movement in Montenegro. When it comes to international partners, we have cooperated with Centre for Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) from Geneva, Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA), a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, European Policy Center from Brussels, Center for International Studies (CESPI) from Rome, Center for Study of Democracy – Sofia, etc.

Managing of the organization is divided between the Assembly and the Managing Board. President of the Managing Board is Stevo Muk. Research Coordinator is Jovana Marović, PhD.

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